

Making Peace with the Pieces of My Masculinity:
Developing A Research Methodology for
Educating Peace.



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CAMBRIDGE**

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

April 2021

Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

*Making Peace with the Pieces of My Masculinity:
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This research is about being able to return to **peace education** as a reputable educator. To be able to do so required research that not only found pedagogical resolutions but embodied the values I hold as central to peace education. This research is about me trying to *walk my talk*.

I felt peace education was ineffective for many of the young men with which I worked. The research aimed to develop **new innovative pedagogies** for engaging young men about peace. However, it soon also became a deeply personal journey into my own relationship with **masculinity** and **peace**. This research tries to make peace with those pieces of my masculinity so I can facilitate peace with other men.

The research showcases a novel methodology using **autoethnography**, **interviews** and innovative perspectives of **second-order reflexivity** and **diffraction** that propelled me to an additional research step of undertaking a **Vison Quest**. This approach was developed as I believe it not only provided approaches for finding resolutions to my questions but did so in ways that espoused the values of peace important to my identity. In so doing I believe **diffractive autoethnography** showcases a peaceful research methodology useful for undertaking research that ensures “synergy with peace values” (Cremin 2016). This approach provides the new methodology I can embrace as a peace educator.

A key theme that emerged is the importance of my own **being** as a peace educator. This *being* is achieved through commitments to constantly work on myself through diffractive reflection, vulnerability, and authentic presence during interactions with others. The research also suggests a possible importance of providing opportunities for participants to similarly diffract their perspectives and supporting them craft and transition to new stages in their lives. The utility of autoethnography in particular emerged as a viable peace pedagogy for these endeavours with its ability to challenge individuals to reflect and reach out in conversation with others. In this role I seek to develop myself as an **Elder** rather than expert: one where I am there *for* participants opposed to educating them. Through this research I might finally come to believe in myself as a peace educator and come into the peaceful male I hope to be. I hope this research engages you in conversation and challenges you to reflect upon your life so we might keep the conversation going (Bochner & Riggs 2014).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for many things and to so many people that without this study would have been impossible. I am grateful for my college Hughes Hall and the generous scholarship they provided as without that I would certainly not have been able to have the privileges that come with being a Cambridge student. It is a privilege and I acknowledge that many do not have those opportunities. I am grateful for the tireless support and belief from friends and family through this, sometimes arduous, process of self-exploration. Especially my mother who just trusts unconditionally whatever I am doing, even if she thinks I am a perpetual student. Also, to my grandparents whose influence will for ever be with me, and my adopted grandmother, Kokum, for her wisdom and permissions to share experiences that are not my place to share. I am grateful to my home within Cambridge: The Cambridge Peace and Education Research Group (CPERG) who have provided a constant anchor and 'place' that allowed me to be who I seek to be in the world and has mirrored back the values I hope to imbue. To past and present students who have been ever graceful in allowing me to bounce ideas off or vent: Toshi, Niki, Kevin, Kaylan, Luke, Sara, Terence, Will, Basma, Hogai, Liz...the list could go on. I carry you all in my heart. But it is to three ladies that have been most pivotal in my exploration of my masculinity. To my supervisor Dr Hilary Cremin, words cannot express my gratitude to you for the opportunities, development, and direction you have given. To my partner Riadh who has sacrificed so much to support me in my own self-indulgence. I only hope I can do the same for you with as much grace. And finally, to lady serendipity without whose subtle hand, who knows where I would be.

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Introduction: Discord in Peace

*"It may be that when we no longer know what to do
we have come to our real work,
and that when we no longer know which way to go
we have come to our real journey.*

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings." Wendell Berry (1983, p.97)

I'm sitting here at the end of a journey. It's been five years of exploring, of processing. I needed this journey to get somewhere, but as the old adage reminds me, *the journey is more important than the destination*. I was stuck, stuck at an impasse with the work I was doing, and stuck as the person I thought I was being. I was a peace educator, working to educate participants about the perils of violence and the techniques to mitigate and transform that violence. I believed in these pedagogies of peace and they were more than just my profession but part of how I self-identified as a peaceful man. However, over time I began to feel discord with the pedagogies I was teaching, and therefore discontent within myself.

What follows describes these impasses and my journey to find resolutions: resolutions to my peace work, but also resolutions in myself or else I could not return to the work I felt passionate about. These issues started with feelings that the pedagogies we as peace educators promote are ineffective and might even do more harm than good (Anderson 1999). That ironically, they actually caused a violence onto some participants that they aimed to destabilise. I observed this violence on some boys who disengaged with the methods I was teaching. These boys honestly argued that while these techniques sounded nice in theory, in practice they would likely get them into more violence, and furthermore would result in them being ridiculed by their peers¹. They were impractical to the realities these boys were trying to communicate to us. But rather than listening to these cries from the boys I continued teaching these methods driven by pressures from my employers that I had to deliver a set curriculum. Peace education became a box to be ticked, not the transformative work that initially drew me to it.

¹ Indeed, the word 'peace' was itself seen as problematic and caused reactions and resistance due some feeling it was associated to femininity.

Walking my talk is important to me and is how I want the world to see me. Someone with ethical integrity. However, I began to feel I was not walking my talk and that I was incongruent with the messages I advocated. These messages were at the heart of the values of peace I promoted and at the core of who I believed I was as a person: of knowing oneself, of listening to those with different opinions than you, of being collaborative, of being non-judgemental, of doing good not harm. I began to feel I had become a hypocrite and had started enacting the contrary to what I believed as an educator. That rather than refusing banking models of education that colonized the minds of individuals (Freire 1970) I receded into enacting education *onto* participants, as if they only conceded to the skills delivered then the problems they faced would disappear. These were antithesis to ethical stipulations I held so dear and contravened what I believed as a peace worker.

These impasses were therefore firstly of a *professional* nature as I struggled to feel confident and congruent with the work I was performing. I required understanding what was failing in peace education for these young men and what was needed to be able to make it more valuable. But these reflections soon also took a *personal* nature as I was drawn into myself and began to question the very values I believed I embodied. Had I done the work on myself? Was I in touch with the realities I too experienced as a young male trying to negotiate the trials and tribulations of becoming a man: tribulations of a seeming dichotomy between peace and masculinity? If I was not, then was I a hypocrite for these young men that I was trying to engage? Was this why many young men disengaged with my sessions? I began to question if I had somehow suppressed my experiences that correlated with much of what I was ignoring from the male participants so as to just complete the sessions. I began to realise that I was ignoring myself and did not 'know myself' as well as I endorsed in my sessions. That perhaps I was not in peace with myself or the applications which I taught. If so, how could I pretend to be the congruent peaceful male and peace educator with these young men? It was these impasses that instigated this research journey. To walk my talk and practice what I preach. I realised I had to do the work on myself to be able to return congruent to the work I had become in conflict with. What I required was to journey into myself so I could understand how my masculinity had impacted me. I needed to come to understand this so I could listen and connect with the realities of the young men in my sessions. Only by doing this would I have a chance of engaging them where they were on a relatable level and do relevant activities that were realistic for them.

These revelations took me to a final requirement for the research: *pedagogical*. What I was looking for was therefore professional resolutions for my work with young men, but to do so I needed personal resolutions so that I could feel like I was walking my talk and able to connect with these young men. By doing so, I hoped to find pedagogical resolutions that would allow me to return to the work with young men in ways that walked my talk and mirrored the peace values I endorsed with applicable pedagogies useful for the needs the young men.

I started this research with one question: **What can be added to existing peace education models to assist boys explore masculinity and peace?** However, this soon included the second preliminary question of: **How has peace and masculinity impacted my life?** As I embarked on this journey I came to understand how interacting with others was required to assist me with these questions, but also enacted the peace values I wished to personify. I therefore added a third question for the research: **What can be learnt from engaging with other boys/ men about these issues?** The research questions that this research therefore seeks to explore towards finding the resolutions I require are:

- 1) How has peace and masculinity impacted my life?**
- 2) What can be learnt from engaging with other boys/ men about these issues?**
- 3) What can be added to existing peace education models to assist boys explore masculinity and peace?**

To find these resolutions I embarked upon this research journey. This research journey took me to explore myself and the peace pedagogies I practiced through engagement with literature and interaction with others. It developed a new innovative pedagogical model called **diffractive autoethnography** that I feel I can endorse and allows me to re-enter the professional field I am passionate about in congruent ways with my personal and pedagogical aspirations. I invite you to come on this journey with me to discover something together. What I came to understand would change not only what I do in the sessions with the young men but focused on changing how I am *in* these sessions, and how I am *in* myself. This is now the central focus to my peace education with young men.

Methodology

“Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.” (Parker Palmer 2000, p.4)

Introduction

This chapter will introduce the methodology for undertaking this research. Due to the personal aspirations of the research the chapter will also discuss how the selection of methodology needed to be appropriate not only for the study, but also for my personal ethics. The chapter will firstly discuss the choice of **autoethnography** as a central methodological pillar due to it meeting these combined functions. The chapter shall then turn to discuss the **complementary methods** that supported the gathering of ‘data’ and writing of the autoethnography, including **interviews** and the innovative approach of **diffraction**. The methodology is informed by recent innovations within my field of peace research that seeks to enshrine ethical stipulations in and through research processes to preserve the ethics of peace I as a practitioner purport to advocate. It is my personal aspiration that through the research methodology I not only find resolutions to my challenges but ‘walk my talk’ by ensuring “synergy with peace values” throughout (Cremin 2016 p.12).

Selection of Methodology

As previously described, this research is a deeply personal quest for resolutions that places *me* at the heart of the research. The introduction recounted the struggles I encountered as a male peace educator. In particular this included a personal discord that the peace education I taught were neither useful for the young men with whom I worked, nor walked their talk and practiced the ethics they preached. This discord was at the centre of my own discontent and lead to the *professional, personal, and pedagogical* resolutions I seek.

With these issues positioned, the selection of methodology needed to cater for multiple goals. Firstly (1) it needed to allow for myself to be central in the research process. This is important not only as the resolutions are of a personal nature, but also by being central in the research preserves the peace education ethic of self-exploration. Preserving this ethic leads to a second (2) requirement for the

methodology selection: congruence with the ethics I purport as a peace educator. As discussed above, discord arose between the ethics I promoted as an educator and whether I was maintaining these ethics during my sessions with young men. This led to the feelings of disingenuousness that I seek to transform. To be able to achieve this, the selected methodology must exemplify ethical stipulations I wish to endorse. Therefore, the selected methodology ideally needed to be collaborative, conversational, and based on ethics of care throughout. If I was to truly walk my talk this sought to not only maintain these ethical stipulations in the design, but also the act and representation of the research. This meant research that avoided prescriptive representation and instead (3) sought to engage audiences in affective co-creative dialogue. It was for these deeply personal reasons **autoethnographic** research emerged as a suitable research approach.

Autoethnography

Autoethnographic research has appealed to me since embarking on this research journey. This appeal is due to a multifaceted ability within autoethnographic writing that fits not only the personal aspirations of this research, but also accomplishes the ethical considerations I desire. In particular, as a research method, autoethnography situates itself as an ethical approach to research. Autoethnography emerged out of ethical considerations towards traditional ethnography where the objective apolitical social researcher was critiqued (Said 1978; Hayano 1979; Ellis & Bochner 2000). These critiques acknowledged researchers "...reflexively (or unreflexively) write themselves into their ethnographies" (Denzin 2014 p.26). Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013) discuss four interrelated trends that they feel contributed to the formation of autoethnography: "(1) a recognition of the limits of scientific knowledge and growing appreciation for qualitative research; (2) a heightened concern about the ethics and politics of research; (3) a greater recognition of and appreciation for narrative, the literary and aesthetic, emotions and the body; and (4) the increased importance of social identities and identity politics." (p.25-26).

Autoethnography emerged as a method that seeks to subvert the perpetuation of bloodless (Cremin 2019)² researchers in ivory towers (Gur-Ze'ev 2011) who objectively represents the *true reality* of those they research without ethical reflection

² <https://medium.com/the-politics-of-representation/bloodless-angel-27ef6d07d16b>

on their own positional biases. Instead autoethnography seeks to be ethically reflexive of its limitations to truth claims and potential violences onto research populations, while simultaneously not discounting its unique potential for human understanding. Autoethnography therefore seeks to maintain a rigour of research but from a different viewpoint, one in which the researcher, researched, and reader are brought together in equal conversation (Bochner & Riggs 2014). As Douglas & Carless (2013) add, autoethnography developed from an “awareness that something was missing from the academic writings and communications” (p.85). Instead, such research began to encourage concentration “on ways of producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience, research that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner 2010, p.273-4).

I have been inspired by personal autoethnographies and their ability to engage and evoke emotions and reflection (Bochner 1997; Cremin 2018; Baesler 2017; Kavoori 2018; Hiller 2018; Trubceac 2018; Ergas 2020; Cremin & Kester 2020). In particular, my supervisor, Dr. Hilary Cremin’s personal autoethnography (2018) about being a peace educator connected deeply with my own experiences and encouraged my own research journey. Autoethnography can be a form of self-study that can assist in improving one’s practice (Throne 2019; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir 2020). However, it not only carries the potential to find the personal resolutions to my questions, but also carries abilities to reach out and *evoke* (Ellis & Bochner 2000) reflection in others, therefore achieving my other aspiration for this research. By reaching out and engaging the reader this thesis might also act in some way as a peace pedagogy itself. Selecting autoethnography therefore fit my ethical aspirations and mitigated reproducing the issues of preaching onto audiences from “nowhere” (Cremin 2019) that lead to my undertaking this research. It also walked my talk by showcasing the importance of self-awareness and doing self-research, thus ensuring “synergy with peace values” (Cremin 2016 p.12).

The following section shall explore the suitability of autoethnography for my proposed research. Firstly, this section shall look at some definitions and purposes of autoethnography before turning to its abilities in using narratives for therapeutic, connective, affective, and transformative reasons.

Definition and Purpose

There exist many definitions of autoethnography with most centring on the importance of a combination of research representation (graphy) of the self (auto) and socio-culture (ethno) (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Chang, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010), for example, describe autoethnography as seeking to “systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (p.273), while Marx, Pennington and Chang (2017) state that autoethnography is “to translate the personal into the social science research realm with unique first-person representations that are accessible to readers both within and outside various communities in the global context” (p.2).

Autoethnography carries particular purposes of not only representing particular cultures, but also bringing them into conversation and even change (Bochner & Riggs 2014). Autoethnographers gaze “back and forth...first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” (Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 739). Autoethnography therefore can “provide a means of challenging traditional, hegemonic, and imposed power imbalances by creating a space for people...to describe their perceptions and experiences and to express their views, beliefs, and values rather than being re-presented and interpreted by others.” (Sikes 2013, p.xxv). As I sought to understand and even disrupt my experiences of masculinity, peace, and education, I hoped that an autoethnographic approach might bring such complexities into focus. Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013, p.22) and Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis (2015, p.36), propose similar purposes of Autoethnography that have been combined here that guided my aspirations for this research: (1) purposefully commenting on/critique cultural practices from insider knowledge, (2) making contributions to existing research that is accessible to audiences (3) embracing vulnerability with purpose as a way to understand emotions and improve social life, (4) manoeuvre through pain, confusion, anger and uncertainty, and disrupt taboos, break silences, and reclaim lost and disregarded voices, (5) creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response. I felt these purposes further resonated with my aspirations for this research.

Stories and Narrative

Autoethnography achieves the above purposes through its use of personal narrative that are central to its approach (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The use of narrative, for some, is an essential element to understanding the human experience. Atkinson (2007), for example, argues, “we are the storytelling species. Storytelling is in our blood. We think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story” (p.224). Autoethnography realises stories are “complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that taught morals and ethics, introduced unique ways of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p.274). It was through the exploration of my personal stories that I hoped to find the resolutions I required, especially in ways that also reached out in conversation with others. The purposes of this research were therefore self-edification and therapeutic, while also seeking to be connective, affective, pedagogic and potentially transformative with others. Narratives carried the potential for each of the aspired personal purposes for this research for what Kim (2016)³ calls a “research-storyteller”, further reinforcing the benefits for using autoethnography as an appropriate methodology. These elements of self-edification, therapeutic, connective, affective, pedagogic, and transformative potentials of autoethnography shall be discussed below.

Stories as self-edification and therapeutic

The intention of this research was to find resolutions to the challenges I encountered as a peace educator. These challenges took me deep within myself towards unanswered questions about my own ideas of masculinity, peace, and education. This research was therefore fundamentally a self-learning and potentially therapeutic endeavour. Throne (2019) states how autoethnographic and heuristic methods “allow for a deeper understanding of self—a more fully enlightened view of a phenomenon experienced by the self-as-subject and the serendipitous understanding of others, society, and culture that may result” (p.38). It was my belief that through the autoethnographic exploration of my own and others stories I would be able to come to new understandings and find ‘peace’ with myself. As McAdams (1993) argues, “if you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am.

³ Noting Barone (2007).

And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I, too, must come to know my own story” (p.11). Plummer (2001) noted how “each of us constructs and lives ‘a narrative’, and that this narrative *is* our identities” (p.186). Kim (2016)⁴ describes autobiography as “a narrative construction of identity that discusses how a life came to be what it was, or how a self became what it is, written in retrospect” (p.123). As Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) argue, I hoped that I could come “to know the self within the processes of research” (p.124).

It was also through this research process that I hoped to let go and move forward with a new story through the act of exploring and sharing my stories to what Bochner (2014) eloquently defines as, “a story you can live with that will allow you to move on to the future with hope and optimism” (p.314). Kebede (2009) similarly discusses the “cathartic effect” of autobiographic writing, while Spry (2013) discusses the healing process of autoethnography through “un-learning” (p.357). Lapadat (2017) adds that sharing such work can further add to the therapeutic effects, “such witnessing can be therapeutic, showing narrators that they are recognized and heard, which may lead to a degree of resolution” (p.592). Finally, this coming to know oneself also matched the tenet I often promoted in peace education: the need for self-knowledge. To truly to be able to hold the ethical positioning I hoped to espouse, doing such self-examination would also exemplify the congruency I sought, and therefore also further supported this approach. As Marc Gopin (2012) argues, “an inability to examine oneself is one of the greatest impediments to peace” (p.6).

Stories as Connective

While stories carry self-learning and therapeutic potentials, they also connect us to others through the experiences we share. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) discuss how “personal stories can be therapeutic for authors as we write to make sense of ourselves and our experiences”, but they “can also be therapeutic for participants and readers” (p.280). Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue “participants are encouraged to participate in a personal relationship with the author/ researcher, to be treated as coresearchers, to share authority, and to author their own lives in their own voices. Readers too, take a more active role as they are invited into the authors world, evoked to a feeling level...and stimulated to use what they learn there to reflect on,

⁴ Drawing from Martin (1986).

understand, and cope with their own lives” (p.742). Hearing stories “awaken emotions” and “awakens responses in the audience” (Riessman 2008 p.4). Leskelä-Kärki (2008) notes our desire hearing the stories of others as we search to know more about ourselves, while Reid and West (2015) note, stories “cut to the quick of our humanity” (p.1). Presently there exists no Autoethnography detailing masculinity and peace from a peace practitioner perspective. It was hoped that this may connect with others and bring to light a new topic for conversation (Bochner & Riggs 2014).

Stories as Affective

Stories therefore connect us through evoking emotional responses. Bochner (2014) notes how his presentation of research aims, “to gently invite readers to go on a voyage with me, one in which we would be discovering and making something together” (p.13). My research aspiration was to create “a spirit of dialogue and connection between the reader and me” (ibid. p.14). Bochner and Riggs (2014) similarly discuss how “the goals of much of narrative inquiry are to keep conversation going” (p.201). The research does this by *affecting* the audience “in deep and visceral ways” (Sparkes 2013 p.515). If autoethnography carries this constitutive potential it is something I hoped to draw upon as I sought to meet my aspiration of reaching out, touching, and engaging others into what Horsdal (2012) discusses as “vicarious experience”. Lapadat (2017) adds, through telling personal narratives “situated in the particular, including emotional aspects, and attending to aesthetic qualities of writing and performance, autoethnographers open their research to a wider audience. In doing so, they shape individual perspectives and influence collective actions” (p.593). It is this that acted as further aspiration of my own personal research moving it beyond simply my own egotistical needs towards one that engages and affects others.

Stories as pedagogic and transformative

A final aspiration of the research attributed to autoethnography is the potential to disrupt and transform hegemonic beliefs (Sikes 2013; Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis 2015). Through sharing my analysed experiences, and by hopefully affecting the audience through their representation, new learning might be fostered. Hager and Mazali (2013), for example, used autoethnography towards changing the

consciousness between Palestinian Arab and Jewish students in Israel, while Barr (2019) used autoethnographic writing with his students who felt it provided “freedom to discover and most importantly, question aspects of yourself” (p.1110). As Alexander (2013) notes, autoethnography can be a particular pedagogical strategy that moves to encompass critical pedagogy. Alexander adds the act of autoethnography as a pedagogy can move “toward becoming a revolutionary pedagogy that helps to enact the possibilities of social transformation by bleeding the borders of subjectivity and opening spaces of care (McLaren 1999)” (p.544). Spry (2013) suggests that autoethnography does this by presenting “alternative versions and options of reacting to and experiencing sociocultural expectations, thereby resisting and intervening on normative constructs of human being and reified structures of power” (p.369). It is through the use of evocative stories that autoethnography becomes pedagogical and transformative. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007)⁵ note how listening to stories “opens up possibilities for generating new stories in which we can all live” (p.62). It is through interaction with stories that provides “sites of resistance” and “empowering as well as subversive” alternative templates to draw upon (Reid & West 2015, p.2). Kim (2016) draws from Nassbaum’s notion of ‘narrative imagination’ (1988) arguing how using a storytelling methodology can cultivate and foster narrative imagination in the reader (p.113), an imagination of what can be, or what should be, or what Bochner and Riggs (2014) call a ‘counterstorying’. This transformation was firstly in myself as I sought resolution to my own questions (Throne 2019), but also the lofty aspiration, that through research transformation might occur in others (Anderson & Braud 2011). As Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway (2013) note, “one does not need to look far to see that autoethnographers invest in the capacity for transformation (interruption, transgression, disruption, movement) through autoethnographic narrative” (p.572). This pedagogical potential within autoethnography therefore moves towards hope for social justice and transformation. These stories may provide particular ways for the reader to navigate their lives and to challenge collective identities as they come into contact with new ones (Horsdal 2012).

This transformative aspiration, however, should not be pre-prescribed. My goal was not, and should not be, a specific goal in mind if I wished to stay congruent with my beliefs fostered from peace education and elicitive (non-imposed) approaches (Lederach 1995). By affecting the audience through the sharing of my own stories

⁵ Noting Delgado (1989).

and allowing the audiences to take from them what they see as relevant, the 'conversation' can be created (Bochner & Riggs 2014). Here I do not seek to colonise the minds of the reader (Freire 1970) through my stories but allow "for readers to make their own sense of them" (Maynes et al., 2008, p.12). As Gubrium and Holstein (2009) note, the story "changes in meaning and in its consequences, depending on speakers' and listeners' purposes and their circumstances" (p.39). This allows for what I hoped to be a critical dialogic pedagogy, one in which we can all be changed. The use of autoethnography thus, "is a form of "high deep" (Saldana 2015) and is "illustrious for teacher educators/teachers to embrace this paradigm in order to foster their transformative learning so that to transform self/others" (Qutoshi 2015 p.162).

Autoethnographic Methods: Conclusion

The above sought to provide justification for the use of autoethnography for this research. This includes how autoethnography suited the requirements for my multifaceted aspirations. Firstly, that it could assist my need for coming to understand and find resolution within my professional practice as a peace educator and find resolution within my personal needs as a male seeking peace. Autoethnography's ability for self-edification and even therapy fit well within these needs. Secondly, I hoped that the undertaking of this research could reach out further than just myself, towards engagement with others. This was specifically in line with my ethical beliefs and aspirations that I felt must be espoused to remain congruent with the beliefs I have around peaceful educators: one who reaches out in non-imposed or colonizing conversations. Autoethnography's ability to be evocative, affective, pedagogical and even transformative *with* populations fit within these desires. Finally, autoethnography also met other ethical stipulations that I felt must remain central throughout the research process to exemplify the 'walking my talk' approach to research I hoped to personify. Autoethnography's ethical foundations that emerged from critiques of potentially violent research practices situated it well within my own beliefs in being self-reflexive and ethically congruent. Autoethnography emerged through a changing epistemological belief within the social sciences that "there are no clear windows into the inner life of individuals" (Denzin & Lincoln 2011 p.12), and that there is no 'Truth', but 'truths'⁶ (Bochner & Riggs 2014). This, I hoped, will fit well

⁶ This concept will be discussed in more detail later.

within the peaceful methodologies I hoped to portray and maintain as a peace educator as well as my own epistemological and paradigm beliefs⁷. Within the literature there existed no personal narratives or autoethnographies depicting a male perspective on struggles relating to masculinity and peace from a peace educator's perspective. It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to the field by providing a new site for consideration and dialogue, and in so doing, may in itself become in part a peace pedagogy.

I end this section on autoethnography with a quote by Etherington (2004), who while not speaking specifically of autoethnography, positions the importance of research that is researcher reflexive and contains the voice of the researcher. I believe this quote sits well with the aspirations I have for my research as I seek to explore my story through interactions with others.

“As I tell you my own stories and those of other people, I am also telling them to myself and I am changed by them; as I listened to and wrote these stories down I had a chance to make sense of my own and other people's experiences in new and different ways (Frank 1995). As you read them, perhaps you too will be changed and find new meanings in your own life as you resonate with participants' stories of lived experience (Bruner 1990; Frank 1995), both through the content of those stories and the ways in which they are told.” (Etherington 2004 p.25)

Complementary Methods

With the central methodological pillar of autoethnography being positioned for its appropriateness for my research aims, this next section turns to complementary methods that supported the undertaking of the autoethnography. The approach to the research initially utilised a **heuristic** exploration of particular **episodes** from my life to be culminated into a final discussion and conclusion. However, as the research progressed, it was discovered that this approach relied upon methods that potentially contravened the ethical stipulations central for my research. This realization pushed me to incorporate more innovative approaches drawing upon **second order reflexivity** and **diffraction**. The first section describes the first more traditional part

⁷ These epistemological and paradigm beliefs situate me firmly in the interpretivist tradition.

of the research with **five life episodes** being explored. This section describes the format that was replicated for each of these episodes as mini-research projects, including a vignette, a literature review, interviews, analysis, and conclusion. The subsequent section then describes how I decided to undertake an alternative onto-epistemological dimension to the research to *diffract* my Western epistemological over-reliance and attempt to regain my ethical intentions. Firstly, the heuristic approach that encapsulated and informed the whole research is discussed.

Heuristic Inquiry

Horsdal (2012) notes how we pre-understand the narratives we engage with, suggesting, “as we are listening to or reading a life story narrative we, inevitably, interpret the story within the context of our own experience and narrative repertoire; there is no way to detach ourselves completely from the interpretive act” (p.86). The purpose of this research was specifically to (re)interpret my own life story. Due to the personal nature of the research, the heuristic approach of Moustakas (1990) was used throughout as it allowed for an embracing of personal interpretation opposed to detachment from it. As discussed above one’s ability to truly separate oneself from the research has been challenged and is something that I ethically question. A heuristic approach therefore seemed an appropriate approach that complemented the ethical stipulations put forward in the autoethnography section.

Moustakas (1990) positions the heuristic researcher as “...not only intimately and autobiographically related to the question but learns to love the question” (p.43), complementing my aspirations for this research. Throne (2019) advocates the use of Heuristic Inquiry (HI) and argues for its appropriate links with autoethnography as it “begins with a research problem as a significant human experience or phenomenon of the lived experience” (p.10). She continues to suggest that one’s “self-identification may bring valuable evidentiary insights beyond the earned doctoral degree...but one deeper, wider, and form more vast epistemological reflexivity as much as personal reflexivity, whereby the narrative brings empathy and understanding of others” (p.4).

Moustakas provided research phases and guides for analysing data (1990 p.51), where one is to “to get inside the question, [and] become one with it” (ibid. p.15). These phases included “the initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination of the research in a

creative synthesis” (p.27). Moustakas (1990) noted how one engages in ‘self-dialogue’ when engaging data, “allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one’s own experience” (p.16). Through this personal engagement with data, a ‘tacit knowing’ becomes induced, connecting to experiences being felt. Rather than being minimised, ‘intuition’ is encouraged and acts as a bridge between the implicit tacit dimension and an explicit knowledge that is “observable and describable” (p23). A subsequent imperative period of ‘indwelling’ should ensue that “seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience” (p24). ‘Focusing’ on oneself, brings the attention back to our inner wisdom then clears the inward space to “enable one to tap into thoughts and feelings that are essential to clarifying a question” (p25). Finally, an internal frame of reference is positioned to locate the thoughts in their situated and possible momentary place in time and related to the questions under investigation.

Using heuristic interpretation does not suggest ‘that anything goes’ (Stanley & Temple 2008), but that we make a clear distinction between analysis; “a formal inductive process that seeks to explain”, and interpretation; “a more intuitive process that gains understanding and insight from a holistic grasp of the data” (Simons 2014, p.464). It believes that intuitive and holistic “eyeballing” approaches are meaningful as they allow for a wholeness otherwise missed (Trent & Cho 2014, p.644). For Moustakas (1990), this type of research was therapeutic and healing, but often needed to be nonlinear and even spontaneous to carry a “freedom in discovery” (p.44). Douglass and Moustakas (1985) discuss the importance of intervals of rest to fully indwell the data, and dialogues with others as a means to process one’s reflections. This framed my whole approach to the research with the inclusion of interviews with others, and time for contemplation on my own.⁸ This process endorses ideas “become emergent as one works iteratively with data” (Thorne 2014, p.108). Thorne (2014) argues that this “clearly steers researchers away from the presumption that they are discovering truths and toward processes that will better and more effectively illuminate possibilities for thought and action” (p.109), therefore further matching my epistemological beliefs, and my aspirations for the research.

⁸ Being a part-time student certainly helped in this regard.

Part 1: Traditional Research

The Episodes

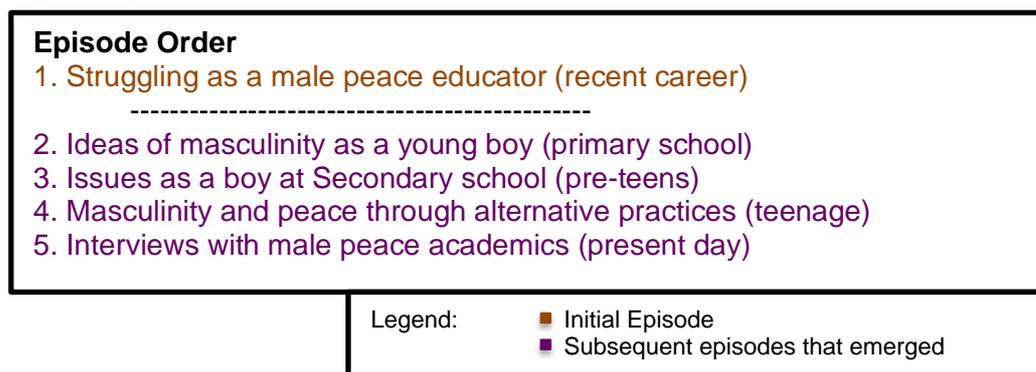
The format of the research was based upon exploring five episodes that emerged as key moments in my life. Each episode became an individual mini-research chapter in the thesis. The episodes commenced with the initial struggle as a male peace educator discussed in the introduction chapter that instigated the research project. It was this initial episode that drew me to the research and created the initial research questions discussed above.

A subsequent four life episodes emerged and became evident as “personal epiphanies” (Denzin 1989) through the iterative and heuristic process of exploring this initial episode. As I explored the initial episode I began to reflect upon points in my life where masculinity and peace came into contrast and these points provided unresolved questions that assisted answering the main research questions. For example, through researching the struggles I encountered as a male peace educator, I realised how certain unacknowledged assumptions in my own ideals of masculinity intersected with this initial crisis. This led to the realisation that I needed to explore my own masculinity in more depth and fostered the next four episodes. Each of the five episodes focused on specific events where I struggled to find peace in masculinity, or masculinity in peace, towards reflections on my place in/with peace education. Each episode therefore commences with a short vignette retelling this particular incident. The format for the vignette was inspired by my supervisor⁹ and always commenced with “I am [*verb*-ing]”. Looking back and taking these episodes from my life “emphasises the everyday experience of the individual and his or her capacity to learn from that experience” (Pinar¹⁰ 2011, p.2). The formative episodes therefore emerged as:

⁹ See for example, Cremin, Aryoubi, Hajir, Kurian, & Salem (2021).

¹⁰ Pinar specifically describes what he calls ‘currere’, “the lived experience of curriculum – *currere*, the running of the course - wherein the curriculum is experienced, enacted, and reconstructed” (Pinar, 2011 p.1).

Figure 1: Episode Order



Each episode mini-research chapter followed a repeated sequence that garnered heuristic reflections for resolving the specific episode and culminated towards answering my initial research questions. Each episode chapter format included:

Episode Chapter Section e.g., Primary School	Section Description
1. Personal Vignette	Initial incident from my life where masculinity and peace came into focus. It informed a question to be researched in 2.
2. Literature Review	Review of literature on the above question. This was done through a traditional review of Western academic literature (e.g., idiscover ¹¹) through my position in an academic institution.
3. Mini-Research Question	Upon completion of the literature review a new subsequent question emerged, prompting interviews to take place. This included additional methodological and ethical stipulations given in each episode.
4. Interviews	Interviews with 5 boys/ men corresponding to the incident. For example, 5 primary schoolboys were interviewed about their ideas of masculinity.
5. Heuristic thematic analysis & reflection	Analysis of the interviews. This involved several stages to be described below.

¹¹ This is the library search engine for the University of Cambridge and includes literature from natural sciences, social science, and humanities.

6. Return to Literature	A final return to the literature reflecting the themes that emerged through the heuristic analysis above. This might include new literature that emerged as particularly useful for interpreting the episode.
7. Conclusion	Culmination of the whole episode chapter with resolutions taken for that particular incident.

Table 1: Episode Chapter Format

The above was then replicated 5 times for the five separate episodes. Each episode therefore produced a mini-research project creating particular personal heuristic reflections and resolutions at the end of each chapter. A Subsequent ‘traditional’ **discussion chapter** was then expected to synthesize the reflections and themes from all five episodes into reflections and findings towards the initial research questions. Below shows the evolution of questions that emerged in each of the five episodes that assisted the mini-research chapter research¹².

Episode	Pre-Literature Review Question	Subsequent interviews questions
1. Initial struggle as a Male Peace Educator	Are peace education programmes effective, especially for boys? What challenges exist for peace education programmes today?	What can I learn about peace education with boys from other male peace practitioners? a) What do they feel are struggles working with men and why? b) What do they feel are important considerations for boys/ men in peace pedagogies?
2. Ideals of masculinity at Primary School	What messages of masculinity do we receive and where do we receive them from?	How do a sample of 9-11 year old boys understand masculinity? What do they want to be like when they are older and why? What role models do they look up

¹² For Interview semi-structured questions see Appendix 1.

		to for inspiration for being a man?
3. Issues as a boy at Secondary School	Why do so many boys face these challenges at school? What happens for boys at school?	What can I learn about my experiences at school from boys' current experiences of school? Does masculinity still inform their experiences?
4. Masculinity & Peace through alternative practices	What did such alternative activities offer my masculinity?	What can I learn from other male practitioners of arts, such as martial arts, that draw from alternative philosophies regarding masculinity and peace?
5. Interviews with male peace academics	What is my direction and where is my place in peace with men? What innovations within the field of peace education can help?	What can I learn from male peace academics about possible directions for working with men through peace education in the 21 st Century?

Table 2: Episode question evolution

Literature Review

Each of these five episodes explored a particular incident in my life where masculinity and peace came into view. Each episode therefore commenced with the telling of the personal incident that framed a question I sought resolutions to. After this formulated question each episode undertook a literature review around this episode topic. For example, episode 2 discussed getting into a fight at secondary school and elucidated the question concerning theories on boys fighting at school. This guided my engagement with specific literature, including psychological and sociological perspectives on boys, aggression, and schooling. This was retrieved through searches using the University's idiscover and library databases. This literature engagement was replicated for each of the five episodes. It should be acknowledged, however, that due to the format of this research covering five separate topics within the same space as other PhD research projects, limitations within the scope of literature occurred. Further indirectly linked literature on each

topic could have provided interesting connections but was purposely not included for this project. Such literature could include boys' attainment in schools or trauma-informed literature regarding the impacts of trauma on youth development and young men specifically. It could have also included literature on alternative states of consciousness and ideas of the self in the *diffraction* section described below. These bodies of literature are of personal interest, however, each literature review required strict bracketing for clarity and conciseness.

Case studies Interviews

To assist heuristic reflection after the literature reviews, dialogues with others were encouraged (Douglass & Moustakas 1985). Therefore, **case study interviews** with other (young) men that correlated to this episode was undertaken. Thomas and Myers (2015) note how case studies offer “the opportunity to bring evidence together from many and varied sources to support arguments in ways that would not be possible using other forms of inquiry” (p.129).

This was not intended to suggest that such interviews would produce objective representations of male experiences. Only **five participants** were interviewed within each episode and therefore could not represent a representational sample. Epistemologically I question generalised representational Truth from interviews, and therefore this was not the purpose for interviewing. I sit within the interpretivist tradition believing there ‘are no clear windows into the inner lives of individuals’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, 2011), and no ‘Truth’, but ‘truths’¹³ (Bochner & Riggs 2014). I believe we tell stories for specific purposes to “bring meaning to our lives” (Atkinson 2007 p.224). What we tell (or do not tell) is not necessarily truth but purposeful for whom we wish to be (Reid & West 2015). Therefore, the purpose of interviewing was instead as a means to interact with others about my story and gather their reflections. This provided further data I could analyse to affect my reflections and conclusions.

My aspiration through the interview was to be able to represent the stories of these participants along with my own in the fashion of individual cases and use these interactions as ways to influence my stories. Simons (2009) notes that case studies

¹³ This concept will be discussed in more detail later.

assist ‘story-telling’¹⁴ and it was through weaving not only the five case studies within the episodes together, but the 25 cases from the whole five episodes that assisted crafting new stories I can tell myself and live by (McAdams 1993; Etherington 2004; Didion 2006; Clandinin & Rosiek 2007; Bochner 2014). To make this weaving clear I chose to use colours for each individual interviewee allowing for their words to be seen woven into my overall reflections at the end of each chapter. This aspiration was undertaken with the belief that we are “invariably transformed by the encounters I undergo” (Butler 2005, p27), corresponding to my belief in how stories transform. This transformation is not only on the audience I hope to *affect*, but on myself as I seek new knowledge and understanding. I agree that while “much is written about how the research context may be changed by our interventions, rather less about how the research impacts on us, or, at least, gives us pause to think about who we are in any particular research context” (Simons 2009 p.81). Figure 2 below illustrates these episode case-study interviews.



Figure 2: Interviewing format

Semi-structured interviews were selected to gather the voices of these participants. The interviews commenced with the sharing of my episode story followed by questions regarding their reflections upon it. Their reflections were later thematically analysed and reflected upon through my heuristic approach. The interviews were taped with permissions and transcribed, providing the data that could be coded and sorted into themes useful for my reflections. Interviewing has been seen as an appropriate data gather technique for case study research (Yin 2009, 2014; Simon 2009; Woodside 2017). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggest interviews as useful “to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subject’s own

¹⁴ Drawing from Bassey (1999).

perspectives” (p.27). They provide a useful metaphor of a miner and a traveller for thinking about oneself when conducting interviews. They state that where “the miner typically looks for reports...the traveller is typically more interested in the conversation itself and the accounts it occasions” (p.57). This traveller metaphor resonates with my own practical and ethical aspiration for the research as one who walks *with* participants “on a journey to a distant country that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home” (p.57). They continue that traveller interviewers ‘wander together with’ (p.58), where the “journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveller might change as well” (p.58).

Interviews allowed for the topic of masculinity and peace, currently missing from the literature, to be travelled through for reflection; not only by myself and the interview participants, but also readers of the thesis. I have chosen semi-structured interviews as it provides what Olsen (2012) calls “scaffolding”, as well as a “systematic and slightly more pre-planned method” (p.34). Kvale (2007) suggests semi-structured interviews allow “a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as some prepared questions”, while allowing “openness to changes” (p.65). Drever (2006) adds the aim of semi-structured interviews “is to encourage people to talk at some length and in their own way” (p.10), while allowing the interviewer to “assert control when necessary” (p.13). Each of the five episodes therefore contained semi-structured interview questions to assist discussions, if needed. These questions are illustrated in Appendix 1.

Sampling

While each episode presents their specific sampling considerations, all the interviews were sought through **purposeful sampling**. Patton (2015) discusses the advantages of purposeful ‘group characteristics sampling’ as they allow for a focus on small samples towards understanding the phenomenon of inquiry in depth. He continues to describe how the “purpose of a purposeful sample is to focus case selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry’s purpose, primary questions, and data being collected” (p.264). Each episode focused on a particular incident at a particular juncture in my life. These incident particularities provided the specifications for the purposeful sampling, authorizing the selected participants as adequate as they contained, “access, privilege, and authenticity” into the subject matter (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p.212). For example, episode four focused on my continued interest in

alterative practices, such as internal martial arts, and sought interviews with likeminded men. To gain interviews for each episode participants were sought through my networks of education/ teaching, peace work, or martial artists contacts respectively.

Analysis

Due to the multi-episode approach to this research, each episode required separate analysis. As discussed above the personal nature of the research advocated for a heuristic method and was decided as a suitable approach to the data. The process of each episode commenced with my personal story of an incident denoting masculinity and peace. This vignette provided the instigation for engagement with literature and a subsequent question to be explored through interviews. Each of these stages provided data that assisted my heuristic process of 'self-dialogue', 'tacit knowing', 'intuition', 'indwelling', 'focusing' and 'internal framing' (Moustakas 1990) and informed the successive stages of the research.

Five participants were interviewed in each episode. I wanted the thesis to pay tribute and represent the conversation of each interview separately before a synthesis of all five interviews and a conclusion for that episode. Therefore, two levels of analysis were undertaken in each episode chapter. Firstly, an analysis of each individual interview in relation to my own story was undertaken. Secondly, analysis of the themes from all five interviews together was done towards synthesized reflections in relation to my episode story. The sequential process for each episode chapter is depicted below:

Stage	Process per episode chapter e.g., Secondary School	Frequency / Chapter
1	Interview with five (young) men in each episode.	1
2	Interviews transcriptions created from the vocal recording	5
3	Thematic analysis of each individual interview transcript	5
4	Indwelling and focusing time on this individual's themes	5
5	Reflections to these individual's themes in relation to my own story (Heuristic focusing)	5
6	Heuristic indwelling and focusing on all five interviews together	1
7	Synthesizing reflection on the episode as a whole.	1
8	Return to literature and conclusion for that specific episode chapter	1

Table 3: Episode Chapter Analysis Process

Richards (2015) and Gibbs (2018) provide useful steps to deal with the data. Firstly, after all the interviews were transcribed, I analysed each interview separately through a heuristic thematic approach. Each individual transcript was printed and chunked with notes in the margins on what that chunk represented. The chunks were then cut up with themes in the margin and laid out on a table. These chunks were then moved around and grouped in relation to similar topics, themes, or ideas. This process took multiple iterations over prolonged periods of time with chunks being moved around and new groups being formed. Eventually groups solidified and given a group theme name. These themes were then further indwelled and reflected upon heuristically and related to my own story.

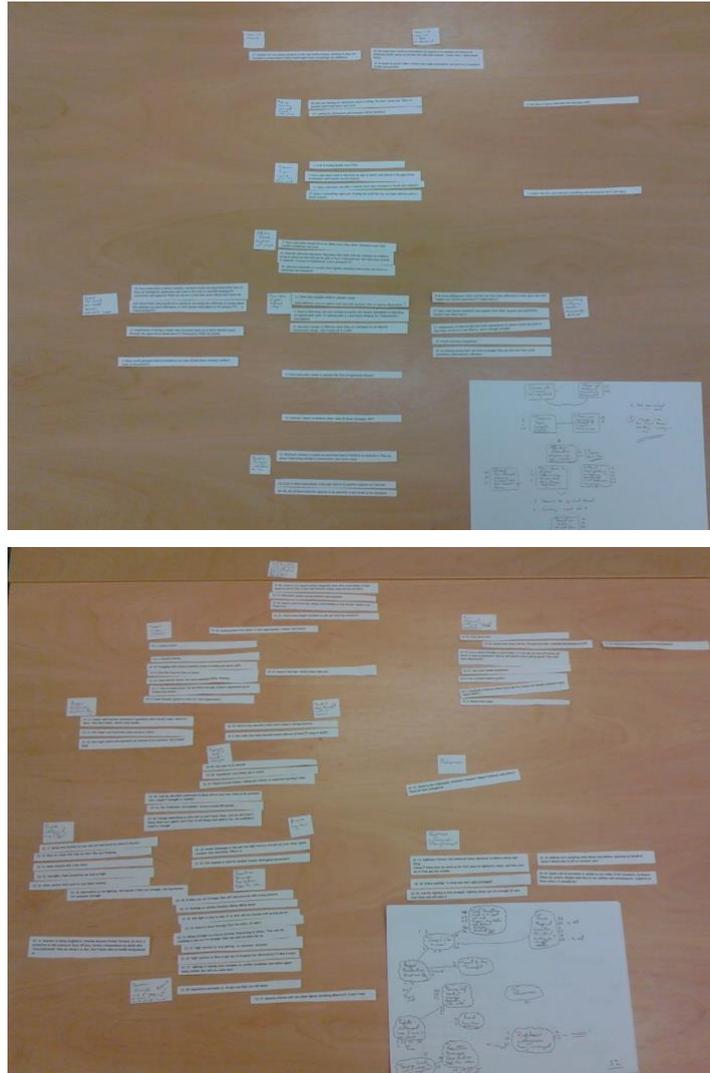


Figure 3: Sorting & Theming the Data.

O'Reilly (2009) notes, themes emerge through a “creative, reflexive (reflexivity) and interpretive (interpretivism) interaction between the researcher, the data, the literature, theoretical ideas that framed the research as well as those that emerge from close analysis of the data, and the researcher’s feelings, emotions, experiences, and memory” (p.35). The purpose for eliciting themes was again, specifically to relate to myself and affect my reflections opposed to some Truth claim on the boys/ men in general.

After all five individual interviews were analysed and themes related to my story, a final secondary analysis was undertaken. This involved ‘indwelling’ and ‘focusing’ upon the themes of all five interviews together to elicit personal themes that resonated for the whole episode. This produced a culminating section for each

episode chapter that provided final reflections to relate again to the literature and personal resolutions for that particular episode to be discussed.

Summary of Interview Analysis

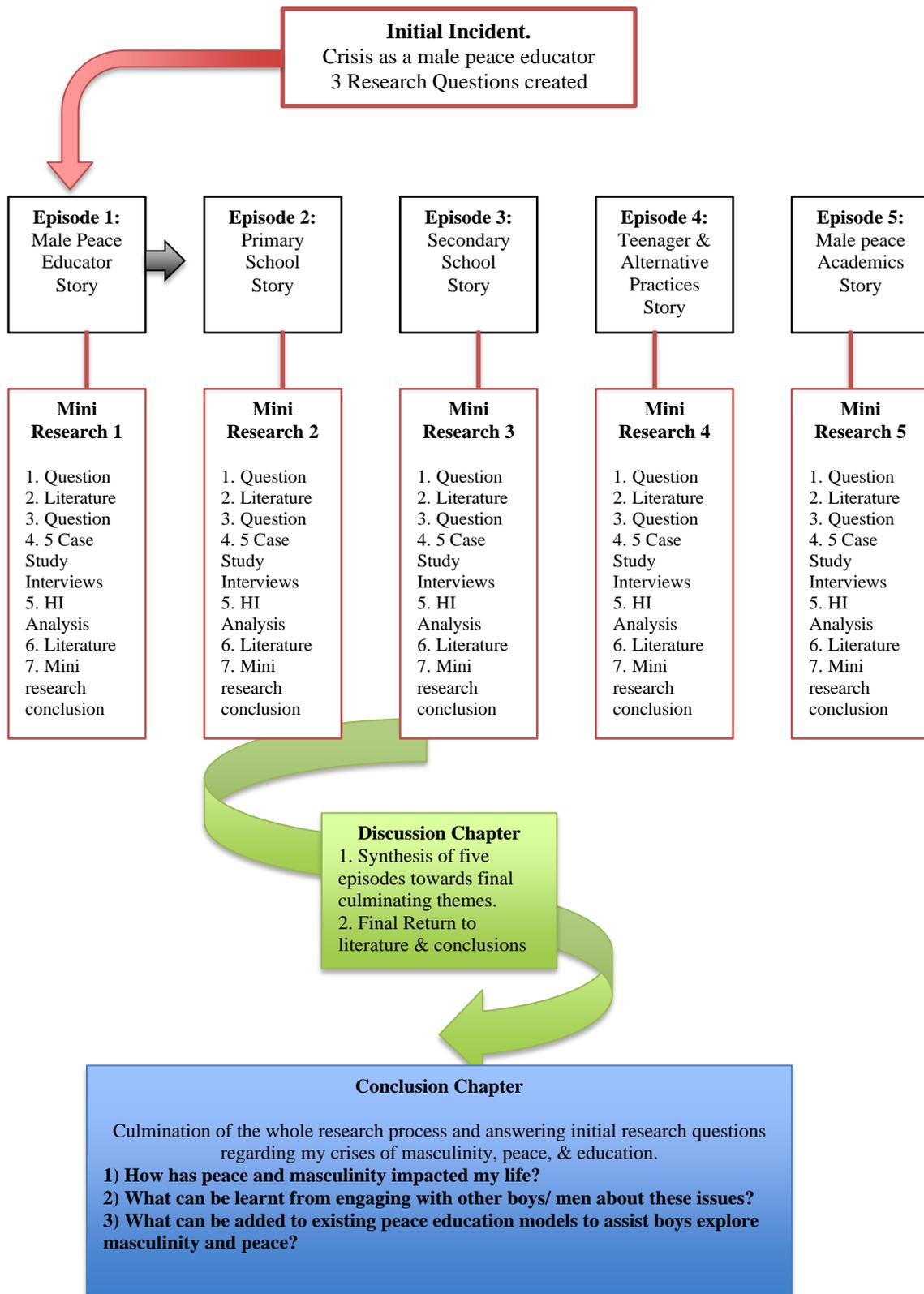
To summarize, this thesis involves the exploration of five episodes from my life that represent masculinity and peace. Each of these episodes provided a separate chapter that contained a story, a literature review, five interviews, and analysis, towards a conclusion for that episode. Each of the five interviews provided a layer of analysis that was related to my story followed by a secondary synthesizing layer of analysis of all five interviews towards concluding that episode. The format of each of the five interview episode chapters therefore follows:

Episode Format:

1. Vignette of participants interview
2. Individual reflective account of themes from the interviewee
3. Overall Reflection (synthesised from all five)
4. Return to the Research Question & Literature
5. Conclusion

This process was replicated for each of the five episode chapters with mini conclusions for each episode. Finally, a **Discussion chapter** aimed to synthesise all five episode chapters towards reflections and resolutions for the whole research process. It did this by drawing the themes that emerged from the five separate episode chapters together and elicited culminating themes that were once again related to academic literature towards the initial umbrella research questions.

Figure 4: Original Research Process



This discussion stage was envisioned as the final stage in this complex methodology towards answering the initial umbrella research questions in a conclusion. However, the more I embraced the iterative heuristic method central to this research, I began to question whether this approach was sufficient to my aforementioned personal and ethical desires. In particular I began to question whether this approach truly exemplified the 'walking my talk' values of peace I sought to personify. I began to question whether instead, the enactment of this research still committed a potential prescriptive nature that I seek to avoid and therefore lacked the ethical reflexivity central to my aspiration for the research. Specifically, this drew me to the potential that this research committed a form of epistemological violence (Spivak 1988; Teo 2010; Kester & Cremin 2017; de Sousa Santos 2018) through an unacknowledged over-reliance on particular epistemologies of the Western academic tradition. If I was to remain congruent and 'walk my talk', I required ways to mitigate my participation in perpetuating these unperceived violences. I therefore decided to explore alternative epistemologies and found the innovative methodology of **diffraction**.

Part 2: Alternative Epistemologies: Second Order Reflexivity and Diffraction

As I strived to be ethically reflexive throughout this research, and therefore walk my talk as a peace practitioner, I became exposed to literature that made me question whether reflexivity may itself be ethically fraught (Lather & St. Pierre 2013; St. Pierre 2014; Kester & Cremin 2017; Bozalek & Zembylas 2017; de Sousa Santos 2018). Critiques suggested that knowledge is often reproduced by inabilities to reflect upon the taken-for-granted onto-epistemological lenses that frame the research process and are then imposed onto audiences without awareness. From my own field of peace studies, Kester and Cremin (2017), argue for the need of a *second order* reflexivity suggesting that even the critical reflection used in many peace pedagogical approaches is unable to see beyond the ontological structures it seeks to transform. They suggest that only through a second order reflexivity "that structural and symbolic violence within, through, and by scholars in the field becomes fully visible" (p.6). If I was to maintain the ethical aspirations previously revealed as important to me, reducing my complicity in reproducing theories and methodologies surrounding my research on peace and masculinity became crucial. To avoid perpetuating what Kester and Cremin (2017) call a "poststructural violence", using a deeper reflexivity, or "reflexivity on reflexivity itself" (ibid. p.8), to question my epistemological lenses

therefore became necessary. Kester and Cremin use Sriprakash and Mukhopadhyay (2015) to define how a second order approach effects reflexivity.

“second order engagement with reflexivity encourages us to trace the ways in which knowledge [] is assembled: how particular ‘truths’ [] are produced through empirical studies, how these ‘truths’ circulate, and how they gain an apparent stability and durability....Reflexivity, then, is not only concerned with individual researchers’ engagement with their subjects under study, but it is also about tracing the politics of knowledge with respect to their field of study and beyond” (Sriprakash & Mukhopadhyay 2015 p. 232, cited in Kester & Cremin 2017 p.7).

If I was to seek new resolutions to the issues I encountered, ones that allowed me to ethically re-enter my field, a deeper reflexivity was required. This meant that the methods I originally selected to assist my reflection, the traditional approach to research of using academic literature specifically, were insufficient and perpetuated a poststructural violence. By only relying on traditional Western approaches to research might only result in reproducing similar resolutions that trapped me in the crisis I felt as a peace educator. Using innovative approaches to foster insights outside of my onto-epistemological frames were therefore deemed useful to generate the transformation I sought in my practices. While Kester and Cremin (2017) acknowledge, “there is no prescription for how academics and departments might go about practicing second-order reflexivity” (p.9), they discuss the need to zoom out “not merely to gaze back on the self, but to look onto the self as it is in relation with others and to observe how these constructed collectives then serve to constitute and govern the fields they create” (p.9).

As I looked for approaches to provide methods for moving beyond my reliance on particular epistemologies, I located an innovative approach called **diffraction**. Diffraction provided a useful metaphor for my research approach that encompassed a second order reflexivity discussed above. Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) provided my foundation for this diffractive lens, describing how this methodology could be used within peace research as “an affirmative methodology which has a great deal to offer for reconfiguring liberal humanist practices used in research methodology” (p.123).

Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) provide examples of how a diffractive lens has been used by other researchers and provide an example of how they used diffractive reading groups as educationalists. They add that, “while reflection can document difference, diffraction...is a process of producing difference” (p.117). Furthermore, diffractive methodology “requires an important ontoepistemological and ethical shift in our thinking so that we begin to take notice of the differences and transformations that emerge in specific events” (p.118). In this case diffraction does not do “epistemological damage” (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017, p.118) and could be seen as ethically congruent with autoethnography that positions itself ethically robust. Diffractive methodology does not seek to position “one approach/text/discipline against another” but instead allows for an “attentive and careful reading the ideas of one through another, leading to more generative ‘inventive provocations’ (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012, p. 50) and the possibility of a true transdisciplinarity rather than interdisciplinarity” (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017, p.115). Kester (2018) similarly provides an example of using diffractive reflexivity to his own sphere of peace education suggesting, “peace scholars must remain focused on the social processes of knowledge creation” and “must be cautious against reproducing systems of privilege through their good work” (p.10). He argues that diffractive reflexivity “may critically inform social justice work as scholars interrogate their role within the promotion (or not) of field-based orthodoxies, and in the pathologization of students’ minds as the site of social change” (p.8). It was my hope that diffraction could provide a bridge between such post-structural critiques of methodology levied by the likes of Kester and Cremin (2017), with potential directions to follow that did not fall foul of the same field-based orthodoxies that would inevitably fall back upon the same post-structural violences they seek to mitigate (Ulmer 2017). Diffraction emerged out of a move towards more posthuman approaches to research to decentre the human-centric production of knowledge (Haraway 1997, 2016; Barad 2003, 2007; Braidotti 2013). However, as Dernikos, Ferguson, and Siegel (2020) note, such posthuman theories are not without their own challenges and have been questioned regarding a potentially dehumanizing trend that may not attend to social inequalities. As I sought to be ethical in my approach to research I agree with Dernikos who states,

“For me, when educational researchers turn to affect it doesn’t imply a turning away from the insights of other theoretical perspectives, such as poststructuralism, postcolonial, queer theory, and critical race theory. Rather,

it signals a re/turning to, building upon, and complicating of such theoretical accomplishments and analyses” (Dernikos et al. 2020, p.440)

I therefore hope that by integrating perspectives from diffraction into my methodology links between post-structural critiques and posthuman decentring occur that provided specific and actionable steps that achieve a second-order reflexivity. This is achieved through moving with and *through* existing approaches with the integration of new lenses of posthumanism while at the same time not losing sight of my aspiration for humanizing the issues on masculinity and peace that are essential for my ethical congruence. As Kester (2018) notes, it “may be through marrying subjective experience with structural critique, and diffraction with reflexivity...that takes account of the dialectic of structure and agency, power and empowerment, and other field-based orthodoxies that scholars find themselves entangled within” (p.10).

Using a diffractive lens to my research therefore assisted not only unearthing new insights helpful for me and the field I hope to return, but also reduced an unperceived violence peace educators and researchers can enact onto those we hope to affect and persuade. It was this enactment of colonizing the minds of the individuals (Freire 1970) that was the initial epiphany that instigated this research. Diffraction, I believe, therefore assisted me remain congruent as an ethical peace educator and researcher. Diffraction became an essential addition I attempted to incorporate into the research and provided a metaphor and method to approach later stages of the study¹⁵.

Diffraction

Diffraction occurs in nature. When one is by the beach one might observe how parallel waves approaching the beach become bent through rocky-formed apertures. These waves change from being a straight wave to rounded waves that strike the shore and create a rounded bay. This is diffraction: the bending of a wave as it passes through an aperture. This can sometimes occur multiple times down the same beach (see figure 5). As two diffracted waves patterns meet, they *interfere* with

¹⁵ It should be stated here that this metaphor was by no means intended to suggest this process would replicate the actual physics experiments, nor appropriate such ideas and misuse them out of the context of which they came. This again would seemingly contravene any ethical foundations I seek to uphold. I am not a physicist and have no expertise in the process of diffraction, however, I find the description of wave (not wave/particle) behaviour useful as a metaphor.

each other. It was this metaphor that provided a useful way for thinking about my research and how interacting with different lenses bent my interpretations. The metaphor provided a way for me to think of how reading my experiences through particular apertures, such as Western academia, bend these experiences and created ripple effects into how I might interpret them. But that through reading the same experiences through different apertures, creating new diffractions, they interfered with each other. It was this aspiration I sought to move away from the over-reliance on one approach and mitigate epistemological violence (Kester & Cremin 2017) towards a truly transdisciplinarity approach (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017 p.115).

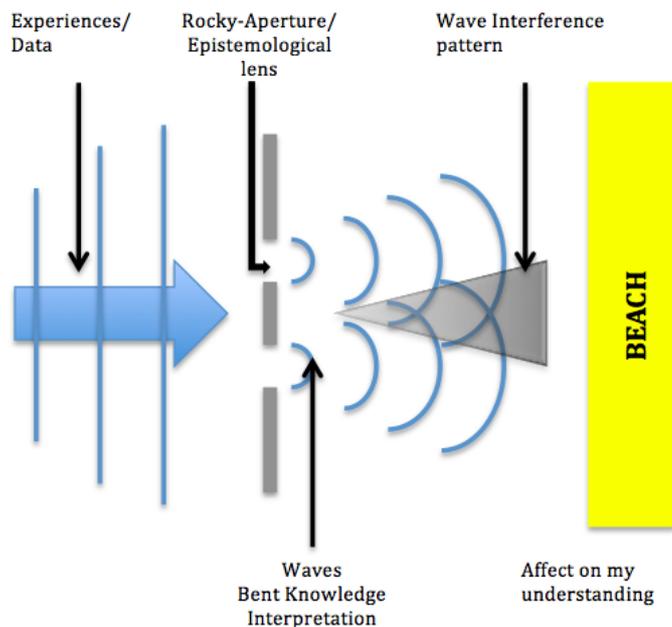
Figure 5: Wave Diffraction Patterns¹⁶



This diffraction metaphor was used to incorporate innovative methods presented in recent peace research literature (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017; Kester 2018; Kester, Archer, & Bryant 2019), and to therefore stay congruent with the direction currently emerging in my own field of peace research. Using this metaphor from wave diffraction provided a nuanced way to interpret my episodes through additional apertures as a means to *interfere* with singular interpretations. The metaphor of wave diffraction was therefore a metaphor to think about observing interpretations interacting with each other, and a method of seeking out different epistemological references to interfere with my own epistemological biases. This metaphor is presented in figure 6 illustrating how reading experiences through epistemological lens bends them into different interpretations and paradigms.

¹⁶ Image from http://www.coastalwiki.org/wiki/Shallow-water_wave_theory

Figure 6: Wave Diffraction Metaphor



To achieve this diffractive approach the research integrated an additional step drawing from an Indigenous onto-epistemology. This diffractive addition involved two steps: (a) reading Indigenous onto-epistemological literature and (b) participating in a Canadian First Nation’s Vision Quest. It was felt this additional step would firstly be congruent with the heuristic approach for the research involving ‘self-dialogue’, ‘tacit knowing’, ‘intuition’, ‘indwelling’, ‘focusing’ and ‘internal framing’ (Moustakas 1990), while also encouraging a diffracted perspective through the alternative epistemological method. Similarly, this step sought to interfere with my preliminary, more traditional approach, while also allowing for a process of synthesis to occur through a different type of indwelling and focusing offered by the Vision Quest.

Indigenous Approach

Using Indigenous approaches was in no way meant to appropriate such traditions or suggest I am eligible to represent or truly understand them. Drawing upon the eminent post-colonial scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) I do not seek to become another “They came, They saw, They named, They claimed” (p.80), Western scholar as this would again contravene the ethical positioning I proclaim. Instead, the intention was to value the rich resource and “transformative power of Indigenous,

subjugated knowledges” (Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith 2008 p.2). Chilisa (2012) adds there is “an increasing emphasis on the need to sensitize researchers and students to diverse epistemologies, methods, and methodologies” (p.xv) and create ‘third space’ methodologies (p.25). Lin, Oxford, and Culham (2016) similarly promote a need to develop and embrace a spiritual research paradigm (SRP) into qualitative research and such an approach was consistent with what Dietrich (2012), a prominent peace scholar, calls “Energetic” Interpretations for peace. Indigenous approaches provided opportunities to move away from the over-emphasis of mind of traditional peace research and move into the body, heart, and spirit (see Dietrich 2012; Cremin & Archer 2018; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019), and honour more intuitive ways of researching (Koppensteiner 2018, 2020). I hoped that through exploring alternative epistemological approaches I could firstly maintain my ethical ambitions, and secondly, that through reading new literature, and participating in the Vision Quest, my own reflections become affected, crafting new insightful reflections of the second order.

Additional Diffractive Discussion

This additional step therefore created two supplementary parts to the research after the initial more traditional discussion chapter synthesised the five episode themes. The first chapter turned to Indigenous onto-epistemological literature to (re)examine the episodes towards new reflections. This chapter discussed what an Indigenous onto-epistemology might say about my experiences as a young man. This literature was accessed similarly through idiscover, but also expanded to other online searches (including Google) to allow for the acknowledgement that these literatures often sit outside of Western academic traditions.

There could exist an irony here, however, by relying upon literature of Indigenous perspectives to try to diffract my Western rational epistemological perspectives. Firstly, many of these sources are still written by non-indigenous writers *about* Indigenous traditions. This does not mean they are disingenuous or unavailing, but rather their authenticity should be questioned. Secondly, many of these traditions are specifically *not* written as they rely upon a different epistemology of oral and direct experience. Reading a book about these ideas might therefore undermine the purpose and simply reinforce the epistemologies I am seeking to mitigate. As some have noted, these traditions promote a different way of knowing and are based upon

different models that lose meaning when translated into English (Four Arrows 2016; Cajete 2000; Little Bear 2012). As McGaa (1990) notes, these ways of understanding are “too much of a mystery for us to describe fully” (p.77). Duncan (2018) adds that “[a]lthough the language of contemporary biology and ecology has created a world that can be scientifically explained, it leaves the human population in exile from the rest of nature and we are stuck in a self-referencing mechanistic narrative with no way out” (p.86). Therefore, direct experience with nature and altered states of consciousness are epistemological tools within many Indigenous traditions. To explore this different epistemology and try to diffract my perspectives further, I therefore decided to undertake a traditional rite of passage of a Vision Quest where I could reflect on my research journey and the topics of peace and masculinity. This constituted a third and final discussion chapter. This final discussion chapter will describe the Vision Quest in more detail and will seek to represent this experience. To do so, moving away from a reliance of analytical description (promoted in the Western academic traditions) seemed pertinent to avoid regressing into a Western epistemology. Therefore, the use of creative writing was used, and shall be explained in more detail in the chapter.

A note should perhaps be added here that choosing the onto-epistemologies of the Canadian First Nations and the Vision Quest is by no means the only avenue available to explore alternative epistemologies that could diffract my own. An array of other ceremonial, ritual, and medicinal alternatives exist from both Indigenous and Western non-traditional practices.¹⁷ The selection of the Canadian First Nations and the Vision Quest as an appropriate avenue was intentional due to my own personal interests in the onto-epistemologies of the First Peoples of North America since being a young boy as well as the personal connections with First Nations Elders that I have been fortunate to have made since moving to Canada. The selection therefore seemed an appropriate choice for my exploration of an alternative epistemology.

Vision Quests usually consist of a four day and four night no food or water fast in the wilderness for prayer and reflection. These fasts are undertaken “for the purposes of self-improvement...for a deeper insight into the why of our being” (McGaa 1990, p.78). They are “an ancient rite of dying, passing through, and being reborn” (Foster 1989 p.xv), and are used to “enable people to understand, find

¹⁷ For example these could include such options as plant-based Ayahuasca, Holotropic breathing from transpersonal psychology, DMT, Vipassana meditation retreats, amongst others.

meaning in, and develop resources to take on the new live stations, rather than just “suffer through” (Little 2011 p.1). Milton (2006) states Vision Quests “means surrendering to Nature and Spirit in a sacred way to deepen relationships with the mystery of life, the mystery of you, the mystery of Nature, the mystery of Great Spirit. A vision quest means praying for a vision of the truth of your life” (p.17). Cajete (2000) discusses how such ceremonial and spiritual connection with nature leads to the direct transference of information. He suggests that such practices “attempts to connect the “in-scape” – our human intelligence, a microcosm of the intelligence of the Earth and the Universe – with the heart and mind” (p.71). Duncan (2018) argues that such approaches therefore have “the potential for revealing areas of individual personal development that might need attention” (p.73), while for Rice (2005) they can “offer direction and focus in life” (p.82). Four Arrows (2016) discusses such trance-based experiences suggesting they help “people to access feelings, ideas, beliefs, information, and creative insights in ways not normally accessed in waking consciousness” (p.28). He adds that such experiences are also ways to ““walk the talk” of such virtues as generosity, courage, patience, respectfulness, honesty, fortitude, and humility” (p.28) and that through it “we have access to ways of learning and communicating that can put us in touch with multiple dimensions of self as well as of other” (p.32). As Hart (2019) concisely suggests, “the quest is designed to create a deep change in the bodies, emotions, minds, and imaginations of participants”. It is for such reasons I embarked upon my own Vision Quest as an additional research step.

These additional considerations to diffract my perspectives resulted in three separate discussion chapters. These three discussion chapters all culminated in my final conclusions to the initial three umbrella research questions that I embarked on this journey to resolve.

Three Discussion Chapters:

1. Western Academic Literature (**WA**)
2. Indigenous onto-epistemological literature (**IL**)
3. Vision Quest (**VQ**)



Conclusion Chapter

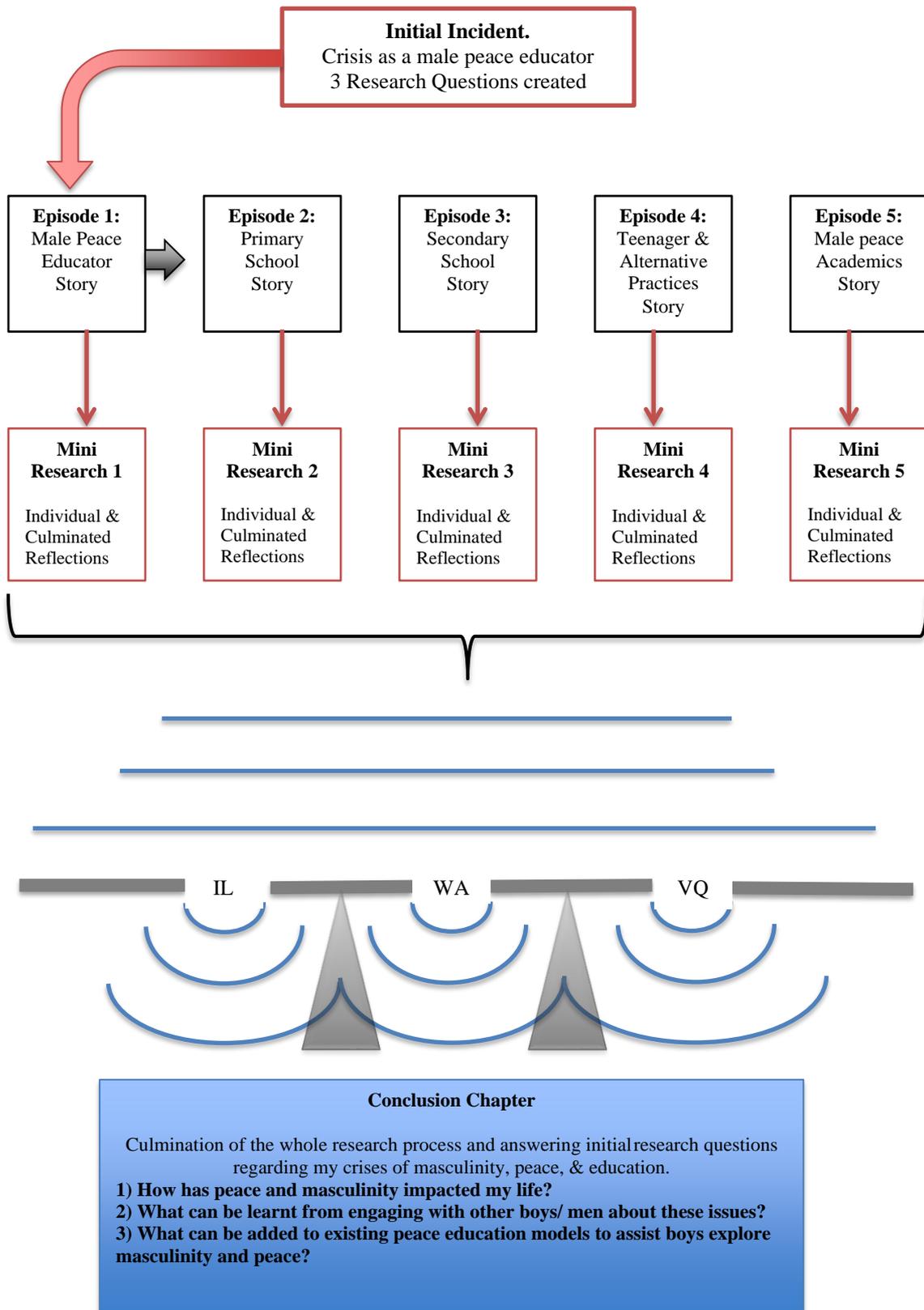
Culmination of the whole research process and answering initial research questions regarding my crises of masculinity, peace, & education.

- 1) **How has peace and masculinity impacted my life?**
- 2) **What can be learnt from engaging with other boys/ men about these issues?**
- 3) **What can be added to existing peace education models to assist boys explore masculinity and peace?**

Figure 7: Discussion Chapter Format

A vision quest should not be taken lightly. It is an intense, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual experience. I have been interested in such ceremonies since being a child and was fortunate to have been introduced to a Cree Elder in Canada who graciously agreed to support my Quest. Upon explaining my reasons for undertaking the fast she felt it would be appropriate as traditionally Vision Quests were used for young male warriors of a Nation to enter into adulthood. Below illustrates the whole research process.

Figure 8: Entire Research Process Incorporating Diffraction



Issues

Every methodology contains certain assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). The methods positioned above are not beyond potential limitations and must be reflected upon. Autoethnography, for example, has been called self-indulgent (e.g., see Sparkes 2002; Sikes 2013) and has been challenged in relation to validity and credibility (e.g., see Atkinson 2015). Memory can also be problematic where we recall only what is useful for specific reasons (Gardner 2003; Freeman 2007; Bochner 2014). Interviews too carries potential bias (e.g., Payne & Payne 2004), and I can never be sure whether what is discussed represents Truth. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) declare, “all qualitative researchers are philosophers” (p.12) and therefore each researcher must “articulate its epistemological, methodological, and ethical stance towards critical enquiry” (p.x).

As I hope to have communicated, my epistemology and paradigm place me within an interpretivist tradition that seeks not to represent notions of “Truth but truth; not truth but truths. The truths of the stories exist between storyteller and story listener” (Bochner & Riggs 2014 p.209). While I hope that the narratives I tell of myself and of others represent some saliency of truth, the purpose was not to suggest these as generalizable Truth claims. As Maynes et al. (2008), quoting Luisa Passerini suggest, ““all autobiographical memory is true: it is up to the interpreter to discover in which sense, where, and for what purpose”” (p.148). Instead, I seek to evoke (Ellis & Bochner 2000) responses in the audience that engages with my research. While I acknowledge the personal aspirations of this research, I hope too that it reaches out and connects with others. As Sparkes (2002) argues, autoethnography’s purpose is not self-indulgence but encourages “acts of witnessing, empathy, and connection that extend beyond the self of the author and thereby contribute to sociological understanding” (p.187). The aspiration of this thesis was transformation of myself through the act of the research (Simons 2009; Anderson & Braud 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba 2011), but also the potential to transform others who engage, reflect, and undertake their own self-research.

As I wish not to insinuate Truth claims through my research, it is through the credibility of my research I hope to be judged. Credibility of the research(er) is often a key importance to validity above truth (Bochner & Riggs 2014). This credibility is from “engagement within and between, not analysis from outside and at a distance” (ibid, p.209). This does not mean analysis or presentation are void of information as they

must bring something new, but they argue that “facts don’t tell you what they mean or how they feel” (ibid, p.209). To be credible the thesis needed to be persuasive and honest through its methodological justification, its reflexivity, and its ability to resonate and engage the reader (Le Roux 2017). To achieve this, the thesis firstly strived for what Maynes et al. (2008) term legitimacy through “transparency and clarity about the processes that shape the production and analysis of the personalities” (p.11). In so doing, credibility lies in my ability to maintain the epistemological, ethical, and personal authenticity that I have promoted throughout. Secondly, Reid and West (2015)¹⁸ discuss judging narratives by aesthetic standards, “including their emotional force” (p.10). This research could be judged by the aesthetics of evoking emotions and personal investigation. They argue that validity therefore “lies in the potential to engage the reader, imaginatively, in the story, which might lead her to ask questions of her own life, thus generating, in turn, new insight and meaning” (p.10). Validity of this research would be what it offers to a marginalized conversation of struggles between masculinity and peace. It does not seek to persuade the reader to its findings,¹⁹ but be persuasive by retelling enough of the life stories “for readers to make their own sense of them” (Maynes et al., 2008, p.12). I therefore hope that the research has “disciplinary relevance” and “pragmatic obligation” (Thorne 2014, p.110) to myself on my own quest, but also to those who engage with the thesis and become drawn in and *affected* through an effective presentation.

Ethical Considerations

Finally, ethics must be considered before any research is undertaken (BERA 2018). As discussed throughout this chapter, ethics runs central to the type of person I endeavour to be. If I am to “ensure synergy” with the peace values I purport to promote (Cremin 2016), my research must consider the ethical implications at every stage throughout the research process. With the focus on the self, autoethnography is not without ethical stipulations. Harrison and Lyon (2013) suggest “it is precisely its possibilities for bringing private understandings and emotions about the private and the public into the public arena...that raises ethical questions about the use of autoethnography” (ibid. p5). Therefore Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) note,

¹⁸ Echoing Bruner (1990) and Clough (1996)

¹⁹ As noted by Reissman (2008), for example.

““relational ethics”” are heightened for autoethnographers” (p.281). With the added element of interviews, extra ethical concerns needed to be consciously considered as I engage and incorporate the stories of others (Yin 2018).

Tolich (2010) and Tullis (2013) provide practical ethical guidelines that assisted my own approach to the research. For example, Tolich (2010) instilled the importance of respecting participants’ autonomy, practicing on-going “process consent” and “recognizing the conflict of interest or coercive influence when seeking informed consent” (p. 1607). He also reminds that my approach required “internal confidentiality” and recognizing my autoethnography as an “inked tattoo” that will remain with me, those close to me, and those mentioned. Tullis (2013) adds that ethics should not simply be an afterthought but that autoethnographers should “lay bare and make vulnerable their ethical process” (p.258). It is this vulnerability that I hope furthers my transparency and increases my credibility as the ethical researcher I am trying to be.

Lapadat (2017) believes autoethnography done correctly as an ethical approach as it enhances “one’s understanding of others, as well as openness and a willingness to engage that fosters trust and solidarity” (p.592). Drawing upon Visse and Niemeijer (2016), Lapadat concludes autoethnography as not only “an approach to gain access to insiders’ knowledge and experience (epistemology), but also to create space for dialogue and “good care” (praxis of care)” (p.305). Similarly, Tullis (2013) adds, that, autoethnography done well proves to be not only an ethically sound method, but an exemplar to other research of what ethical research can be. If I am to ensure my desired synergy with my ethics through the research itself (Cremin 2016), autoethnography could be the most ethically as well as practically appropriate method. In this way, it is through autoethnography that *I am* in best synergy with my ethics.

My research was therefore inspired by relational ethics (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner 2010; Simons 2014), and ethics of care (Noddings 2003; Kim 2016; Lapadat 2017) to be in tune with my own ethical aspirations. These ethics rely upon my abilities to be reflexive, or what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as a “wakefulness” that allows one to “proceed forward with a constant, alert awareness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots, scenarios, and unidimensional characters” (p.182). Kim (2016) discusses developing an ethical “phronesis” through constant reflexivity. This judgement is an “ability to put into action the general

knowledge and skills with the relevance, appropriateness, or sensitivity to a particular context (Dunne, 2005)” (p.105). It requires a “caring reflexivity”²⁰, and she highlights Foucault’s notion of Askēsis, where “the self is an object of care before being an object of knowledge (Geerinck et al. 2010)” (p.253). Finally, Lapadat (2017) notes how in autoethnography the “researcher’s self is the ethical axis where reflexive ethical deliberations must take place” (p.592). She continues to add that research must be “enacted within community in an ethic of care. Such relational ethics hold human dignity as central” (p.592) and “strives toward a more caring, humanizing society” (p. 302).

These reflexive and care ethics have at their core a focus on relationship that align with a second order reflexivity. Within this relationship focus, constant engagement and approval was sought, involving the participants so they could be part of, and invest in, the research and its goals rather than being mined for information by external ‘expert’ researchers. This ethical approach changes the image of researcher as seizer of interviewee’s information, towards humility, where one is honoured to be granted access to the interviewee’s life and insights. In this way reflection on potential harms were on-going *with* participants. Murphy and Dingwall (2007)²¹ suggest that ‘consent’ is always relational and sequential, and access is always tentative and conditional. Consent was therefore continuously discussed on an on-going basis with right to withdraw given (O’Reilly 2009).

This approach, therefore, promulgated the importance of first building trust and relationship with participants. It proposed that informed consent and research objectives are not only produced prior to the research, but were continuously negotiated through on-going dialogue (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014). The right to withdraw in this type of research was of paramount importance, even if this resulted in sacrificing the research. If I was to maintain the ethical stance I aspire towards, then this was the potential consequence. However, such potential consequences were mitigated through relationship building and constant honest and open communication. This communication included making intentions of the whole process explicit to the interviewee’s (Kim 2016), but also making explicit one’s own meaning making (Josselson 2007) from the interviews with participants. The research therefore included a fully explained consent form (Appendix 2) that included

²⁰ Drawing from Rallis and Rossman (2010)

²¹ Cited in Atkinson, 2015

the process, presentation style, and aspiration of the research. It disclosed procedures with the 'data' in relation to storage and future use. It discussed confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and the adherence to ethical standards (BERA 2018), but honestly acknowledged that confidentiality is sometimes impossible (Josselson 2007). Discussion with participants about fears or concerns prior to the tape being turned on was also done. Individual permission was sought before commencement of interviews and further approval was sought before the final completion of this thesis with full withdrawal being permitted. All of which, I hope, espoused the ethic of care, reflection, and relationship I hoped to emulate.

Final Conclusion

To summarize, I seek to personify my ethical positions through the undertaking of the research (Cremin 2016). This made the research methodology an ethical endeavour as well as a professional and personal one. Autoethnography was positioned as a methodology that emerged from specific ethical stipulations and framed as an ethical approach that still allowed for my research purposes to be accomplished. As a means to undertake the autoethnographic research, a heuristic (HI) approach to five life episodes was chosen. Each of these five episodes included five interviews with other males to animate my personal heuristic investigation. To enable this research to emulate the ethical stipulations I seek to personify, second order reflexivity emerged suggesting the importance of moving beyond reproducing epistemological and poststructural violences (Kester & Cremin 2017). This resulted in the incorporation of a new innovative approach of diffraction and the additional steps of integrating alternative onto-epistemologies, including Indigenous literature and undertaking a Canadian First Nations Vision Quest. These additional steps aimed to diffract my taken-for-granted reliance on Western rationality-based epistemological knowledges and provided new insights that assisted my heuristic reflections. This final stage to the research created three separate discussion chapters and culminated in the final resolutions to the initial three research questions I started this journey with.

It is hoped that this research 'walks my talk' and synergises the peace values I advocate (Cremin 2016). I hope it offers insights useful for myself, but also audiences who engage with the research and become affected. If such lofty aspirations are achieved, it would mirror calls for research to align with the values it

researches (Toews & Zehr 2003; Cremin 2016; Kester & Cremin 2017). As I embarked on my personal journey, I encountered others in conversation. Sharing my stories, I was gifted theirs. Their stories changed me and so I retell them to create a further “spirit of dialogue and connection between the reader and me” (Bochner 2014 p.14), to “affect readers in deep and visceral ways” (Sparkes 2013 p.515). As Etherington (2004) states,

“By allowing ourselves to be known and seen by others, we open up the possibility of learning more about our topic and ourselves, and in greater depth. This then becomes a personal journey, and it was the stories of those journeys that I hoped to capture – my own and those of others. (p.25)

Male Peace Educator

Vignette

I'm standing in front of a group of boys. Silence cuts the room. "Come on, what do we think? What do you feel this activity is about?" I am teaching a session on peaceful communication to 25 sixteen-year-olds. I am a little frustrated as it is not what I'm passionate to teach. I'd prefer to talk more about creating and building peace from the inside out. However, I think to myself that "beggars cannot be choosers", "times are tough, and schools are rarely asking for outside programmes". "I should be grateful". 90 minutes is not a long time, but "it is better than nothing". At least I can start the boys thinking about violence and possibilities for change.

"Beggars cannot be choosers?", my mind starts to wonder as I perhaps pick up on the groups disinterest and lack of engagement. "What a strange saying that is. Even in our language we are complicit in the structures of violence we say we wish to dismantle." *"It's about how we react instead of respond to incidences"*, emerges a voice. "Go on, tell me more about that", I reply suddenly elated at human contact. *"Its saying that we react from our assumptions and those reactions often cause the issues to go bad...but its bullshit. I mean, what are we supposed to do? If we do nothing then we will get it from our friends never mind the person in front of us. We have to fight, there's no choice. This all sounds great in theory, but it's not practical."* I'm silenced, both joyous at his honesty and opportunity for discussion, but anxious that we do not have time and that I have a specific set I have to get through for the school. I think about his words and think of what I should say to save the pedagogies I am preaching and keep the gazing teachers confident that I know what I'm doing. But inside I wince. I want to say, "I agree, so let's talk about that", but it stays inside as we do not have time for Pandora's box. Instead I deliver the lesson on "I" statements so popular in my work. Look at any manual that proliferates this work and one finds this lesson about using "I" to mitigate conflict. It's not that I find these tools useless, I believe they can help, but I have also questioned whether young boys like the one who spoke will get into more conflict if used in the situations they encounter. I would not use them when I was their age, so why should they? I am saddened. Saddened that this has become my life, where I deliver empty content *onto* these youngsters. Saddened that I am enforcing onto them tools that I do not truly believe in myself as a male. Saddened that I have become the antithesis of what I want...a preacher rather than an educator. I turn to the class and see the eyes glaze over again, opportunity lost, and my soul glazes over too.

Question:

This incident suggests that the peace pedagogies requested for are not applicable to the young boys they are delivered to.

Two questions arise:

1. Are peace education programmes effective, especially for boys?
2. What challenges exist for peace education programmes today?

Literature Review

This section will therefore provide a review of the literature on peace education programmes, as this is the capacity I have most worked. To be able to discuss such programmes, it is first important to define what they are, however, many scholars discuss how definitions are difficult to differentiate (Reardon 1988; Bar-Tal 2002; Salomon 2002; Harris 2002; Ben Porath 2003; Johnson & Johnson 2010; Tinker 2016). Hantzopoulos and Amani Williams (2017), for example note that even “the words “peace” and “education” by themselves engender much contention; they are not apolitical terms” (p.1). These definitions become even more complicated whether one discusses contexts in conflict (Salomon & Cairns 2010) compared to contexts in general stability or “tranquillity” (Hakvoort 2010). This diversity has led to similar yet separate terms often becoming merged and being difficult to disaggregate (Harris 1999, 2004; Bajaj & Chiu 2009; Hantzopoulos & Amani Williams 2017). Bekerman and Zembylas (2014), for example add that the “scope of peace education has expanded in recent years and has become more inclusive of areas such as human rights education, citizenship education, multicultural education, environmental education and social justice education” (p.52). Having worked in both post-conflict and “tranquil” contexts, my own work has often been termed loosely as peace education, but has also included terms such conflict resolution, intercultural communication, and violence prevention. Differentiating between these varied programmes is therefore difficult and could lead to divergences assessing evaluations for this review.

Creating a typology of definitions from multiple scholars in the field of peace education, Cremin and Bevington (2017, p.39), note how peace education draws from all these differing names into common aspirations of peace in a general scheme. While this may cause difficulty evaluating the effectiveness of peace

programmes, they argue all could be seen to fit together in a continuum of peace practices. While each context may require different focuses, Carter (2008) argues a commonality is that all aim to endow participants with certain knowledge, skills, and dispositions to improve the prospects for peace in that context. Put simply, peace education “foster[s] changes that will make the world a better, more humane place” (Bar-Tal 2002, p. 28). The programmes I participated in and taught primarily drew from the UNICEF definition of peace education and the UN Culture of peace (1998; 1999). Such education is seen as,

“the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.” (UNICEF 1999, 2011).

I therefore included keywords of peace, education, conflict, culture of peace, human rights, and violence prevention as starting points for my literature review search.

All these programmes I participated in or taught shared a common influence drawing from the significant and most cited figure in peace studies of Johan Galtung (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall 2011; Cremin & Bevington 2017). Drawing on Galtung’s conceptualisation of violence and peace, these programmes sought to provide skills to avoid violence and to resolve conflicts non-violently. They focused on the direct violence²² committed between individuals, as this was perceived the most pertinent in the communities I inhabited, however, they believed that peacebuilding was also required to change the pervasive structures and cultures that maintained violent relations. Imbedded in these programmes were knowledge and theory concerning conflict and aggression, skills to communicate assertively yet non-violently, and dispositions to see cooperation as more conducive to problem-solving than competition.

The sections that follow will firstly look at reported effectiveness of similar programmes showing that while there are encouraging results, there are certain ambiguities to the exact effectiveness of these programmes. Within this section,

²² For example, Johan Galtung’s (1975, 1996) theory of violence and peace was often discussed and used.

results by gender will provide a specific lens to be interrogated. Secondly this review shall look at possible reasons behind the divergent results for peace education. Within this section the power of peace education to challenge the structures complicit in violence is examined. Further, the arguments of some who question if it is not the power of peace education but the whole persisting epistemological foundations that perpetuate inabilities to change will also be discussed.

Section A: Peace Programmes Effectiveness

The above definitional problems of peace education can make evaluating the impacts of peace education programmes difficult. While positive results and impact assessments exist for specific peace education programmes, many evaluations are anecdotal self-evaluations on particular programmes that cannot justify actual impact (Tinker 2016) and lack long-term evidence of peace education impacts (Rosen & Salomon 2011). Similarly, evaluations of peace programmes can lead to confusing mixed results (Fitzduff & Jean 2011; Cann 2012; Ross 2014; Arslana, Günçavdı & Polat 2015; Lazarus 2015; Braun-Lewensohn & Kitain 2016; Dunn et al. 2020). As Del Felice, Karako, and Wisler (2015) discuss, “there are few well-documented cases of a thorough evaluation of a peace education program and, similarly, only one well-known existing meta-evaluation of assessment practices” (p.xvii). While I participated and taught peace education, peace was often not explicitly explored, with violence reduction, prevention, and resolution instead being prioritised. For this reason, evaluations were extended to include violence prevention and anti-violence programmes as well as peace education programmes.

Searching meta-analyses and systematic reviews that included violence prevention programmes provided a larger body of evaluations. Much of this literature attested to a general positive impact in programmes at reducing violence (Nevo & Brem 2002; Mytton et al. 2002; Derzon 2006; Wilson & Lipsey 2007; Fagan & Catalano 2012; Mikhail & Nemeth 2016; Gaffney et al. 2019; Brooks & Hajir 2020). From an explicit peace education perspective Nevo and Brem (2002) argue that “80%-90% of the programs are effective/partially effective”, suggesting this provides “an encouraging picture” (p. 276). Focusing on youth violence prevention programmes, Fagan and Catalano (2012) found widespread use of effective interventions “across settings and development, and implemented with fidelity”, as “likely to substantially reduce youth violence” (p.141).

However, other meta-studies suggest mixed results, showing limited effects or discord with regards to what factors are key to success (Ferguson et al. 2007; Hahn et al. 2007; Matjasko et al. 2012; Alford & Derzon 2012; Fagan & Catalano 2012; Barnes et al. 2014; Fagan & Lindsey 2014; Jiménez-Barbero et al. 2015; Gavine, Donnell & Williams 2016; De La Rue et al. 2017; Zhou et al. 2018; Lee & Wong 2020). For example, looking at youth violence prevention programs, Matjasko et al. (2012) suggested a “majority of the meta-analyses and systematic reviews were found to demonstrate moderate program effects” (p.540). They continue to add that the literature is large and is “difficult to draw conclusions about what works across evaluations from different disciplines, contexts, and types of programs” (p.540). Alford and Derzon (2012) found that school-based programmes aimed at reducing violent and antisocial behaviour overall, “no program showed uniformly positive evidence across all outcomes and domains considered” (p.593), while Fagan and Lindsey’s (2014) study even noted some studies showed iatrogenic effects. Finally, Lee and Wong (2020) found that while programmes had generally positive impact on measures of knowledge, attitudes, and violence perpetration, they did not significantly impact experiences of victimization or bystander behaviours.

Reasons for such divergent results could lie, in part, to the aforementioned difficulties in defining what is and what is not considered a peace education programme, or what indicators of success should be used (Fagan & Catalano 2012; Mayer 2012; Sharkey et al. 2012; Del Felice, Karako, & Wisler 2015; Tinker 2016). Sharkey et al. (2012) for example, state, “examination of recent studies in the area of school violence indicated limited consensus about the use of common measures to examine school violence” (p.261). Tinker (2016) notes that without agreed-upon conceptual frameworks, the task of evaluating peace education programmes remains difficult. She adds that the “lack of a clear conceptual framework and empirical evaluative evidence has led many within the field to criticize and even question the use of peace education as a post-conflict peacebuilding tool” (p.34). Knowing the effectiveness of peace education cannot therefore proceed “in the absence of clear conceptions of what peace education is and what goals it is to serve” (Salomon 2002 p.4). Felice, Karako, and Wisler (2015) add there is therefore “a need to further learn and discuss evaluation experiences and the challenges involved” (p.319).

Harris (2003) points to two issues when evaluating peace education programmes; one relating to “analysing the multifaceted causes of violence and the complexities of

strategies geared to reduce violence”, while the other in “constructing rigorous follow-up studies...to determine if graduates of those programs transfer their learning to the real world and act in ways that contribute to the creation of peaceful cultures” (p.1). Harris continues to suggest that peace educators should therefore avoid making extravagant claims. Similarly, Pugh and Ross (2019) argue “despite much promising work on rigorous evaluation of the impact both of international education programs and of peacebuilding interventions, a more sophisticated understanding of how the two are linked” is required (p.50) to show how training actually “translate into network-based practical action to resolve conflict and build peace” (p.53).

The ability to know whether peace education programmes are actually effective is therefore difficult to ascertain. Indicators are varied and inconsistent but often focussed on peace through the reduction of violence. A personal question remains to whether notions of peace are missing from such attempts?²³ This could therefore equate to measurements of success as Galtung’s (1975) notion of negative peace (absence of direct violence) opposed to aiming towards positive peace where transformation occurs at the inner level of individuals as well as also at structural and cultural levels.

Gender?

Compounding divergent evaluations of peace education effectiveness may be that most meta-analyses focus on programme success in general and do not make differentiations between gender. If I am to locate whether peace education is useful for the boys with which I worked, an additional gender lens would prove useful. Studies that did use a gender lens were, again, often evaluations of single programs rather than meta-analyses. Furthermore, no systematic research existed on boy’s interpretations towards peace programmes usefulness.

Studies that did discuss gender again similarly perceived divergent findings. For example, some evaluations argue there were no significant differences in the effects between girls and boys (Jenkins-Tucker, McHale & Crouter, 2003; Sağkal, Türnüklü & Totan 2012), while others placed better effects for boys (Farrell, Meyer & White

²³ This is a notion that is raised further in an article written by my colleague and myself (see McInerney & Archer, under review).

2001; Türnüklü et al. 2010), and others suggested better effects on girls (Yablon 2009a, 2009b; Garaigordobil et al. 2009; Sullivan et al. 2015). Yablon (2009a), for example, found that “female youths were indeed generally more positive than the male youths toward members of their conflict group and also gained more than the males from participating in the peace programme” (p.697). What works best by gender, however, was not discussed. Furthermore, Limbos et al. (2007) argued that when studies did report findings by demographics such as gender, “the analytic approach taken by investigators was to examine effectiveness within each population subgroup rather than examining the differential effectiveness among subgroups” (p.72). This might lead to generalization of whether it worked for boys as a homogenous group rather than whether it worked for some boys differently. Finally, Fagan and Lindsey (2014) also found some differences in effects by gender in their systematic review. These effects were, however, mixed with some programmes having similar effects by gender, while others having “harmful effects for one sex or the other” (p.1057). They found no clear patterns concerning the types of programs that are most effective by gender, nor what factors existed where differences occurred. They therefore discuss the importance of including gender when considering prevention programmes.

One field of programming that did reveal gender specific results was the sphere of men’s violence prevention programmes (MVP),²⁴ due to these being targeted directly at young men. While many men’s violence prevention programmes predominantly focus on men’s violence against women, they can also address the full spectrum of men’s violence (Kaufman 1987; Berkowitz 2004)²⁵. While this, again, is not directly related to peace education, it is an area I have taught, and was therefore included in the literature search. Meta-evaluations within this body of literature similarly showed positive results within many programmes at changing men’s violent behaviours and attitudes (Barker et al. 2007; Ricardo et al. 2011; Dworkin et al. 2013; Carlson et al. 2015; Edstrom et al. 2015; Wright et al. 2020). However, this same research also attested to mixed levels of effectiveness, with some programmes having partial or no outcomes. These mixed results led to Michael Flood (2015), a prominent scholar in MVP, to suggest a need “for a critical stock take of efforts to involve men in the prevention of violence against women” (p.159).²⁶

²⁴ It is with great appreciation to my friend and colleague William McNerney for our conversations and work together regarding this literature.

²⁵ Sometimes referred to as the ‘triad of men’s violence’ (see Kaufman, 2019)

²⁶ Originally delivered at the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium New Delhi, Nov 2014.

There are calls for gender to become more of an explicit part of peace education programmes (Reardon 1988, 2001, 2015b; Breines, Connell & Eide 2000; Davies 2004; Cockburn 2004; Cook 2007; Brock-Utne 2009; Fobear 2014; Standish 2015a; Holmes 2018; Weber 2018; Finley 2018; McLeod & O'Reilly 2019; Oswald Spring 2020; Harmat 2020). Cook (2007) for example, notes “removing gender makes a holistic, integrated, and respectful analysis impossible. It obfuscates the naming of alternative approaches that are at the very root of peace education” (p.60). Standish (2015a) adds “peace education is well-positioned to address forms of cultural violence that relate to gender (p.299). However, Finley (2018) notes that “while peace education has such amazing, transformative potential, that potential has not yet been reached. One reason is that the field has yet to fully address gender and sexuality” (p.xviii). McNerney and Archer (under review), however, discuss that while such gender focus is of vital importance, they predominantly focus on promoting gender equality that lacks analysis *with* males about their gendered experiences and aspirations in relation to peace and violence.²⁷

Possible Factors for Boys?

Looking at programmes directed at boys, Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) place some of these potential shortfalls connecting directly to that of masculinity and the schooling system²⁸. They argue that “some of the approaches contribute to the very problems they seek to eradicate” (p.126). Pointing at strategies used to solicit boys’ changes from violence (authoritarian or therapeutic strategies), they argue neither are effective. They argue authoritarian strategies only reinforces the use of domination that they seek to challenge, while therapeutic strategies focus on emotions and are associated with femininity that boys seek to avoid.

Looking at a specific peace education programme in a school, Sakade (2009) noted how some teachers felt peace education relied too heavily on discussion and did not cater for boys’ more active learning styles. The teachers felt boys would often turn off when excessive time was spent discussing topics. Sakade also found difficulties with peace education programmes for boys due to contradictory cultural messages

²⁷ We call this the “*peace vacuum*” in working with men where programmes aim more at convincing boys to be non-violent opposed to exploring what the actualities of peace looks like for them.

²⁸ Schooling and masculinity is to be discussed in the later chapter.

encouraging boys to fight back. Whether peace education programme carried enough appeal to counter the lived experiences of boys was therefore questioned.

Writing about the limitations within MVP programmes, Flood (2019) suggests critical needs for reflexivity and reform within pedagogy, curriculum, and accountability. Amongst other recommendations he recommends a need for developing more applicable affective approaches to deal with men's resistance against interventions²⁹. Walsh and Harland (2019) similarly, recognize the need for more effective approaches to engage adolescent boys. They highlight seven key factors they have observed over 30 years of practice that improve boy's engagement, including the importance of taking boys seriously, taking a strengths-based approach, acknowledging the critical importance of exploring what it means to be a man, creating safe learning spaces where boys are listened to, appreciating their own journeys through masculinity, and connecting their experiences and aspirations to the real world.

These results may suggest limitations in peace programmes at engaging and affecting change in boys, with further limitations to understanding why such limitations exist. In particular these limitations may spring from not considering masculinity in the strategies to engage boys, nor explicitly exploring their lived experiences *with them* around it. These evaluations may therefore suggest a need to take into account strategies that are explicitly directed at/with boys and are applicable and cater to their needs. These results too might attest to the importance of explicitly focusing upon masculinity and peace with boys as more effective and affective ways to work with boys³⁰. Exploring boy's, or those who work with them, opinions about peace education programmes could, therefore, be of pertinent interest for the development of peace education pedagogies with boys.

Section B: Peace Education Critiques

Some authors have discussed how schooling may not be a conducive environment for peace education to over-turn engrained societal norms (Davies 2004; Bickmore 2008, 2011; Harber & Sakade 2009; Cremin & Guilherme 2016; Cremin & Bevington

²⁹ See also Funk 2018

³⁰ See again McInerney & Archer (under review) as well as a further article with my colleague, Archer & McInerney (in progress).

2017). For example, some argue that schools often use prescriptive peacekeeping methods towards conflict management as a means to “reasserting control” (Bickmore 2013; Cremin & Guilherme 2016). Peace in schools therefore often concerns containment and control opposed to deconstructing the structures that perpetuate violence. MacAllister (2013) and Wilson (2013), question the ‘transformative’ power of peace programmes suggesting they only ‘restore’ ‘peace’ by returning to that which existed previously. Drawing upon Galtung, Cremin and Guilherme (2016) therefore state that approaches to peace in schools only achieve negative peace through peacekeeping mechanisms opposed to targeting positive peace through more peacebuilding approaches. This might seemingly concur with why many of the programmes I taught focused predominately on violence reduction through the prescription of skills onto the youth opposed to a deeply political notion of peace (Hantzopoulos & Amani Williams 2017).

Some authors go even further to suggest that peace programmes therefore implicitly reinforce the status quo. Bajaj (2008), for example, draws from Haavelsrud (1996) to argue many peace programmes are either idealistic, intellectual, ideological or political. The first three programmes are the most popular used but do not bring change to the environments they are in. She continues to argue ideological forms only serve the interests of those in power because of “the social and cultural reproduction that occurs in schools” (p.2). Bickmore (2008) may align with this sentiment arguing many education for peace programmes are paradoxical because they “...represent the government...selections and silences in curriculum content, evaluations, or language of instruction often foster or reproduce destructive social conflict” (p.439). Wang (2013a) refers to many programmes creating “...dualistic distinction between the self and the other” (p487). She argues this can reproduce and reinforce existing social inequalities and “does not necessarily undo the mechanism of objectification and domination” (ibid). Gill and Niens (2014), as well as Reilly and Niens (2014) also discuss this reproductive nature of education for peace programmes, arguing that by taking for granted societal ‘norms’ they reinforce hegemonic structures that may support partialities and discrimination. Lambelet (2018), therefore notes that teaching peace and war in classrooms is an inherently normative exercise. He continues that as teachers we must “pay attention not only to our institutional power, but also the power that comes from our various subject positions” (p. 353).

Many of these authors argue for the mainstreaming of critical peace pedagogies into school's curriculums to explicitly critique the reproducing and resilient structures surrounding schooling (Bajaj 2008, 2015; Brantmeier 2011; Hantzopoulos 2011; Bajaj & Brantmeier 2011; Reardon & Snauwaert 2011; Brantmeier & Bajaj 2013; Gill & Niens 2014; Standish 2015b; Zembylas 2015, 2016, 2018a; Jenkins 2016). Based upon Freire (1970), these pedagogies aim at raising 'conscientização', or a 'critical consciousness' for those involved to counter the pernicious prescriptive 'banking' model of education done onto students. Bajaj (2008) for example, believes peace pedagogies should focus on "teasing out issues of power, domination, and symbolic violence or cultural imposition" (p.5). However, at the same time these same authors show how critical peace pedagogies struggle to gain purchase in schools and are often dismissed as radical as "peace education has a history of being viewed as politically suspicious (Brantmeier 2011. P. 364). They therefore often fall foul to the same issues described above as either tokenistic and not bringing about lasting change, or actively reinforcing particular agendas (e.g., Zembylas 2018b; Cremin, Echavarría & Kester 2018). Haavelsrud (2019) adds that current peace education in neoliberal times has failed as "neoliberalism in educational policy-making is an obstacle to designing peace education processes for experimentation aimed at increased political awareness in confronting reality" (p.49).

Ontological & Epistemological Constraints

The inability of peace education to challenge the structures that it aims to transform has led some scholars to question the uncritiqued assumptions underpinning peace education. Scholars here have begun to suggest that peace education is value laden, partial, and even colonizing. At the heart of these critiques are insights that suggest the practice of peace education as heavily tied to particular onto-epistemologies emanating from Western historical discourses (Page 2008; Dietrich 2012; Bekerman & Zembylas 2012; McGregor 2014; Cremin 2016). These unquestioned foundations of peace education result in an onto-epistemological hegemony over any other worldview or approach to peace and education. These onto-epistemological assumptions often promote peace in universalising and essentialised manners and conceptualise peace as a rational endeavour targeted at the psychology of individuals. There are therefore calls for crucial self-reflexivity and decolonization within the field of peace education, not only to the impacts of peace education, but also to its taken-for-granted assumptions that could themselves be violent (Gur-Ze'ev

2001, 2011; Bekerman & Zembylas 2012; Dietrich 2012; McGregor 2014; Cremin 2016; Kester & Cremin 2017; Cremin, Echavarría & Kester 2018; Amani Williams & Bermeo 2020).

Jewish philosopher Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, for example, specifically focused on these philosophical foundations of peace noting their ties to political and historical worldviews (2001). Gur-Ze'ev questioned the totalitarian "telos" nature of peace. Peace education works "within the framework of modernist technical reason, manifested through various positivist, pragmatic, and functionalist views of knowledge" (2001, p.316). Hidden within these ideals of 'peace' lie hegemonic and homogenizing political tendencies that promote the "capitalist order of dichotomy" (2010, p.172). This Western peace imposes its own values over any other and becomes "extreme manifestations of successful terror" (2011, p.111).

Page (2008) similarly explores the uninterrogated philosophical foundations of peace education. He argues that peace is laden with Western specific philosophical binary values of 'good' versus 'bad'. These are implied as if the achievement of 'good' will lead to a universally desirable utopia. These notions, however, are subjective and lead peace to being "partial and value laden" (p.13), veiling a "hortative tendency" (p.16). He continues that Western peace is "epideictic" yet "specious", imposing narrow interpretations of peace. Western peace will therefore only reproduce the Western worldview as its philosophical foundations are beyond debate. McGregor (2014) notes that therefore "peace educators must be cognizant of their own peace philosophy, because it affects why and how they teach peace" (p.151).

Other scholars too discuss the cultural embeddedness of peace and education and link it to the epistemological foundations emanating from Modernity (Dietrich 2012; Zembylas & Bekerman 2012; Cremin 2016; Cremin & Bevington 2017). Dietrich (2012) for example, surveys world traditions of peace and places the dominate interpretation as being tied to Modern and Postmodern discourses resulting from the uniquely Western academic traditions.³¹ These particular interpretations of peace are partial, holding reason and rationality as the pinnacle of human development above all other epistemologies. For Dietrich, Modernity separates humans further from nature "and installed the conception of a world running like mechanical clockwork"

³¹ Dietrich places interpretations of peace into five families: Energetic, Moral, Modern, Post Modern, and his 'Transrational'.

(2012 p.153). In this mechanical world, reductionism led to superlative knowledge and scientists claimed to not only “interpret the clockwork world”, but also to be able to “manipulate the cogs in a reasonable manner so that a more peaceful world can thereby arise” (p.160).

These Western interpretations of peace prioritise particular epistemological tools and sites of change. Zembylas and Bekerman (2012, 2013), for example, argue peace education contains a psychologized and idealistic perspective that “essentialized conceptions about individuals, peace, and conflict” (2013, p.205). They tie peace education to “enlightenments moralistic and monologic philosophical groundings” (2013 p.200). From these groundings the rational mind is the premier site of change suggesting peace is attained through rational discernment. Bekerman (2016) argues that Cartesian notions of self that persists from this philosophical legacy results in an over-emphasis on the mind, ‘res cogitans’, that detaches individuals from the body and from society. As a result, “any contributions psychological perspectives might offer to the development of pedagogies that can reduce intergroup hostilities are insufficient and suggest the need to critically approach the concepts of self and identity, culture, multiculturalism, and the political organization of the nation-state” (p.19).

Cremin and Bevington (2017) also argue that Modernist approaches to peace prioritize rational modalities. Acknowledging Post-structural continental philosophers, they suggest that peace education overly relied upon science, rationality and reason, affecting its ability to respond to complexity (p.13). They place many peace education methods in schools as drawing from behavioural psychology approaches that similarly saw peace as behavioural ‘treatments’ for the minds of ‘unhealthy’ individuals. They “reject this rather mechanistic way of thinking about conflict” (p.89) arguing that peace education has been “held back by its ties with modernity” (p.13). Education in this way is only ever “*about* peace rather than education *through* peace” (p.47). Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, and Smith (2017) observed this over-emphasis on the mind as the site of change commenting, “we also encountered, on the one hand, a highly reductionist view of education’s role in peacebuilding that limited it to peace education or changing minds and behaviour, rather than addressing the more structural issues of governance, equal access, and quality” (p.21). Finally, Kester (2018) corroborates there is a need to move beyond psychologized and individuated approaches in peace education. He argues that “good-intentioned” peace education “individuates violence onto students” (p.9) by not taking into account the structures

influencing them. He adds that “peace education has long operated on the assumption that altering the psychology of the individual has a multiplying effect that in aggregate alters society toward peacebuilding” (p.11). However, these approaches also “places the locus of social change within the individual student’s head thereby under-examining social causes, such as neoliberalism, capitalism, sexism, etc., that contribute to social inequalities and violence” (p.12). Kester calls for a ‘critical ontology’ that acknowledges these structures as well as “the material and embodied, a shift from the mind to the body and body-politic – a transrational embodied materiality” (p.6).

Conclusion

Peace education has been discussed as being difficult to define and difficult to evaluate. Where evaluations exist, mixed result abound, and gender is rarely a factor for consideration. Males’ own perspectives of peace education, or what works with them is further missing from the literature. Challenges have therefore been levied to peace education, firstly on an effectiveness level, and secondly on an onto-epistemological level that suggests it needs to be critiqued. Cremin (2016) therefore notes three interlinking crises within peace education: a crisis of legitimacy, a crisis of representation, and a crisis of praxis. This has lead Kester and Cremin (2017) to call for a need for deeply reflexivity, a reflexivity of the second order, a “reflexivity on reflexivity itself”, as “there is a responsibility for practitioners and the field to scrutinize taken-for-granted assumptions of the field” (p.8). The literature therefore calls for a reflexivity within the field and to the assumptions that we as educators take for granted. To build upon this need for reflexivity it might be useful to interview male peace educators and discuss their experiences working with men in peace capacities to relate them to my experiences and this literature.

Research Question:³²

What can I learn about peace education with boys from other male peace practitioners?

- a) What do they feel are struggles working with men and why?
- b) What do they feel are important considerations for boys/ men in peace pedagogies?

Sampling: 5 male peace practitioners who agreed they worked in educational capacities with young men were contacted through my networks. These men included men working in both the UK and North America as this is a) where I have worked, and b) where my networks predominantly exist. All agreed to meet and discuss their experiences at engaging and working with men in an educational capacity around violence prevention and peace.

³² For interview questions please see Appendix 1.

Interviews

John Francis Stuart Andy Tony

John

John became involved in peace education at school due to both a personal experience and what he felt was a natural propensity being the peacemaker in his group. He recounted how a friend was given a life sentence for murder and this experience led him to reflect upon his life. John participated in conflict resolution training at school and valued the opportunity to reflect inwardly. He began to feel self-reflection was an important aspect youth did not have opportunities to do at school, and so he began to lead trainings with a friend. However, over time John began to question what he felt was feminized ways of expressing emotions inherent in peace education and also felt masculinity became unfairly demonised in the media. This led him to explicitly focus on masculinity during his sessions as he felt many young men are confused about manhood. At present John is still questioning how masculinity fits within peace education and was interested in the research. Through this interview themes of **Male expression of emotions, energies and explicitly exploring masculinity** emerged.

Reflective Account of John's Interview

John described while he feels it is important for men to explore their emotions, he had witnessed other male peace worker friends communicate in ways he felt were rather feminine. This led John to the reflection that men and women express emotions differently and that men had not learnt how to express **emotions in male ways**.

"I found myself in situations where my friends would come to me and vent...and I would in my head think, this is a bit feminine...And I thought, maybe that's how people viewed me before...and that's when I stumbled across the realisation that men and women actually do express emotions very differently."

John conceptualised this difference between male and females in relation to “energies” adding,

“there are masculine energies and feminine energies and we can’t change it because we’re human and that’s what we’re born with.”

This led John to believe that these energies should explicitly be explored and even appreciated.

“Accept that men have different forms of channelling and expressing energy. This is one reason why men associate emotions with femininity. Women haven’t accepted the masculine forms of expression, and men were never taught.”

This exploration of energies led to John discussing a need to **explicitly explore masculinity**. John discussed how he felt masculinity had been demonized and labelled as “toxic” in social media, calling it the “men are trash trend”. He discussed how many men are uncertain about masculinity and “don’t know what it is”. For John this showed a need to explicitly explore the “taboo” topic of masculinity.

“I’ve implemented in my work [] actually exploring masculinity in the session...talk about what it means to be a man, what in manliness, what is your masculinity? That kind of conversation has really helped because I think it’s steered young people in the mind frame where I know what masculinity is and I’m confident in that and so even if you’re seeing me as feminine I know what I’m talking about.”

John added he was rather “protective” of his gender and was “baffled” by the responses young men gave to him about it. For John it is really important to have conversations about masculinity as it creates self-knowledge and self-confidence in young men. He added “it’s not an easy conversation to be had” but is “definitely worth exploring and looking into”. John concluded that he has not “come to any conclusions” about what masculinity is, but thinks, “it’s good to be thinking about it.”

Reflecting on John’s interview I recall experiencing similar incidences where I questioned the communication styles I learnt in peace education. Particularly I recalled interactions with peers that were met with looks of amusement, making me

feel inferior and 'soft'. While I disagree there is 'a male way' of communicating, I too became aware that these ways of expression could escalate tensions rather than deescalate them.

John's comments about energies were useful reminders of how I too conceive of gendered expressions through energetic interpretations. Perhaps for this reason I was drawn to alternative worldviews that explain gender in such ways, such as Taoism. These explanations offered ways I could express and find balance between different parts of myself while still retaining masculine.

Finally, I see the value in John's approach to explicitly exploring with other men interpretations of peace and masculinity. I feel this approach must avoid reinforcing essentialised aspects of gender that only buttress binary ways of being, however, such an approach may engage other men to seek answers to questions on gender.

Francis

Francis became involved in peace in his early 20's when he followed his then girlfriend to Ireland to work on a community peacebuilding project. While there Francis became drawn to the meaningfulness of the work and was inspired by the participants' stories and transformation. This led to him staying after his relationship ended. Francis decided to validate his experience and studied an MA in the UK and became a peace trainer.

Francis struggles with peace education as he feels it contains erroneous assumptions and theories of change. These assumptions are predicated on beliefs that simple exposure to skills is sufficient for change. He feels that workshops are disconnected to the realities of boys and instead concern maintaining behavioural status quo in schools, leading to participants becoming disinterested. Francis feels peace education must be relevant and practical for the young men, focus on their needs and realities while at the same time challenging their assumptions. He believes sessions need longer-term durations to be effective, however, Francis acknowledged this is difficult due to the marketization of peace education that desires singular interventions onto youth. Themes of **Problematic theories of change** in peace education; **Realities and Relevance**, and **Role of the facilitator** emerged.

Reflective Account of John's Interview

Francis discussed how peace education often contains **problematic theories of change** that positions exposure to information or skills as sufficient to creating lasting transformation in participants.

“The simplest form, in terms of in a generic peace education workshop is [] if we bring these young people together and explore these subjects, exposure to this information will transform their life.”

However, Francis was critical to this assumption adding,

“I don't think you transform conflicts by just introducing some new skills.”

Francis feels this approach is flawed as it does not take into account the participants **realities** and is therefore not **relevant** for them. Particularly Francis notes how peacebuilding principles are not echoed within peace education.

[Peacebuilding is] “about listening to local voices, designing a program based on individual's needs. What you're interested in. What would you like to explore and then coming in with something that's customised that's very focussed and therefore is relevant. Now ironically peace education in its typical form is the complete opposite.”

Francis believes that peace education must cease being prescriptive and focus on what is relevant for the participants so they can generate control and choices in their lives.

“That's about how do you take control over your life and it's the relevance...you get that kind of click, click, click. Okay I can see how this is useful.”

The best way this relevance can be achieved in workshops for Francis is by changing the **role of the facilitator** to holding open conversations rather than delivering skills.

“The effective aspect of this type of work [] is rather than going in there, we want to train you in these skills, it’s let’s have a conversation with you about your life and your experience, and just have that conversation around issues around like respect. What does respect look like? What’s important to you?”

This facilitation role also becomes centred on coaching participants in “leadership” capacities regarding “how you can change the status quo” and tapping into the “wisdom” of the participants. However, to be successful, these conversations require follow up opposed to one off sessions.

“how do you do the follow up because again we’re talking about skills. How do you do that from skill development perspective? How do you practice that on a regular basis? I think the kind of coaching approach.”

Reflecting on Francis’ interview, I was led to thinking about my own beliefs that peace pedagogies are ineffective as they are done *to* participants for the purposes of keeping peace rather than supporting ways *they* can change their environments. This resonated with my own experiences and feelings I was not practicing what I believed as a peace facilitator. This nuanced role of the facilitator was epitomised for me by a comment Francis made,

“We often say that we want to tap into the wisdom in the room...that kind of thing, but then we often don’t in a true sense.”

This cut to the heart of my own concerns about whether I was walking my talk about my role as a facilitator and made me question whether I had become tainted by a marketized model of peace education that promotes quick-fix content to fix behaviours of boys. The peace education I delivered was therefore often not relevant nor useful for the youth as it was not driven by their experiences and needs.

Stuart

Stuart was placed in a special unit in primary school due to issues with his anger. While this provided a respite, it did not help him look into his anger. Stuart continued getting into trouble in secondary school and ended up in prison, creating a turning point for him. In prison Stuart participated in workshops that helped him understand the causes of his behaviour, and he found working on himself beneficial. Here he met

a mentor who suggested he could be a good role model, so he decided to help others like him through sharing his vulnerable stories.

While Stuart advocates peace work, he is also critical believing societal pressures limit young men's choices. Stuart believes youth are aware of the violence around them but must replicate it to survive. He is therefore sceptical whether peace education can ever empower them. Stuart feels peace education must give voice to the youth's realities and needs and must assist developing self-awareness and provide long-term "mentorship" to "sow the seeds" towards making better choices. However, sessions must focus not only on individuals but also the systems around youth. Stuart wished peace education could be incorporated into the curriculum and focus on youth's "arrested development" rather than simply reacting to violence. However, he feels funding and professional burn-out were obstacles to this being achieved. Themes of **Awareness and choice**; **Structures limiting choice** and **Long-term mentoring** emerged in our interview.

Reflective Account of Stuart's Interview

Stuart discussed the importance for peace workshops building **self-awareness** and understanding the underlying issues causing violence. Stuart believes through increased awareness **choices** can be explored to navigate the violence youth are exposed to and perpetuate.

"I think it definitely kind of empowers people, kind of personal knowledge, knowing who you are, why you may have reacted in certain ways in certain situations, why you've done certain things, the way your brain works. [] I mean, like for me, I think it would definitely help people in those situations because...for me, the more you can know about yourself, the better."

However, Stuart candidly expressed his doubt that any pedagogy would "empower" these young boys as, for many, there were no choices; violence was about survival until the **structures** around the youth were changed.

"until real change is done around their lives, I'm not too sure what anybody can do from the outside, because I just think that it's just a jungle, to be

honest. I'm not too sure if there's anything that you can really arm them with and empower them with."

Instead, Stuart felt the importance for peace workshops was to provide alternative choices through on-going support and **mentorship** for the boys.

"if I give the other option, you may still choose to do that, but at least I think at some point in time, you may come back. It may click and you might think, "You know what, this is not for me, I want nothing to do with this, I'm going to go and do something else."

Stuart added a caveat that on-going support required enthusiastic mentors, as in his opinion too often mentors lose interest and see the work as only a job. This has negative impacts on the youth who see the mentors as not truly caring.

"a lot of people I see go about for a couple of years, but then they're trapped now because it's a job. So then they have to do it, and then when I see them like that, I'm not sure what value they're bringing. Because the heart's gone, the passion's gone, but you need to pay your rent so you can continue working in that field."

Reflecting on Stuart's interview, I recall tensions I felt between focusing on the individual's behaviours and choices while the structures complicit in shaping these behaviours and choices went unchallenged. I similarly recall feeling anger a lot of the time as a young man, and perhaps needed ways to come to explore and understand this anger in me. I perhaps also needed support in exploring different choices around that anger. If I was able to explore this anger, I might have come to understand the root causes at an individual level *and* a structural level. Finally, this interview made me question whether I had simply become exhausted with the work I was doing. While I am passionate about this work, with no desire for change at the structural level perhaps I had become exasperated and forgotten to simply share my experiences and support the youth. Unfortunately, this may have led to my fears in the ineffectiveness of the work only being reinforced as many young men may have disengaged due to my malaise.

Andy

Andy described personal experiences of friends dropping out of school and getting into violence. Even though they were violent, he saw them as good people so became motivated to understand why they changed. Andy felt pressure to work in business as he felt this was what men did, however, he wanted to help people so started social work. He tried multiple jobs, such as the Samaritans, counselling, and housing, however each felt limited in their impact due to poor funding, and so he applied to work in youth violence.

Andy has reservations about peace work feeling that it was sometimes done “to” rather than “with” participants and was therefore not relevant for the hardest to reach boys. Andy feels peace education for boys should foremost provide safe spaces away from their violent experiences and provide empathetic spaces that assist them develop their needs. These spaces allow youth to be themselves and provide examples of good relationships that counteract their existing relationships. For Andy, facilitators ideally need to be men who have experienced similar situations and survived, and need to be authentic, open, honest, and non-judgemental listeners. However, Andy still feels poor funding is a major hurdle and prevents the long-term support youth need. Themes that emerged included **Respite Space**; **Relationship examples**; and **Motivation**.

Reflective Account of Andy’s Interview

Andy discussed the importance of safe **respite spaces** away from the violence many of these boys are exposed to and that this allows them to finally be themselves.

“So it really is creating those conditions, that environment, a safe environment, to be able to drop that mask, and to be able to share that, because I think of all the interventions we’ve got, as great as they are, that for me is one of the most powerful tools.”

Andy discussed how these spaces also provide young men examples of positive **relationships**. For Andy, these relationships have two aspects; firstly, they provide an example of what good relationships consist of. This might encourage the young men to disconnect with unhealthy relationships they have. At the same time these healthy relationships also provide genuine care for the young men’s realities, does

not judge them, and builds their self-esteem. This results in them becoming more likely to turn to them and listen to their advice because they are trusted.

“I think what they take outside, first and foremost, is that what a healthy relationship looks like, and yes just knowing that actually maybe there are people in my life that I’m not aware of that I can actually trust and talk to.”

For Andy these spaces and relationships provided **motivation** for the young men to change through a respectful challenging of their beliefs. These spaces and relationships provided the encouragement and on-going support that Andy felt young men needed to be able to change their lives. He described how even if young men were not initially interested in changing, “some people really get hooked” and become affected through the environment they are exposed to.

“We challenge respectfully... so it’s about challenging those values and beliefs and saying, ‘Well this is the world, this is how people interact’. And so we would have that debate, we’d have that open conversation to challenge that kind of value and belief.”

Reflecting on Andy’s interview I realise I had become too focussed on the task of delivering the content of these sessions opposed to focussing on building trusted relationships. While I believe I was not judgemental to these boys, perhaps, especially as I had not lived in their lives of violence, I was disconnected to their realities. Instead, providing and holding a respite, open, and empathic space, that at the same time gently challenges the boys’ norms is of more importance than covering content. I believe that my core values of peace education promote the central importance of relationships. However, perhaps due to the poor funding that results in short-term only interventions, insufficient time to build relationships may have resulted in me foregoing truly listening with an authentic ear and trying to connect with the participants. Connection is perhaps more important than content.

Tony

Tony believed he was often considered the peacemaker at school, however, he never realised it could be a career. One day he saw a poster for peace studies in the common room at school and enrolled to the university. Tony became frustrated at

university as he noticed a class divide where his wealthier classmates went into international settings while he needed to secure immediate income.

After graduating Tony started work in his community but found it difficult realizing the academic course lacked practical experiences. Tony feels peace work is often unhelpful for youth because its' expectations were unrealistic and lacked long-term relationship focus and funding. Tony feels too much peace work only focuses on the surface issues and is proliferated by manuals created by people with no understand of young people's realities. To gain buy in, Tony believes workshops must be "real" and focused on participants needs while also challenging their assumptions. Tony now remains open for sessions to go anywhere and does not worry if it goes "off-track". He believes being an honest, real, credible role model from their communities, while also not "a teacher", is crucial for facilitation to connect with youth. Themes of **Irrelevance; Systems analysis; Co-production with youth; and short-term interventions** emerged.

Reflective Account of Tony's Interview

Tony discussed his frustrations that peace education workshops with young men were often based upon "trite" manuals that were **irrelevant** for the youth. Tony often refuses to deliver some of the activities proposed in these manuals as they were "babyish" and would result in youth disengaging.

"I think some of the biggest limitations [in relation to masculinity] is...far too much of the material out there is you know kind of in a dream world, where there is always a win-win outcome and you just need to find it."

For Tony, programmes with young men only dealt with superficial issues leading them to "fob" you off by only providing answers they expected you wanted to hear. Instead, Tony felt looking into the issues the young men were experiencing from a **systems** viewpoint was important to make sessions relevant and useful for their "making choices".

"from a more systemic point of view we need to do a lot more around the different forces that are driving young people towards being in a really terrible state."

For Tony, this system exploration included the emotional trauma many of the young men experience, including the “toxic trios of domestic violence and substance misuse and mental health illness”, as well as the prescribed “codes” of masculinity in areas that are predominantly “women headed without any male role models”.

Tony therefore believes programmes should be created **in co-production with young people**, seeing them as “experts” with resources to know what is important and relevant for them.

“I think if there was more people doing it, actually with young people, saying would this work, is this doing it, I think that would be a lot more effective. So more coproduction for a start.”

Tony ended with a caveat regarding tensions that exist in the **short-term interventions** that get funding. This tension revolved around the differences “between peace and justice” and what can and cannot be achieved in short interventions.

“in terms of doing conflict resolution I can find that can be... very safe compared to doing work on racism. Because with that you are really messing with peoples’ worldviews. [] if you’re given a group for a very short period of time it’s really hard to take on those kind of value based issues.”

Reflecting on Tony’s interview I see again an underlying frustration with the time and funding provided for interventions. This frustration is at the core with my experiences and relates to me also feeling I only had time to focus on “trite” surface levels. I really wanted to co-create *with* the young men about their experiences and unpack the complex interconnections between the systems that often generate the surface level manifestations of violence (e.g., Galtung 1975). However, with a lack of time provided, and perhaps lack of appetite from the school to go into such detail, I instead often delivered the desired easy manuals I felt obligated to, even though I felt they were “babyish” and irrelevant for the participants. As I reflect, I realise my passion had been lost and the sessions I ran became more about ticking boxes and

getting through the session³³. However, it was this loss of passion that created the thing I wanted to avoid; disconnect with the youth, as they probably noticed and reinforced their desires to “fob” me off.

Overall Reflection

As I reflected upon the five interviews, I felt relieved that many discussed similar struggles engaging young men in peace education. Through this process three key interrelated reflections emerged as important for peace education with young men.

1. Misguided theory of change
2. Facilitation
3. Space

Interviewee	Themes	Underpinning Themes?
John	Male expression of emotions Energies Exploring masculinity	Misguided theory of change Facilitation Space
Francis	Problematic theories of change Realities and Relevance Role of the facilitator	
Stuart	Awareness and choice Structures limiting choice Long-term mentoring	
Andy	Respite Space Relationship examples Motivation	
Tony	Irrelevance Systems analysis Co-production with youth short-term interventions	

Table 4: Peace Educators Summary

³³ I always provided my work email with the hope that a spark might arise in some and they could get in touch to explore.

The interviewees discussed how schools believed **very short exposure** to **material** would **transform** individual's behaviours. This, however, was based upon **a dream world** misguided theory of change and instead concerned **maintaining status quo**. All five of the interviewees discussed the role of the facilitator as someone who is not **a teacher** but more of a **role-model**, **mentor** and **coach**. This nuanced role of the facilitator becomes one focused upon **relationships** and **conversation** rather than a disseminator of content. Key to peace education sessions is who and how you are in the **environment** (space), and how you hold it for the youth to **drop that mask** and explore what they feel is **relevant**. Building credible connections with youth came from qualities of being non-judgemental, **honest**, **genuine**, **open**, **vulnerable** and **caring**, and working *with* the youth opposed to working *on* them. Sessions could then **challenge respectfully customised** issues from more structural/ **systemic points of view**. Masculinity could be one such topic **worth exploring and looking into**.

A key personal reflection here is reminding myself to be brave and let go of the manuals and explore the group's needs together. Tony epitomised this by adding the importance of the facilitator letting go and **coproduce** with the group in *their* space.

“Forget the session plan, let's just really, I feel we're really getting somewhere with this, let's just go with it.”

This quote resonated as it reminded me of something I believe in: about being a holder of space opposed to being an educator of young men, possibly very different to myself. This quote also started me to reflect about the interconnection between the facilitator and space. I have always believed that how one is in a space affects space and visa-versa. Reflecting on the interviews I began to recall my most rewarding sessions were not when I managed to persuade participants about some skill or technique, they were moments where I was not trying anything at all. It was when something happened in the space, something that was not planned or easily explained. It was a feeling, a *be-ing* where I was present, curious and passionate, sharing vulnerable stories together, towards answers I did not have. When these moments happen, I felt it in my bones, being affected and affecting the space and those within it. Perhaps researching the influence of space and facilitator could be a missing area of study in peace education and a strong reminder for my own foundational beliefs. However, I too began to feel that **ironically peace education in its typical form is the complete opposite** and so my **heart** and **passion** went.

Research Question & Literature

This section returns to the literature in relation to these overall reflections. The section shall firstly focus on whether peace education's theory of change is flawed. This shall be followed by a discussion on two overarching aspects of relationship-based facilitation and the importance of space, mentioned above.

1. Issues: Theory of change

The interviewees all mentioned inability to bring change in the participants. Returning to the literature this may reiterate Bajaj's (2008) comments that peace education is often either idealistic, intellectual, or ideological, and therefore does not bring the political realizations that are required for sustainable change. Similarly, it may also reiterate comments by Davies (2004), Bickmore (2008), and Cremin and Guilherme (2016) that peace education concerns conflict management and peacekeeping rather than transformation. The male peace educators' comments may suggest the realities of peace education workshops are that they are aimed at short-term quick-fixes rather than deep structural change. While change may be discussed in an intellectual or aspired manner, this change only desires to maintain the existing status quo as if they are beyond debate. This maintaining of the status quo therefore only seeks to colonize the individuals to become part of the same structures they may be disfranchised by (Gur-Ze'ev 2001). For young men, this might be heightened as they return to the unchanged, and possibly unsafe, environments where they could become alienated if they do not surrender back to the expected masculine norms (Fisher 1997), nor carry enough power to make these changes we place onto them (Salter 2016). Finally, this might resonate with Harris and Morrison's (2013), comments that peace educators seek to persuade the participants of particular types of peace rather than objectively analysing the realities that surround them. Peace education in this light fails to explore the experienced realities of the young men and fails to look at the structures that underpin these realities.

These theory of change issues might further link to the epistemological arguments of peace education (Bekerman & Zembylas 2012; Dietrich 2012; Cremin 2016; Cremin & Bevington 2017; Kester & Cremin 2017; Kester 2018). Authors here suggest peace taught in the West is tied to the process of Modernity that privileges particular ways of 'knowing' over others. These place culpability in the minds of irrational young men rather than focusing upon structural violences they are influenced by (Bekerman & Zembylas 2012; Cremin & Bevington 2017; Kester 2018). Behavioural and

communication approaches are prioritised that do not work for the realities of the young men and may resemble negative peace (peacekeeping and making) opposed to positive peace (Galtung 1975). As Kester and Cremin (2017) suggest, a self-criticality on the assumptions within peace education itself might be absent and are the real reason young men disengage. Peace education may therefore lack the critical reflection upon itself that could lead to more harm than the good being enacted onto participants.

2. Facilitation, Relationships and Space

Commonalities across the interviewees included an importance on how one *is* in the space *with* participants. Literature that helped my understanding included therapeutic approaches to education and mentoring. Noddings (1984, 2011) for example, discusses the ethics of care she feels is essential in both teaching and peace education as ways to connect and impact students. Dietrich (2012) talks of therapeutic traditions from counselling and humanistic psychology including Carl Rogers and Marshall Rosenberg. Rogers, for example discusses the centrality of the therapist's congruence, an unconditional positive regard, and an empathic understanding (in Dietrich 2012). Similarly, literature from mentoring stresses the benefits of positive relationships in changing negative trajectories of youth. Dubois and Karcher (2013) for example edit a handbook on youth mentoring which indicates factors that assist successful mentor matches include non-judgemental, honest, and youth centred relationships. In this regard facilitation is more important than content (Claussen 2019) and includes the importance of taking boys seriously, exploring what it means to be a man, and appreciating their own journeys through masculinity (Walsh & Harland 2019).

Dietrich (2014) may go further to suggest that authentic and present peaceworkers (and thus facilitators) are able to 'resonate' with participants in harmonious ways and affect each other, and in turn affect the inhabited space. Key to this for Dietrich, is that peaceworkers need to have undergone self-reflective and introspective work on themselves, again attesting to the importance of walking ones talk. A further interesting addition to this could also be exciting work on Feminist New Materialist approaches that also look at how space in turn affects people. Drawing from the work of Barad (2003, 2007) new insights might be gained concerning how such 'resonant' spaces affects those entangled and how they in turn effect space.

Key to this resonance of the facilitator and space is a focus on working *with* youth and perceiving them as experts. Literature that assisted here includes problem-posing and conscientization work of Freire (1970; 1994), critical approaches to peace (Bajaj 2008, 2015; Brantmeier 2011; Reardon 2001; Reardon & Snauwaert 2011 2015a&b; Jenkins 2016) and elicitive approaches (Lederach 1995, 2005). Reardon (2001) and Jenkins and Reardon (2007) for example, particularly discuss the importance of exploring gender and how it relates to violence and peace as a topic for exploration with male participants. Similarly, Lederach's (1995) *elicitive* approach could prove insightful. This elicitive approach uses encounters as "...an opportunity aimed at discovery, creation, and solidification of models that emerge from the resources present in a particular setting and respond to needs in that context." (Lederach 1995 p.55). While this approach was aimed at peacebuilding initiatives, it could be employed in peace education contexts. Lederach (1995, 2005), and Dietrich (2012), contend that such elicitive approaches should move beyond the rational, intellectual, and behaviour, and incorporate what the participants find as useful. They add this includes embracing aspects of spontaneity, vulnerability, movement, affect, and creativity to move beyond the limited methods that may only entrench conflicts further. This too might provide different ways of engaging young men that they prefer beyond conversation (Sakade 2009).

Conclusion

What have I learnt about my frustrations being a male peace educator working with young men? First and foremost, I no longer feel alone, as other male peace educators also encountered similar challenges. Perhaps the frustrations I felt emerged from similar feelings that peace education carried both unrealistic and ineffective theories of change for young men. This might have been due to unacknowledged assumptions carried within peace education. These frustrations emanated from realizations that the structures around these boys were being ignored and they instead were being blamed for the ills of society. Here quick-fix behavioural interventions were promoted but lacked reflexivity onto the assumptions that lie unquestioned within peace education.

I may have felt discomfort with the methods I was enacting that suggested if they simply accepted their transgressions and assented to the skills, they would become better men. Perhaps on a deep level I felt disingenuous and inauthentic as

masculinity went ignored in these conversations. I perhaps felt too that this 'peace' I was delivering concerned maintaining status quo. I became frustrated and lost my own heart in the work, not believing in these messages.

As I look back, I see these frustrations culminated in a tipping point that I did not have the language to understand at the time. I understand that power is enacted through peace education, and that I was a tool for that power. While I felt I was promoting dialogic methods, I perhaps lacked a deep enough reflection on the role and assumptions behind the pedagogy that I was *doing to* the participants. This resulted in a missing awareness that I perhaps did not realise was affecting me. This missing awareness may have affected my genuineness that may have been picked up by the participants in those spaces, especially resonating the unanswered questions I had about masculinity and peace. Perhaps I had not truly done the work I was asking them to do and was not walking my talk, and this affected me in subtle ways.

Through this episode the importance of continuous questioning by facilitators, not only in peace workshops, but also explicitly about peace itself, emerged. Peace pedagogies need to critically examine not only the individual in the system, but the systems as well. Providing participant led spaces might provide sufficient ways to engage youth as we work *together* on topics from our personal realities. This will make peace education relevant for the youth as they become co-producers and co-researchers for peace, creating an affective space for each other. What peace education requires is honest, curious, and vulnerable facilitators who explore with participants' elicited topics. Masculinity is one such topic that has affected my own peace and should therefore be one I explore to walk my talk. As I explore with participants concepts relevant to me a sense of relationship and authenticity will be garnered that hopefully induces them into conversations about such topics. How we *are* in these spaces therefore matters. The space must be supportive yet challenging and facilitators need to bring their vulnerable authentic selves into the spaces. To be able to achieve this authenticity, it appears I too must walk my talk and explore my own masculinity and bring it into sessions with boys. For this reason, I decided to undertake the following three episodes looking at peace and my masculinity as described in the methodology chapter: Primary school; Secondary School; and learning Martial Arts, before returning to peace education once again towards how I can become the peace educator I hope to be.

Primary School

Vignette

I'm running around the garden emulating my heroes who protect those around them. I'm pretending to be a real man. Grappling in the air and rolling on the ground, I fight an evil-doer. I've seen these heroes on the TV shows I watch. They spark my imagination. I want to be like them when I grow up. Some are tough warriors who fight to protect, some are hunters who provide, some have physical prowess while others are cunning and smart. All are cool and get the girl in the end. They provide the images of what I want to be when I grow up.

On some days I want to be a sportsman scoring the winning try in the final. On other days I'm fashioning a bow and arrow from a branch, or trying to perfect my superman heat vision, focusing on the wall and running to see if I'm made an impact. But today, I'm a Jedi warrior foiling the Empire's plot. In these moments I feel at ease and feel good about myself. The imagination provides a respite from my real life where I do not know what I want to be when I grow up. These pressures are palpable and I must decide for my future soon. With so many things I want and with so many possible directions, which way am I to go? I hear so many different things from my family and friends that I am lost knowing who I should be. I hear so many confusing messages about being a man: that we are naughty, dangerous, and not as clever as sugar and spice girls. That we are supposed to be protectors, but violence is bad. My grandfather reminds me that "manners maketh man", but I hear "nice guys finish last" and that "boys will be boys". I don't want to get in trouble, I want to be a nice guy and help others, but I feel pressure to make money to live a comfortable life. I want to be popular and cool but worry that means I will have to do things and get into trouble to impress. All this makes me wonder if I'm not a real boy? Am I a coward? I wish I could ask someone, I wish there was someone to guide me. But here and now all this does not matter, content in my own world where I can be whoever I want.

Question:

Around 9 years of age I recall being confused about what being a man meant. I was hearing very particular messages but struggled to integrate them into who I could be. I felt anxious about my future. This leads to the question: What messages of masculinity do we receive and where do we receive them from?

Literature Review

This section therefore engages literature on masculinity. A body of multiple literatures spanning social and psychological studies exists around the study of masculinity (see for history Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell 2005; Gottzén, Mellström, & Shefer 2020). Personally, theories that attest to how youth are influenced by their surrounding environments are of interest. Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time theory (2005), for example, has been extremely instrumental on my own understanding to my development. This includes one's immediate environment, such as peers, but also the interconnected influence of media and TV. Media, TV, and magazines has itself a body of literature that discusses reinforcing particular images of masculinity (e.g., Lind 2009; Jackson II & Moshin 2013; Lotz 2014; Lewington, Sebar & Lee 2018; Yousman, Bindig Yousman, Dines, & Humez 2020). However, my interest for this review was specifically literature that interrogated prevailing expressions of masculinity that I was exposed to. The topic of masculinity is often encapsulated within the larger body of gender studies. To hone the literature, keywords of masculinity, manhood, maleness and 'being a man' were used. To contextualise the literature, the review firstly focused on theories of masculinity that emerged during my youth in the 1980 and 1990's. Secondly the review focuses on recent literature on masculinity to bring these debates up to date. This search resulted in a perceived increased complexity in understandings of masculinity from rather binary oppositions to femininity in the early 1980's towards more diverse and inclusive interpretations of masculinities towards the modern day. However, particular pervasive ideas of "traditional" "tough" and 'anti-feminine' masculinity still persist through backlash politics and fears of a loss of "real" masculinity. Masculinity therefore still appears to be a divisive topic with some commenting to a "toxicity" of masculine ideals while others decrying "traditional" masculinity as under attack.

Definitions

Definitions of masculinity often pertain to certain norms, qualities, or attributes ascribed to being a man. The Cambridge online dictionary defines masculinity as "the characteristics that are traditionally thought to be typical of or suitable for men" (accessed 02/09/20). Placing masculinity into a Google search "virility", "manliness", "vigour", "strength", "robustness" and "toughness" were all associated with the term (Google accessed 02/09/20). Masculinity is therefore associated with the male sexed

body and particular characteristics that are expected as norms. According to World Health Organization³⁴, these norms and beliefs of gender are “passed from generation to generation through the process of socialization”.

The following section will provide an overview of the historical development of notions of masculinity from the 1980 and 1990s when I was a youth, before turning towards recent literature concerning masculinity in the 21st Century.

1980’s Ideas of Masculinity

The 1980’s were a time of change and turmoil for many men (Jenkins 1995; Connell 1995; Heffernan 2000; Millward, Bryson & Forth 2000), especially in the North English context where I was born. Many traditional economic and masculine practices in the North East of the country were being eroded. In some of my earliest memories, I remember Arthur Scargill berating Margret Thatcher on TV about the closing of the mines. I remember the local mines being closed and slowly being retaken by the grasses and flowers. While I was not directly aware of the dramatic changes of this time, I do recall the protests and anger by groups of men for what had been taken away, along with the unemployment lines and the prevalence of alcoholism on show.

Within this time period authors discussed these economic changes and the strain and resistance it caused in men (Pleck 1981; Eisler & Skidmore 1987; Connell 1995; Kimmel 1997; Seidler 1997; Smiler 2004). Authors argued that changes were tied to important feminist calls for equality that linked traditional conceptions of masculinity as preventing change. Authors also began to show how these stereotypes not only hindered equality but negatively impacted men as well. Traditional masculinity therefore began to be challenged as unhealthy. Pleck (1981), for example, describes the traditional male role where “masculinity is validated ultimately by individual physical strength and aggression” (1981, p.140). He adds that paradoxically while men are expected to be less emotionally expressive, “anger and certain other impulsive emotional expressions, particular towards other males, are expected or tolerated” (p.140). Pleck contrasts these with what he feels are modern values for the male role “validated by economic achievement and organisational or bureaucratic

³⁴ <http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>

power” (p.140). Here, intelligence, interpersonal skills, and relationship building are promoted. Pleck adds that the contradictory nature of these varied values resulted in stress in men who felt pressure to embody all of these ideologies.

Gerzon (1982) discusses challenging the hard “assigned” machismo stereotypes of masculinity and replacing them with new “emerging masculinities”. Gerzon focuses on stereotypical ‘archetypes’ of the Frontiersman, the Soldier, the Expert, the Breadwinner, and the Lord, which he felt had caused much harm in the world. Instead, Gerzon appeals to men to seek non-violent archetypal images like the Healer, the Companion, the Mediator, the Colleague, and the Nurturer. However, while he positions these as valuable developments for masculinity, little is discussed to how, or whether, such images will be accepted by men when they face such pressure to conform to stereotypical images.

Discussing the pressures for men to act in prescribed ways, Franklin (1984) provides a stereotypic traits chart for valued characteristics for men and women. Within male traits, *aggressive, independent, unemotional, hides emotions, objective, easily influenced, dominant, adventurous, never cries, acts as a leader*, are included. While certain male traits like competitiveness, aggressiveness, intellectualism, logical thinking, are promoted as valuable for either gender³⁵, traditional feminine traits “like emotion, passivity, and warmth...are stressed only minimally as characteristics males should adopt” (p.23). Similarly, Brannon & Juni (1984) created a scale for measuring masculine norms in the US based upon four main themes that men perceived as important: The Big Wheel (the breadwinner); The Sturdy Oak (strength and toughness); No Sissy Stuff (anti-feminine); Give ‘em Hell (courage and aggressive). While the authors did not directly suggest these themes as negative, they suggested the rigidity to acquiesce to them as potentially harmful for young men. Further behaviours noted as required masculine behaviours included an anti-femininity (Thompson & Pleck 1986; Levant et al.1992) and a fear and hatred of homosexuals (Levant et al. 1992). This attested to the binary understanding of masculinity within this time period deeming anything not explicitly masculine as therefore feminine.

³⁵ Drawing on Laurel Walum Richardson (1981)

The 1990's

The 1990's, were marked by increased polarized positions that masculinity was entirely socially constructed versus the belief there was an essentialized mythopoetic nature to masculinity. For example, on the one hand masculinity began to be further critiqued for negative effects on both society and men. Within these areas more diverse interpretations of masculinity and *masculinities* began to emerge (e.g., Connell 1987, 1995). On the other hand, an emergence to more essentialised Jungian influenced archetypal 'masculinity lost' interpretations emerged (e.g., Bly 1990). Many of these, however, were perceived as a backlash and recuperation against feminist and pro-feminist critiques (e.g., Seidler 1997). Concurrently an increase of male-centric self-help popularist writings and a 'mythopoetic' movement emerged (Walker Mechling & Mechling 1994; Leek & Gerke 2020). Leek & Gerke (2020), for example, discuss the difficulty in caricaturing this movement due to a great diversity within each group with different aims and different political agendas. However, authors such as Farrell (1986), Bly (1990), Moore and Gillette (1991), Tatham (1992), and Keen (1992) argued that a crisis to masculinity currently pervaded society and that a return to more essential archetypal masculinity was needed. These mythopoetic writers argued such movements emerged *from* pro-feminist stipulations and sought to assist men grow away from unhealthy and even "toxic" (Bliss 1995, cited in Kimmel 1995) ideologies into mature masculinity (Farrell 1986). Authors like Seidler (1997), however, argued that the movement only reinforced binary ideas of gender and men as *not-women*. Seidler (1997) continues and acknowledges that while there is a problematic nature to these movements there is a need to explore the appeal these movements have for many men.

"There seems to be a resonance for many men from diverse backgrounds with the idea of being initiated into manhood, or rather a sense that this has not happened for them in the West" (p.8).

Social science authors generally argued against these essentialist and 'pop psychology' arguments with masculinity instead being positioned mostly "as domineering and defensive, as the installation in the male psyche of the presumptions of patriarchal power" (Richards 1990 p.160)³⁶. Brittan (1990), for

³⁶ Not all saw masculinity as solely negative, however. Franklin (1984), Miedzian (1990), Mills (1995), for example, argue that positive as well as negative attributes can exist within masculinity constructions.

example, seeks to argue against the idea that masculinity is timeless and universal, preferring, instead, the ideas of masculinities³⁷. However, he adds that this does not necessarily mean masculinity is so diverse it cannot be identified. He argues, “while it is apparent that styles of masculinity may alter in relatively short time spans, the substance of male power does not” (p.2). Britton believes dominant masculine images such as “the hero, the hunter, the competitor, the conqueror” (p.77) are socially constructed. Similarly, Miedzian (1992) describes the social shaping of masculinity or the ‘masculine mystique’. For Miedzian, these masculine constructed values include “toughness, dominance, repression of empathy, extreme competitiveness” (p.1). She believes these values are pivotal to the violence perpetuated by men and should be challenged.

Harris (1995)³⁸ used factor analysis to help organise 24 male messages collected from interviews. These distinct factors included: standard bearers; workers; lovers; bosses; and rugged individuals. Within each of these distinct themes particular values arose;

- a) Standard bearers: scholar; nature lover; be the best you can; good Samaritan
- b) Workers: technician; work ethic; money; law
- c) Lovers: breadwinner; nurturer; faithful husband; playboy
- d) Bosses: control; president; hurdles; adventurer; sportsman; be like your father; warrior
- e) Rugged individuals: self-reliant; stoic; rebel; tough guy; Superman

Harris therefore suggests diversity within modern standards of masculinity, however, he continues to suggest certain values (especially rugged individuals) as harmful. While harmful, these values still carry desirability for boys leading to conflicts as they negotiate a desired masculinity.

But it is Connell's (1995) seminal work that became the most cited and discussed works (Wedgwood 2009; Messerschmidt 2012; Jewkes et al. 2015; Gläser 2004). Connell had been developing the sociology of masculinity through the 1980's (e.g., Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985), but it was perhaps *Masculinities* (Connell 1995) that encapsulated an understanding of masculinity that was to become central to

Others too advise that these debates should not suggest that such masculinity are the only ways men behave (e.g., Collier 1998; Smiler 2004; Flood et al. 2007).

³⁷ Drawing from Connell (1987)

³⁸ Drawing on Franklin (1984)

masculinity studies. In this book Connell discusses the historical and relational aspects of masculinity. She conceptualises masculinity as a continuum of masculinities and places a more domineering 'Hegemonic Masculinity' at its pinnacle, maintaining the patriarchal order.³⁹ Hegemonic masculinity affords power and privileges of the patriarchal order through what she calls the "patriarchal dividend" (1995, p.79) and encourages men to strive and compete towards it. Hegemonic masculinity both endorses and uses aggression and dominance over other masculinities as means to its achievement and maintenance.

"Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." (1995, p.77)

Very few achieve the benefits afforded to hegemonic forms of masculinity, however. Connell later (2005) notes that maintaining one's place at the pinnacle of this continuum causes untold stress on those seeking to preserve their position in the hierarchy through the constant need to enact violence proficiency as a symbol of authority.

The 1990's therefore began to perceive masculinity as diverse and multifaceted. However, masculinity was still associated with high potential for aggression and violence. While masculinity began to be perceived in more diverse ways, these were often still positioned in opposition to an essentialised or negative hegemonic form of masculinity.

Masculinities in the 21st Century

Whilst insights concerning masculinities illuminated important recognition to the inscribed violence inherent in restrictive constructions of being a man, some suggested they "provided little pragmatic guidance for actual men" (Adams & Savran 2002, p.4). Acknowledging past movements in masculinity interpretations, Smiler (2004) suggests current trends as being "a blend of these different movements"

³⁹ Connell's 1995 continuum includes three other masculinities: complicit, subordinated, & marginalized masculinities, all positioned in relation to Hegemonic masculinity.

(p.15). Smiler adds three current masculinity research requirements: (1) examining the influence of contextual factors and the assumptions of invariance of an individual's masculine behaviours across settings; (2) a focus on lifespan developmental trajectories on interpretations of masculinity; and (3) a focus on within-group variations of masculinities (p.25), all attesting to increased nuance to interpretations of masculinity/ies. The following discussion shall describe five particular trends that emerged in relation to masculinity: (a) Continued development of Hegemonic Masculinity; (b) Increased complexity and flexibility within masculinities; (c) Post-human the Material-discursive perspectives; (d) The “toxicity” of masculinity; and finally, a potential (e) polarization between calls for gender annulment and backlash to perceived neo-liberal extreme-left academia.

(a) Hegemonic Masculinity.

Within the 21st Century Connell's gender theory remains prevalent within masculinity studies (Wedgwood 2009; Griffin 2018). However, it has not been without critique (Wetherell & Edley 1999; Demetriou 2001; Hearn 2004; Haywood 2008; Beasley 2008; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele 2015). Hearn (2004) for example, critiques the helpfulness of what he feels is the unclear term of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, he proposes whether using “hegemony of men” would be more useful to analyse the complex practices men are engaged in. Haywood (2008) argues that such academic categorizations and typologies “stabilizes” existing theoretical and conceptual frameworks and “obscures other possibilities of knowledge and understanding” (p.2). Authors have also continued to question the inflexibility and binary construction of hegemonic masculinity. These authors argue hegemonic masculinity does not fully take into account the multiplicity and *morph-ability* within masculinity (e.g., Light 2007 and Arxer 2011), their intersectionalities (e.g., Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen 2014), and the relations between different masculinities in global/national/local nexuses (e.g., Beasley 2008; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele 2015).

However, hegemonic masculinity endures and is still often cited as a useful analytical framework (Swain 2005; Light 2007; Jewkes et al. 2015; Haywood et al. 2017; Munsch & Gruys 2018; Quayle et al. 2018; Messerschmidt 2018; Griffin 2018; Elliott 2019; Pease 2019). Connell herself has continued to respond, acknowledge, and evolve the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Connell 2014; Connell 2016) arguing that “hegemony is constantly under construction, renovation, and contestation” (2016, p.314), while Messerschmidt (2012) argues that the term has often been unfairly misused and misappropriated.

While Messerschmidt acknowledges issues such as “slippage” (Beasley 2008; Elias & Beasley 2009) of the concept, he feels through the use of hegemonic masculinity, “scholars are demonstrating impressively...how specific hierarchical gender relationships between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among men are legitimated...capturing certain of the essential features of the omnipresent reproduction of patriarchal relations” (p71).

(b) Increased Complexity and Flexibility.

In conjunction with the continuing evolution of hegemonic masculinities an increased complexity to the practices of being men has emerged (Haywood & Mac an Ghail 2012; Hearn et al. 2012). Swain (2001, 2005), for example, develops the term “personalized masculinities” as those managing to negotiate between previous typologies of hegemonic or subordinated masculinity. Anderson (2005, 2009) positioned the development of more ‘inclusive masculinities’ that shows many young heterosexual men now reject previous hegemonic standards and, “reject homophobia; include gay peers in friendship networks; are more emotionally intimate with friends; are physically tactile with other men; recognize bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation; embrace activities and artefacts once coded feminine; and eschew violence and bullying” (Anderson & McCormack 2018 p.549). While Anderson and McCormack (2018) acknowledge the inclusive masculinity theory (IMT) requires refining in conjunction with intersectionality and over generalizing discourses, they argue that the framework provides insight to the ever-evolving nature of masculinities in society.

Others too have similarly begun to show the nuance and complexity that exists within performances of being men in today’s society (Demetriou 2001; Messner 2007; Noble 2009; Arxer 2011; Vandello & Bosson 2013; Bridges & Pascoe 2014; Ward 2015; Ellis 2016; Elliott 2019). Arxer (2011) and Bridges and Pascoe (2014) for example draw from Demetriou (2001) and Messner (2007) to describe a ‘hybridity’ to masculinity that incorporates less rigid and more selective boundaries between assumed masculine and non-masculine traits. Similarly, Ward (2015) describes a “chameleonisation of masculinity” where young working-class men exhibited agency not restricted to one particular masculinity but performances of multiple identities depending on time and situation. Pascoe and Bridge (2016) suggest that there is a tendency to reproduce particular ideas of masculinity through the prioritizing of particular theorist (usually white male). There is therefore a need for post-colonial and decolonising perspectives to masculinities (Stanovsky 2007; Newell 2009;

Connell 2014; Saha 2017; Farahani, Thapar-Björkert 2020). Others (Haywood & Mac an Ghail 2013; Haywood et al. 2017) are also beginning to argue for a 'post-masculinity' where one can "explore the possibility of understanding gender in a way that is not reducible to masculinity or femininity" (Haywood & Mac an Ghail 2013 p.116).

(c) Post-human the Material-discursive perspectives.

Alongside the increased diversity to interpretations to masculinity a further trend that includes a move towards post-humanism, new-materialist, and what Hearn (2014) terms the material(-)discursive approaches to masculinities has emerged (Hearn 2014; Mellström 2016; Garlick 2017; Reeser & Gottzén 2018; Filipović 2018; Lyttleton-Smith 2019; Ray 2019; Mellström 2020; Reeser 2020). This materialist turn often draws for the work of scholars such as Barad (2003, 2007) and integrates an over-reliance on anthropocentric understandings of social construction. For Garlick (2017), these new materialist theories "may offer a productive way of engaging with issues that have often been obscured by assumptions about what is social and what is not" (p.20). Ray (2019) adds that new materialism therefore offers researchers of masculinity the possibility "to discuss the impacts matter can have on lived experience" (p.96). Within these lines of inquiry masculinity is not only shaped and maintained by social and cultural practices but entangled with the materials that surround these cultural practices. These materials in turn become (re)produced as a result of cultural practices and *affect* the maintenance of particular cultural gendered discourses. Perhaps of particular note is a growing focus between the interfaces of technology and human interaction. Research into the 'manosphere'⁴⁰, as well as Incels⁴¹ and extremist forums have begun to bring concepts such as hegemonic masculinity (e.g., Connell 1995) and materiality together towards discussing how new forms of "toxic" masculinities as formed and perpetuated in online spaces (Nagle 2017; Massanari 2017; Ging 2017; Kimmel 2018; Van Valkenburgh 2018; Farrell et al. 2019; Pearson 2019; Vandiver 2020; Scaptura & Boyle 2020; Menzie 2020; Ralph-Morrow 2020).

⁴⁰ Includes "websites and internet discussion groups that are concerned with men's interests and rights as opposed to women's, often connected with opposition to feminism or dislike of women" (Cambridge Online Dictionary accessed 16/09/20).

⁴¹ Involuntary Celibate: "A member of an online community of young men who consider themselves unable to attract women sexually, typically associated with views that are hostile towards women and men who are sexually active" (Lexico Oxford Online Dictionary Accessed 16/09/20).

(d) Toxicity of Masculinity.

A continuing trend of “toxicity” to certain forms of masculinity and a suggestion to a crisis of masculinity abound. Originally developed in the mythopoetic movement to describe unhealthy versions of immature masculinity (Bliss in Kimmel 1995), the term later became synonymous with forms of hegemonic and patriarchal masculinity as a “reification of power or toxicity” (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p.839). The focus on toxic masculinity often aims to show the consequences of pervasive violent forms of masculinity on society as well as the psychological costs it conveys to men themselves (e.g., Katz 2006; Kimmel & Wade 2018). A quick online search reveals a plethora of popular books devoted to the personal stories of how toxic masculinity impacts lives.⁴² Similarly, an increased psychological interest for more positive masculinities and Gender Transformative Approaches has emerged calling for a strengths-based approach to masculinities to counter the prevalence of “toxic” masculinities (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson 2010; Englar-Carlson & Kiselica 2013; Seymour, Smith & Torres 2014; Kiselica, Benton-Wright, & Englar-Carlson 2016; Cole, Moffitt-Carney, Patterson, & Willard 2021; MenEngage Alliance 2021). Englar-Carlson and Kiselica (2013), for example describe their Positive Psychology/Positive Masculinity (PPPM) model that “integrates the concept of positive masculinity with a theoretical approach to counselling that elevates the role of client strengths and available resources as the focal point of intervention” (p.402). This adoption towards positive masculinity can further be seen in the recent American Psychological Association (APA) *Guidelines for Psychological Practice for Boys and Men* (2018) that providing ten guidelines of therapist to support boys and young men traverse the influences of toxic forms of masculinity.

However, the crisis of masculinity is hotly debated and means different things to different people (e.g., Jordan 2019). For example, while some regard the crisis resulting from the pervasive unhealthy and narrow forms of masculinity, others suggest the crisis is due to feminist attacks on masculinity in society. Such perspectives can be seen in a burgeoning popularist literature on masculinity covering perspectives from reinstating binary biological interpretations to gender,

⁴² A small sample includes: Perry 2016; Urwin 2016; Webb 2017; Hemmings 2017; Howes 2017; Haller 2018; Smiler 2019; Bola 2019; Boayke & Chetty 2019; Rudd 2019; Yates Sexton 2019; Whitehead 2019; Ford 2019; Robinson 2021; Baldoni 2021.

reclaiming traditional masculinity values, and beliefs in an extreme political (left) hegemony emerging in cultural studies.⁴³

Similarly, during these often-polarized debates, continued popularity in mythopoetic psychological healing approaches flourishes. These approaches continue to draw from Jungian archetypes and Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey* (1990) towards healing imbalanced masculinity and reclaiming more sacred and perennial expressions of manhood.⁴⁴ Enter 'sacred masculinity' into an Internet search, for example, and a plethora of available courses at a cost emerge. These often promise a reconnection to 'true' forms of masculinity lost in modern chaotic times through experiences in nature and group processes.

It appears masculinity is still divisive and creates visceral reaction in many. These polarized debates could perhaps best be depicted in a 2019 Gillette Advert. The advert called "We believe" had the tagline, "Is this the best a man can get?", and was inspired by the #MeToo movement. The advert caused much debate online from political agendas, appropriation of social debates for marketization, value signalling, attacks on men, and feminist conspiracy theories. While the advert created a reinvigoration of attention and discussion about masculinity, it might further attest to its continued deeply intertwined political nature and how masculinity remains a continued contested topic.

(e) Post-Gender?

Finally, connected to the above, further polarized debates have emerged regarding the usefulness (or even violence) of gender and gender pro-nouns with a promotion of gender-neutrality. While such debates have been in existence from the 1970's (Saguy & Williams 2019; Saguy, Williams & Rees 2020), the recent incident of University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson who refused to use gender-neutral pronouns in his class and recanted the Canadian Bill C-16 claiming it was against free speech caused polarized local and international debates (e.g., Toronto Star Nov 2016). With concurrent gender sensitive bills in the UN (SDG 5 gender equality) and EU parliament (2018), along with notable protest on university campuses (Channel 4

⁴³ A sample of this literature includes: Glover 2002; Mansfield 2007; Baumeister 2010; Donovan 2012; Lloyd 2014; Cernovich 2016; Savage 2016; Sledge 2017; Tomassi 2017; Valizadeh 2018; Felman 2018; Pluckrose & Lindsey 2020; Casey 2020.

⁴⁴ A sample of this literature includes: Clare 2001; Dalbey 2003; Deida 2004; Brooks 2009; Fox 2009; Eldredge 2012; Tracey 2013; Shinoda Bowen 2014; Sankofa El 2014; Kiestler 2014; Masters 2015; Gregory 2015; Vierra 2016; Paul 2017; Gerek 2019; Kier 2020; Adams & Frauenheim 2020.

News Dec 10th 2013; Time Nov 17th 2015; The Toronto Star Oct 5th 2016; New York Time Mar 31st 2017), there has become an amplified media attention to gender-neutrality (Time Magazine, May 12, 2016; BBC Sept 22, 2019; Washington Post, Dec 15th 2019; Forbes, Dec 22, 2019). For example, media trends have focused on gender-neutrality in language use (e.g., Forbes Jul 8, 2020), in toys (e.g., New York Times Feb 5, 2018) and in clothing (e.g., WWD Jan 8, 2020; The Guardian Oct 10, 2020). As previously noted, some (Haywood & Mac an Ghail 2013; Haywood et al. 2017) have argued for a 'post-masculinity' approach to gender. Gelfer (2016) places 'beyond masculinities' as a further evolution within men's understanding of masculinity⁴⁵. Others such as Valentine, Trautner, and Spade (2019) and Osgood & Robinson (2019) edit books that attest to the social and material construction of gender. While showing how gender stereotype construction pervade throughout every aspect of society, Osgood and Robinson (2019), for example show how early school interventions can shift perspectives towards more gender inclusive, neutral and "gender-full"⁴⁶ perspectives.

Conclusion

The development of masculinity/ies over the last 40 years shows a movement from binary oppositions of sexed masculine and feminine bodies towards more complex and diverse interpretations, and to even questioning of the existence of gender itself. Growing up in the 1980's and 1990's masculinity was going through a period of change, and I was undoubtedly being affected by those changes. On the one hand masculinity was positioned as negative and violent, while simultaneously it was still something that I needed to accomplish. Masculinity became increasingly politicized and divisive. This perhaps led to the conflict and anxiety I felt growing up.

Over the years this divisiveness may have only intensified as theories of masculinity attest to increased complexity. While these developments might allow for more flexibility to individually crafted visions of masculinity, like I was trying to integrate as a young boy, correspondingly, masculinity still remains a highly charged political topic with backlash movements and reinvigoration of hypermasculinity on the world

⁴⁵ Gelfer (2016) positions a five-stage continuum of the evolution within men's understanding of masculinity, including: 1, Unconscious Masculinity; 2, Conscious Masculinity; 3, Critical Masculinities; 4, Multiple Masculinities; and 5, Beyond Masculinities.

⁴⁶ Mentioned at a conference Nov 25th 2020.

stage (e.g., Kimmel & Wade 2018). These developments might only lead to more confusion to what boys can and cannot incorporate (Harland & McCready 2015). How to integrate seeming dichotomies, such as being empathic yet stoic, was always my focus as a young boy, but remained in tension. I feared I had to make a choice, remove the qualities I liked and accept those I did not or else be 'not-man-enough'. What I was looking for was a role model who epitomised these 'holistic' attributes so I could experiment and find my own masculinity. Without this, I was left confused and anxious that I would become alienated as 'not a man'. I am left wondering, how do images of masculinity influence boys today? Do they still feel certain pressures to be certain ways or does more flexibility to being a man exist? What can I learn from young boys about my own masculinity growing up?

Research Question:

How do a sample of 9-11 year old boys understand masculinity? What do they want to be like when they are older and why? What role models do they look up to for inspiration for being a man?

Sample:

5 Boys aged 9 within school contexts were contacted through my networks who work directly in schools across the country. This age is important as it is the same age I remember thinking about such notions of becoming a man. Two schools were selected, one in the North East of the UK where I grew up and one in the midlands to create some diversity.

Interviews

Paul Pat Frederick Simon Nicolas

Paul

Paul discussed how he wants to be like his heroes, a footballer or Youtube star. He likes their lives of fun and being “nice”, with the fast cars, mansions and girls. Paul continued that he wants to impress others and do well by his family and friends as they are important to him. How others perceived Paul is important to him and included being cool, especially through possessions, and being a good person and a “gentleman”, especially as this gains attention from girls. Paul described that he wants to do what he is good at and enjoys competition and winning and wants to be “the best”. Football for Paul was one such activity he is good at and enjoyed playing. Paul also described how he wants to join the army as this would bring him “strength” and they did “loads of stuff”. Fun and play is important to Paul and being an adult was not fun. Paul also mentioned he was a “weirdo” and wanted to know if he was getting the answers to my questions wrong. From Paul’s interview themes of **emulating characteristics** towards **gaining what was important in life** emerged.

Reflective Account of Paul’s Interview

Paul wanted to **emulate characteristics** of people he looked up to towards **gaining what he wanted**. For example, Paul mentioned attributes of his heroes Cristiano Ronaldo and a DJ Youtuber as being important to him. These included being friendly and for Paul this was important,

“Because when you be friendly you get more friends.”

Paul added that these role models were also nice and often gave “stuff to the homeless” suggesting an added importance of giving to others. Paul continued to discuss a further attribute of being a gentleman as important, adding this came from one of his preferred teachers.

“So, everybody could be like oh, you know Paul? Oh yes, I know Paul and then everybody will be like oh yes, he’s a gentleman.”

Paul also discussed how “being cool, it isn’t important, but I would like to be cool”, but that he felt he was “just a weirdo. I don’t know why I’m a weirdo”.

These attributes seemed to serve a purpose for Paul as a means to **attaining what he felt was important in life**. Paul added how his heroes were very good at what they did and how this afforded them material wealth as well as an added popularity.

“He’s really good. He lives in a mansion and I really want to be like him.”

Paul continued that like his heroes, he wished for “a good job” because “there’s a lot of things in life that I really want”. He continued that, “then I can have a mansion as well” and “a fast car”. Finally, through these attributes and accumulations, Paul felt that he would become popular like his role models and also get girls,

“girls smell good. Boys are just...no.”

While Paul knew what he wanted to attain, he was not sure what he wanted to be,

“there’s a lot of things I want to be, like a lot, because I’ve been trying boxing, kick boxing and rugby and football, so there’s a lot of things I want to be. It’s kind of hard.”

Reflecting upon Paul’s interview I recall how I too wished to be perceived as cool and popular. While money, cars, and mansions were not something I aspired towards, I similarly wanted to control how others perceived me. I wished to be seen as cool as I wanted to be popular with peers and girls. While I recall believing these were not the most important aspects in life, I remember how these messages of wealth and popularity were reinforced by peers around me. Without these aspects I believed life would be difficult and lonely and so I focussed a lot of my attention on trying to impress others through external attributes: namely being funny (different), nice, sporty, cool, and kind. At the same time, I recall feeling a certain amount of pressure to succeed and recall calling myself a bit of a weirdo as a means to both separate myself from the rest, while at the same time regaining control if I did not succeed. I felt sport was the best area to focus on to achieve the desires I had, and I was lucky to be successful at it. However, I too was unsure what I could do when I grew up and had anxiety about my direction.

Pat

Pat's family is important to him, especially his father who he cycles with. Pat enjoys cycling as it keeps him healthy and he races competitively. For Pat being healthy and strong was important, but he added that unlike others as he wanted strong legs for cycling and a toned body rather than a large upper body. He continued that he sees motivation as an important skill as people who are motivated become the best and stand out from the rest. Pat discussed how he likes motivated people as they have a tough never give up attitude that makes them special. Pat wants to be the best as he does not want to end up in a "bad situation". Pat also discussed how he wanted to be sporty but also intelligent. Pat's role models included people who were the best in their national teams and won trophies. However, Pat added he prefers not being the captain as they get blamed if they made a mistake and instead prefers to be second in command. From Pat's interview themes of being the **leader** and **motivated** while not being the **centre of attention** emerged, as well as **not ending up in a bad situation**.

Reflective Account of Pat's Interview

Pat discussed how his role models were the **leaders** of the team or the winner of competitions. He gave examples of Steven Gerrard, who captained England football, and Chris Froome, the Tour de France winning cyclist.

"I like that [Steven Gerrard] was the captain and he led the team and I think I would like to do that and win the matches...and maybe win a trophy. I think you would have to be quite proud of that." "I like it that [Chris Froome] can do such long distances and I can also do long distances as well. I guess I like with Chris Froome that you have to be resilient."

Pat expressed being proud of oneself and being resilient against adversity as important and linked these traits to another important life skill of being **motivated**.

"I think motivation's important because if you didn't really have motivation in you, then you wouldn't be able to do many things. Persuade yourself to do a challenge in life, basically."

Motivation in life was important for Pat because he did not want to end up in a **bad situation**.

“I think it’s quite important to think about your future. So think about what you’re doing, because you don’t really want to end up in a bad situation.”

While Pat was motivated and wanted to be the best, he also mentioned that he did not like being the **centre of attention** but prefers to help the captain do their job.

“I think I wouldn’t like to be the captain, but I would like to be close to the captain...I feel like if you’re the captain and you maybe make quite a bad mistake, I feel like you might get a bit of the blame...[so] to help the captain out in a way. But not like so much that I sort of become the captain.”

Helping others was an important attribute for Pat “because I feel like if I help them and maybe there’s something I’m not sure about one day and they know about it, then they’ll feel like they could help me out”.

Reflecting upon Pat’s interview, it reminds me of a saying we had at school, “first the worst, second the best...”. I recall how being the best was something we strived for as you did not want to be a “loser”, yet being the best also carried stigma as being “cocky” or “a stiff” (teacher’s pet). This tension created pressure and anxiety for me. Instead, I felt it was better to be the second in command, to support the one who was took all the pressure. This allowed me to remain motivated while at the same time removed the pressure from fear of being blamed if things went wrong. I too did not want to end up in a bad situation and I felt a fine line existed between being successful, while at the same time, not putting myself in spotlight where I could become targeted or labelled by others. As I look back, I recall how my motivation focused on balancing these needs of achievement but in ways I would still ‘fit in’.

Frederick

Frederick discussed his father and sister were role models for him. His father no longer lives with Frederick and he explained that he enjoys spending time together and wants to be more like him so that he would be proud of him. Frederick likes that his father is calm, funny, and fun to be with. In particular Frederick enjoys gardening and constructing things with his father. Frederick mentioned how his father burnt

himself while working and this was a manly thing. Frederick also mentioned how he likes his father's delivery job as you get to travel, meet new people, and have adventures. Frederick also wishes he could be more like his sister who is caring and looks after him. He particularly likes that she is creative and imaginative. Frederick added, however, that he feels he is not funny or caring like his father and sister. Frederick also discussed wanting to grow up so he can drive and use tools, however, at the same time he is nervous about growing older, as it changes the family. Themes that emerged from Fredrick's interview included being like **his father**, **becoming an adult**, yet **fears over growing up**.

Reflective Account of Fredrick's Interview

Fredrick related many of the attributes he admires to those he feels **his father** has, including being "fun", "calm", "helpful", and "busy" doing things for others. In particular Fredrick added how he enjoys spending time with his father and enjoys helping him, especially building and construction work.

"I do loads with my dad... I helped him build a pond."

Fredrick continued that he would like to be like his father when he is older and described that he is looking forward to **becoming an adult** so that he can do things he is not currently allowed to, like "use the heat gun", or drive.

"Because you can go out and do stuff and you can go to [a location] and invite your friends."

While Fredrick wanted to grow up for the freedoms it provided, it appeared to create an amount of anxiety for him in relation to changing roles in the family dynamics or being unable to be like his father or sister. For example, Fredrick described how he was unsure how he felt about becoming bigger than his older sister or mother.

"Because at the minute my sister is older than me and I'm taller than her, and I'm coming up to my mum's shoulder... [TA: "why does that worry you?"] Because they are my parents and [XXXX] is my sister."

Reflecting upon Fredrick's interview, I remember how my father was initially important to my ideas of being a man. I remember how I wanted to spend time with him on fishing trips. However, once he left, this role became void. As I reflect, I recall how I replaced my father with my grandfather whom I looked up to and wanted to emulate. I also can recall similarly wanting to grow up and become an adult while at the same time fearing the responsibilities expected of me as a man that I was not ready for. While I desired the freedom of being an adult, and liked the idea of not being treated like a child, I also knew I would no longer be able to have the fun I was currently having. This created anxiety as I wished to cling to the fun responsibility-free life of being a child before I was told I needed to act like an adult. While I wanted to be an adult, this unfamiliar territory posed uncertainties where everything changed and I would not be ready, not knowing what to be or whether I would succeed or fail.

Simon

Simon wants to be a chef when he is older so he can provide meals for his family and friends. Kindness and helpfulness are important for Simon as he recalled how people had been kind and helpful to him, and he liked it. Simon mentioned that he looks up to his cousin as he plays with him and helps him with his life. Simon also discussed superheroes and their ability to take action and help and protect others in need. He particularly likes that superheroes are powerful and helpful, but also that they can switch identities between being normal and then special. This ability to change one's appearance was something Simon liked to do. He mentioned Spiderman as a hero he likes as he also likes climbing trees. Simon also discussed video games that he plays with his friends and sister. These games include shooting games with his friends and racing games with his sister. He does not like being active and said that his mum says boys play video games. From Simon's interview themes of being a **provider** and **protector** for those close to him, and abilities to **control his appearance to others** emerged.

Reflective Account of Simon's Interview

Simon discussed how he wanted to be a chef when he grew up "serving desserts and meals". When I asked why this was, he explained that he wished to **provide** food "to family, friends, other people that come to the restaurant". Simon added that

while he would charge people who came to his restaurant, he would provide food for free to those he cares about.

“Because if my friends or family can’t afford food I can make it for them. I have lots of materials and stuff to make food in my restaurant, so when they need food, they come to my restaurant, I serve them.”

Simon also discussed an importance of a ‘good man’ “being smart and being able to do things while they’re happening”. When I asked him to explain, he discussed an importance of being able to **protect** himself or his family.

“if ...there was a random person in his house trying to attack and he was just lying in his bed, if he didn’t do anything he would get attacked. But if he did something, the other person would get attacked.”

Simon added it was important for a man “to attack when things are happening”, stressing that this was a defensive rather than aggressive act.

Finally, Simon shared how he likes to **change his appearance** and fool his friends.

“I feel like I look different and my friends see it, they will be, look who’s that and then I’ll tell them it’s me, your friend. And then I cut hair or something. And they wouldn’t know that it was me.”

This perhaps incorporates an element of control where Simon could either momentarily change who he was, or how he was perceived.

“The last time I cut my hair, my friends didn’t know it was me until I told them that I cut my hair. And I told them do you know any differences about me and they noticed the hair.”

Reflecting upon Simon’s interview I recall how being a provider and protector for those I cared about was important to me. While I was not personally interested in being a chef, being a provider meant providing stability and happiness for those close to me and was connected to protection by encompassing not only physical protection against harm from others, but protection to control against the harms of society, such as poverty or ill health. Similarly to Simon, I saw a clear differentiation

between acting defensively versus offensively, with the former being construed for me as associated more with a good person. Finally, I also feel there was a desire for control over how I was perceived by others and I wished to sometimes be able to change to someone different. I recall cutting my own hair and changing my clothes with the hope that I would be seen as a different person and that perhaps it would afford me different responses from others.

Nicolas

Nicolas wants to be an artist as he is good at it. Art allows him to see cool things and keeps him calm and peaceful. Through art he also feels he can encourage and help others. Nicolas described looking up to his uncle, as he is kind, encouraging, and helps him. He also liked that he had a motorbike and big muscles, even though he did not think muscles were important. His uncle used to live with him, but now he did not, and Nicolas misses him. Nicolas mentioned being cool as important and added he had earrings that were cool. Nicolas also likes travelling and visiting castles with his dad and seeing the armour and swords. Nicolas likes soldiers as they are strong and can protect themselves. He often played soldier and survival video games with his friends. Deadpool was Nicolas' hero as he had cool moves, swords, and was funny. Nicolas also discussed enjoying being in nature and hunting, which he used to do in Latvia but does not do in the UK. Being a boy was easy for Nicolas because his mum and his sister did everything. Themes of **protection** and **provider**, emerged in Nicolas' interview, as well as being a **helper/ supporter** of others.

Reflective Account of Nicolas' Interview

Nicolas likes fighting, soldiers and weapons, discussing how he likes going to visit places where "there would be lots of swords and things, like guns and all that". When we discussed it further, he added that he likes soldiers as "they can shoot tanks", and that this would be "very cool". Nicolas continued to discuss that "I like fights, battles" and described one of his favourite activities as playing the video game Fortnite where the purpose is fighting and survival. Later Nicolas discussed how he hopes to be able "to protect myself", and how he drew from heroes like Deadpool who was "pretty cool, he has swords on his back...[and] has cool moves".

Nicolas also discussed aspects that seemingly linked to the idea of **provider** as he discussed enjoying hunting in the woods. When asked why he enjoys the woods Nicolas added it was, “where you can go hunting animals”. He continued to add that he enjoys hunting as they can then “eat them”, but also that he often did this with his dad. This theme, however, also seemed to connect to the previous notion around weapons “because you can use any gun you want”.

Finally, there was also a theme about being able to **support** and help others where Nicolas discussed being an “encouraging person” and being “kind” as key attributes of a good man, even though he said he did not know what a man should be like. This encouraging person for Nicolas was through his art as he felt that “you can encourage someone to help them draw something like that”.

Reflecting on Nicolas’ interview, aspects of protection and provide again emerged. I recalled fishing with my father and how this was quality time feeling like a man, bringing home a fish to eat, provided a feeling of self-esteem as a successful provider. I also recall being drawn to being a warrior with weapons as a young person, particularly swords that carried a need for skill to be able to use. I remember wishing that I also had “cool moves” as I wanted to be skilled and proficient to be able to protect others and myself. Cool moves also would make me cool, and this was something that I felt I had to be to succeed in life. Finally, I recalled how being a supportive or helpful person was personally important as it differentiated between a protector and provider who was a good person from what I assumed was a bad person fighting and taking what they wanted. These subtleties were perhaps ways I as a young person negotiated between values of being a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ person with my mixed interests.

Overall Reflection

While this episode produced short interviews with simple ‘yes’/‘no’ answers, certain themes weaved throughout. Through the episode a variety of desired attributes emerged with suggestions of uncertainty towards manhood. Each participant described someone they looked up to, often a cousin or uncle if not their father, who emulated attributes they admired, and a lament if that person was now absent. For this overall reflection themes of **Attributes**, **Vulnerability**, **Motivation**, and **Stress** shall be discussed.

Interviewee	Themes	Underpinning Themes?
Paul	Emulating characteristics Gaining what was important in life	Attributes Vulnerability Motivation Stress
Pat	Leader Motivated Not centre of attention Not ending up in a bad situation.	
Frederick	His father Becoming an adult Fears over growing up	
Simon	Provider Protector Control his appearance to others	
Nicolas	Protection Provider Helper/ supporter	

Table 5: Primary School Summary

Attributes

Table 6 below shows the attributes that were discussed and shared by the interviewees.

Name/ Attribute	Paul	Pat	Fredrick	Simon	Nicolas
Nice	✓			✓	
Friendly	✓				
Kind				✓	✓
The best	✓	✓			
Cool	✓				✓
Strong	✓	✓		✓	✓
Different	✓	✓		✓	
Helpful	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Competitive	✓	✓			
Provide	✓ For self		✓ For family	✓	✓
Protect				✓	✓
Healthy		✓			
Motivated	Possibly	✓		Possibly	Possibly
Tough		✓			
Resilient		✓			
Sporty	✓	✓			
Intelligent		✓		✓	
Calm			✓		✓
Funny	✓		✓		✓
Fun	✓		✓		
Liked	✓		✓		

Table 6: Discussed Attributes

Within these attributes, themes of helpful, kind, nice, funny, and cool arose along with physical traits of strong, resilient, tough. While there was diversity to the attributes mentioned, I cannot help but recall how I desired similar attributes but struggled to balance a felt incongruence between them. The attributes of **provide** and **protect** emerged and particularly resonated with me. While not all participants mentioned these themes explicitly ([Simon](#) & [Nicolas](#) did), many of the attributes

could refer to care and helping others through both providing or protecting what they felt was important. These included providing and protecting towards a stability for *themselves* through possessions (e.g., **Paul**) or relationships (e.g., family, friends, being popular, e.g., **Pat**), or providing and protecting for *others* close to them (e.g., **Simon**).

I wonder whether these desires to provide and protect themselves and those close to them were driven by vulnerabilities and anxieties they might be feeling. As I reflected upon these interviews I came to realise how providing for and protecting both myself and those close to me was important for me. I began to realise that these attributes were due to a sense of **vulnerability** I felt about whether I would be able to 'measure up' to the standards and responsibilities of becoming an adult man and be accepted by my peers. These attributes connect to two other themes that arose through this episode: motivation and stress. For example, I came to realise that my motivation as a young boy concerned gaining these attributes to be able to protect and provide for myself and others, as this is what I believed I had to achieve proficiency in to be a successful male. At the same time I realised that this belief was caused by, and created more, anxiety as I combatted feeling of inadequacy, vulnerability, and fear that I could not find a balanced self within the contradictions, such as smart yet cool, tough yet nice.

Motivation

While not all of the interviewees mentioned the word motivation (only **Pat**), all discussed motivation towards something they felt would provide the things they desired (e.g., becoming a **footballer** or **chef**) and protect them being in "**a bad situation**". As I reflect upon motivation, ideas of competence/ mastery, self-esteem/ confidence, and control personally emerged. Many of the interviewees discussed doing things they felt they were good at (**Paul, Pat, Simon, Nicolas**), and discussed how they were competitive at those things (**Paul & Pat**). This motivation to do things they were competent at seemed to provide each self-esteem and provided some control on how others perceived them. How others perceived them was reflected upon by all of the participants as important and may show both an anxiety for being judged and a wish to have at least some control in their persona. I recall how these three areas of self-esteem through mastery of certain attributes and skills provided me with a sense of control over who I was and how others saw me. This motivated me to keep practicing the things I believed would provide the image of me I desired

and would in turn protect me from becoming alienated or ridiculed; one of my largest fears. The image of being a competent and confident provider and protector itself bore the attributes I desired as I believed they would be acknowledged by others and bring acceptance from my peers.

Stress

However, the above motivations may generate certain stresses and anxieties. For example, the interviewees were self-critical (Frederick comparing himself to his sister), showed self-doubt to their answers (Paul), nor wanted to be blamed for making a mistake or end up in a bad situation (Pat). Paul, Pat, and Simon discussed either wishing to be different or a “weirdo”. Stress was also discussed between wanting to grow up but being unsure what a man should be (Paul, Simon, Nicolas), stress about their changing role (Fredrick), and stress that adults were different (not fun: Paul). Finally, certain attributes of being the best (Paul & Pat), making people proud of them (Frederick), and being cool (Nicolas & Paul) all seemed to create pressure onto the interviewees. As I reflect on these types of stress, I recall feeling similar stresses navigating the different requirements different spheres of my life required as well as uncertainty to who or what I should be. These stresses led to me becoming self-critical and created pressure and anxiety as I tried to not end up in ‘a bad situation’ but become someone people would be proud of.

One final reflection of interest was that for 4/5 of the interviewees, when the recorder was switched off, they wished to know what it was like to be an adult, or what it was like to have a beard, and what I thought. This perhaps further attests to the curiosity and desire they had to explore manhood and deal with the anxieties they felt, like I did, but a stress that they do not wish to admit it on record.

Research Question & Literature

The following section shall return to the original episode literature. From this episode three main concepts emerged that have assisted my own understanding of my childhood ideas of masculinity. These concepts include: a **diversity to masculinity**; a persistence of hegemonic masculinity that can cause **stress and anxiety**; and **motivation** for young men to craft particular identities that provide control and security for themselves. While re-exploring the literature theories of motivation

emerged as particularly useful to understand what I was searching for to mitigate my anxieties. However, it is possible that these aspects of motivation only increased stress and anxiety as I tried to balance all the attributes I felt were important to be a successful male.

Diversity of masculinity

The boys interviewed all spoke about different personal ideas about manhood, therefore suggesting diversity within masculinity over essentialised perspectives. This corresponds to a building corpus of literature that positions masculinity with more complexity and intersections over a singular archetype (Connell 1987, 1995, 2014; Demetriou 2001; Hearn 2004, 2014; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messner 2007; Anderson 2009; Noble 2009; Arxer 2011; Heywood & Mac An Ghail 2013; Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen 2014; Bridges & Pascoe 2014; Ward 2015; Anderson & McCormack 2018; Elliott 2019). In particular, the masculinity in these interviews appeared to promote increased inclusivity (Anderson 2009; Anderson & McCormack 2018) and more hybridity and flexibility (Arxer 2011; Bridges & Pascoe 2014) to the masculinity on offer when I was their age. However, it is possible that certain traits are still venerated above others and remain within stereotypical and “traditional” ideas of masculinity. Attributes of being strong, tough, and the best could fit within Connell’s (1987, 1995) hegemonic framework and perhaps attests to the persistence of such attributes and the endurance of Connell’s theory (Swain 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Light 2007; Jewkes et al. 2015; Haywood et al. 2017; Munsch & Gruys 2018; Quayle et al. 2018; Griffin 2018; Elliott 2019; Pease 2019). Polarized arguments will likely continue to whether such traits are natural tendencies for men or socially constructed norms that cause harm. McKay (2014)⁴⁷, for example, promotes the “3P’s” of masculinity: Protect, Provide, Procreate, drawn from Gilmore’s (1990) work, as potential essentialised masculinity traits. With both protection and providing emerging within my own reflection⁴⁸, certain expected traits may remain, creating pressure on young men towards the needs to be proficient in these attributes if they are to ‘measure up to masculinity’. An interesting reflection that emerged through the interviews was a belief that the participants needed to not only have these qualities, but that they needed to be *perceived* as having them by others. This might further reinforce Connell’s work on the fear young men have of being subordinated by their peers due to certain insufficiencies in admired attributes.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/the-3-ps-of-manhood-a-review/>

⁴⁸ As well as the noted desire to impress girls.

Anxiety, Pressure, and Uncertainty

The above section may also correspond to literature suggesting that trying to achieve standards of masculinity creates stresses and anxieties (Pleck 1981; Eisler & Skidmore 1987; Connell 1995; Mac An Ghail 1994, Katz 1999; Kimmel 2008, 2017; APA guidelines 2018). The interviewees discussed feeling uncertainty towards what being a man was like, while at the same time also discussed pressures and anxieties about making mistakes and avoiding bad situations. This corresponds with literature that suggests constraints of patriarchal masculinity affect young men producing stress to achieve a certain status (Connell 1995; Mac An Ghail 1994, Katz 1999; Kimmel 2008, 2017, APA guidelines 2018; Pease 2019). Vandello and Bosson (2013) for example use the term 'Precarious Manhood' to suggest when men do not feel masculine, they encounter internal stress and will likely regress to masculine endorsed stereotypes. Ellis (2016)⁴⁹ speaks directly to the anxiety of measuring up to masculinity to suggest young men fearful of being not-man-enough draw upon masculine endorsed behaviours to “temporarily advert incessant feelings of humiliation, insecurity and anxiety” (p.34-35).

Motivation

The interviewees expressed motivation to acquiring certain attributes that would in turn provide for (e.g., possessions, skills, or acceptance), and protect them and those they cared for. Achieving this was also seemingly related to self-esteem. As I explored literature, theories that built on the seminal works of Maslow (1943) emerged as particularly useful for understanding the boys and my own motivation as a young boy. For example, Ryan and Deci (2000, 2017) discuss the importance of competence, relatedness, and autonomy in people's lives. They argue this theory of self-determination “specifies social conditions and psychological processes through which growth, self-regulation, and social integrity are optimized” (2017, p.8). Pink (2009) builds from Ryan and Deci's theory to suggest autonomy, mastery, and purpose as three essential elements that promote 'drive' in people's lives: “(1) *Autonomy* – the desire to direct our own lives; (2) *Mastery* – the urge to get better and better at something that matters; and (3) *Purpose* – the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves” (p.204). Finally, Human Givens (Griffin & Tyrrell 1998, 2013) positions particular needs that increase well-being. These include security, autonomy and control, attention, intimacy, community, status,

⁴⁹ Drawing from Winlow and Hall (2006).

privacy, becoming competent at something, and finding meaning. They argue that fulfilling these needs “determines many aspects of our personality, our character, how well we develop physically and emotionally, how we interact with other people and what we achieve in life” (p.98).⁵⁰ As I reflected upon my life, I recall how I was searching for control over the anxieties I felt trying to be accepted and belong. Through trying to master certain competencies I believed I would be accepted by others (related) and this would provide protection (safety), the ability to be my own person (autonomy), and result in self-esteem and a sense of control over my life. It was this that drove my desires to accumulate the attributes I deemed as important and might drive the motivations for the interviewees. However, while this did provide some direction and motivation, it might have ironically created further anxieties as I felt pressure to attain these socially desirable competencies, and I struggled to find balance between them.

Conclusion

As I conclude this episode, I reflect how my ideals of being a man were informed by the cultures that surrounded me. I wanted to be accepted and measure up to prescribed standards of being a protector and provider I believed as important, yet I wanted to mitigate endorsing violent (hegemonic) masculinity. Finding the delicate balance between being accepted without negative attributes of masculinity, and avoiding bad situations, however, caused stress and anxiety. I became motivated to acquire competence in certain attributes I hoped would provide confidence and control in my life through recognition from my peers.⁵¹ However, while this provided direction it also created further stress as I struggled to find balance between seemingly incompatible attributes. As I tried to find direction, I looked for mentors. I was curious and anxious about being a man and wanted support and help. Perhaps I required opportunities to explore different ways of being a man so I could find integration towards my-self. However, while I was young there existed limited opportunities to explore masculinity and limited flexibility to what masculinity could be. Reflecting of the interviewees, I hope more inclusivity to create oneself exists, however, particular persistent expectations of being a man may remain causing uncertainty, stress, and anxiety on boys as they try to navigate their way. I was left asking how these ideas of masculinity manifest in schools and was taken to the following episode of being a boy at secondary school.

⁵⁰ Some child resiliency literature also uses similar notions called the 5 or 7 C's, e.g., Ginsburg (2015).

⁵¹ I am brought here to reflect on Pierre Bourdieu's idea of social capital.

Secondary School

Vignette

I'm standing in a field by the outskirts of school. I don't want to be here, but I have no choice. I feel my beating heart through my clenched fists. There's no turning back now. I want this to end so I can return to normal life. But this is important. I must not fuck this up or my life will be scarred. My eyes are sharp to what is in front of me. My ears feel hot but all I hear is my heartbeat through them. No longer in my chest, my heart is swallowed into my stomach. My body is tense and heavy. I feel sick.

I don't know why I am here, but I have no choice. I have been told that I must fight this boy. I look at him across the circle formed by the crowd swelling around us. His fists are clenched and his mouth is tight. He seems tense and in anticipation for what is to come. "Hit him first as hard as you can, then walk away". These were the words my brother told me when I told him the previous night about the fight. I did not know what to do and did not know who to ask.

I don't want to fight, but I have no choice. I don't want to hurt anyone and I don't want to get into trouble. But I have to fight as I guess it is my turn. I hit him as hard as I can. Do you know the sound a scull makes when it is struck? It's not like the movies, its hollow and vibrating. I could feel his whole body through my fist. It shakes as I see his face contort and he falls down. Everything slows. The crowd erupts into jeers like hyenas sensing a bloody meal. I don't want to be here, I don't want to fight, but I have no choice. Where are my friends? Silent, invisible and morphed into the crowd. The boy hits the ground with a thud, and I immediately execute part two of the plan: "I don't want to do this, I'm done" and I begin to walk away. The crowd shout, "Hit him again", while others call for the boy to get up. I have executed my plan, but the boy gets up, shaken, the crowd tell him to hit me. I did not plan for this. What should I do? I don't want to be here, but I have no choice.

Question:

I know I was not the only one to have a fight at school, but why do so many boys face these challenges at school? What happens for boys at school?

Literature Review

This literature review draws from the corpus of literature on schools and masculinity due to its direct relevance to masculinity formation⁵². Keywords of school, schooling, masculinity, boys, and gender, were all used in the Cambridge database searches. What emerged was how certain traditional ideals of masculinity are perpetuated through the institution of schooling and society. Within schools, traditional ideas of masculinity as dominant, competitive, and aggressive are valorised and reproduced in explicit and subtle ways. However, the literature suggests current changes in masculinity in schools in comparison to my schooling (1980s-1990s). These changes shall be discussed after exploring how schooling can affect the behaviours of boys.

Masculinity & Schooling

Connell discusses how schools have often been seen as “masculinity-making devices” (1989, p.291). While noting that school’s interaction with masculinity formation is complex, she argues that generally it is “the inexplicit, indirect effects of the way schools work that stands out in the long perspective on masculinity formation” (ibid, p.300). However, the seminal book by Mac an Ghaill (1994) focuses directly on schooling and the reproduction of masculinity and how it impacts boys. While acknowledging masculine perspectives of schooling he argues “masculinity has tended to be absent from mainstream educational research” (p.1). Mac an Ghaill continues to note how the reproduction of gender can be traumatic not only for girls, but *a/so* for boys as they negotiate identities available to them.

Mac an Ghaill describes schools as “intricate masculinizing agencies” (p.31) and suggests schools consisted “of contradictory forms of compulsory heterosexuality, misogyny and homophobia, and were marked by contextual contingency and ambivalence” (p.9). He shows how school micro-cultures of management, teachers, and students, are all “key infrastructural mechanisms through which masculinities and femininities are mediated and lived out” (p.4). Mac an Ghaill introduced masculinities of ‘the macho lads’ and their three F’s (fighting, fucking and football p.56), ‘the academic achievers’, ‘new enterprisers’, and ‘the real Englishman’ as identities that impact boys differently.

⁵² This therefore excluded other literature such as boys’ attainment at school.

Connell (1995) similarly discusses how schooling promotes the development of certain varied types of masculinities that affect boys in different ways. She positions four types of masculine performance that include: hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalised masculinities. Connell positions these as a hierarchy of masculinities with 'Hegemonic masculinity' as the pinnacle that boys compete to attain. In 2005 (2nd edition) she states how violence is perceived as the means through which one not only avoids subordination and marginalization but is the mechanism through which one may attain the desirable hegemonic status. Pressure to avoid subordinate positions places pressure on boys to conform to violent expressions in school, whether they wish it or not. As Browne and Fletcher (1995) contend, "certain behaviours are encouraged; other behaviours are shunned... For some, fighting into the peer group is more important than learning" (p.4). These hierarchies can lead to a range of negative behaviours being endorsed and reproduced by young males as they try to achieve manhood and avoid being targeted by other boys who are competing for positions within the hierarchy.

Behavioural Consequences

As boys become pressured to position themselves in comparison to others certain negative behaviours are endorsed. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) argue that to find appropriate versions of masculinity, boys "draw on the available terms, categories and ways of thinking, acting and interacting which these various contexts provide, including a specific form of masculinity associated with them" (p.51). Toughness is one such exemplar often promoted through the school culture. They argue, toughness "is both a means to the end, in its contribution to school success and group popularity, but also an end in itself, as part of their developing masculinity" (p.142). They believe these constructions of masculinity in the school are a major factor towards bullying, arguing most violence "is an extension of normal masculine behaviour exasperated by unforeseen events in contexts where incentives, controls and inhibitions are out of the normal balance" (p.192).

Mills (2001) argues assumptions underpinning the expectations of boys in school are about power and privilege. These assumptions create fear in boys to not become subordinated or marginalised, forcing them to strive for unitary and limited forms of masculinity. However, these achievements do not come easily for most boys, and if

achieved, “the status hegemonic masculinity offers is often fragile” (p.48). As means to constantly prove and reprove their masculinity boys may cause “great pain to others or engage in self-destructive activities” (p.48). He adds that this desire for masculine success, “is also complemented by a fear of being one of those subordinated boys/ men who provide a means by which other boys can assert their manliness” (p.49). As Vandello et al. (2008) contend, manhood is often “precarious” requiring continual proof and validation to avoid the anxieties it causes.

Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002) studied 12 secondary schools in London and similarly found popular masculinity involved “‘hardness’, sporting prowess, ‘coolness’, causal treatment of schoolwork and being apt at ‘cussing’” (p.10). They found these led to boys feeling they must position a difference from girls and avoid doing anything that could be perceived as girlish behaviour. Tactics employed included resorting to belittling girls and other boys, as well as strategically exhibiting homophobic behaviour. McCarry (2010) similarly interviewed boys to highlight the messages they received in school. These boys associated being male with dominance and expressed they believed men to be ‘violent’, ‘aggressive’ and ‘angry’ (p.23).

Sundaram (2013) spoke to pupils to find these forms of violence were perceived as either understandable, deserved, or unacceptable, depending on who was doing and receiving that violence. Most male against male violence was seen as normal, expected and endorsed and a way to avoid being seen as feminine. Sundaram also noted how girls reinforced the expectations for boys to be aggressive suggesting girls also police the perpetuation of gender norms. Rogers, Updegraff, Santos, and Martin (2017) and Rogers, DeLay and Martin (2017) discuss how conformity to such “traditional masculinity scripts” come at a psychological cost to boys and are related to lower well-being and depression in boys, especially in transitions from primary to secondary school. Elliott (2018) argues that there is therefore a pressing need to challenge the toxic masculinities rife in societies at school as this is where they are formed, practiced, and normalized.⁵³ Schools themselves, therefore, should be analysed for how they endorse or reproduce particular forms of masculinity.

⁵³ It should perhaps be added, however, that this is now not the only space where such constructions are informed. Unlike in my own school experiences authors have discussed how these spaces have moved from in school environments to also include online and phone spaces (e.g., Shariff 2008; Mishna 2012; Triggs 2014; Shapiro 2018; Astor & Benbenishty 2019).

Schools' as Violent Masculine Institutions

The schooling system is also argued as being indicative to the reproduction of particular forms of masculinity. For example, Askew and Ross (1988) argue there may be a “direct association between the school organisation, policies on discipline and teaching methods, and the gender behaviour and relations” (p.43). They continue to argue that the official curriculum makes available certain versions of masculinity for students to inhabit. Skelton (1997) shows how Connell’s Hegemonic masculinity is “given ascendancy in the school itself” (p.366). She continues (2001) to note how schools relate and react to pressure imposed by the outside community, especially parents. These pressures lead to “the particular control and management strategies used by teachers” as it reflects the “intimidatory, aggressive aspects of the hegemonic masculinity evident in the local community” (p.94). This could be seen directly in male teachers who needed “to demonstrate their masculine credentials both to themselves and others” (p.138). Doing this often meant “exaggerating various aspects of masculinity” (p.138) and perpetuating limited images of masculinity available to boys.

Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) state that schools are complicit with violence as in “obvious and subtle ways schools model, permit and shape violent attitudes and behaviours, they encourage students to accept that certain levels and orders of violence are normal and natural” (p.126). Focusing on the different types of violence, male to male violence, “is premised on beliefs about the importance of aggressive and violent acts for gaining and maintaining status, reputation and resources in the male group, to sustain a sense of masculine identity and as a form of ‘self’ protection” (p.122). Martino and Meyenn (2001) also discuss how norms, such as violence as manly, are perpetuated onto boys through political rhetoric entwined through schools. They argue that these norms are myths as are “not a trait carried on any chromosome, not soldered into the wiring of the right or left hemisphere, not reduced by testosterone” (p.16). Instead, these behaviours are learnt by the ways schools operate. As Watson (2007) notes, boys “are not destined to be aggressive because they are males, but rather they become so because they are raised to be so” (p.731).

Carter (2002) further draws attention to the use of masculine ideals in schools pointing to how schools’ authoritarian ethos reinforces and encourages aggressive masculinity. Underlying this ethos is a fixation with ‘control’ and the belief that control

is the hallmark of efficiency. This control leads to forms of aggression that “created a culture, which ignored the possibility of multiple masculine identities, preferring to dictate an acceptable model of manhood” (p.28). Carter also notes schools themselves reinforce the requirements to achieve and prove certain hierarchies to masculinity. She discusses how the school “operates a student hierarchy in relation to its concept of masculinity and the students believe that their experience at school depends on their position in this arrangement” (p.29). However, the difficulty to achieve or maintain such standards lead to many feeling disaffected with schooling system and taking frustrations out elsewhere.

Harber (2004) leaves no room for doubt and calls schools violent institutions. He states how schools are responsible for both initiating violence as well as reproducing and perpetuating the violence that exist in society (p.3). Harber argues that we are so “embroiled” in education for education’s sake, that we have forgotten to teach how to be humane, compassionate, and without prejudice (p.16). Schools are therefore a form of ‘systemic violence’ (p.40). Placing the authoritarian nature for schooling at the centre, he suggests schools reproduce violence through its ‘obey or be punished’ structure. These structures “implicitly support patriarchy and concepts of hegemonic (‘tough’) masculinity” (p.58), and position success as aligned with being the toughest and dominant. Stoudt (2006) places this violence as “embedded in the social fabric of the school” (p.273). Focusing on curriculum, Stoudt suggests the hidden curriculum, is “a form of symbolic violence that helps to perpetuate patriarchal dominance” (p.285). These symbolic violences lead to boys reproducing “hegemonic masculine values by disciplining its boundaries in “acceptably” masculine ways, often using emotional or physical violence” (p.285). Lingard, Martino, and Mills (2009) and Haywood and Mac An Ghail (2013) relate the political cultures that surround schools to the particular actions that occur towards boys within school environments. They note that a perceived crisis of masculinity within the political and social spheres have created backlash politics that infiltrate schools and further compound issues for boys in schools.

Cremin and Guilherme (2016) draw from peace scholar Johan Galtung to similarly argue that “schools and education systems can be powerful and efficient instruments of violence” (p.1126). They argue that schools are complicit in reproducing structural and cultural forms of violence through the negative peace tactics they use to keep peace in schools. These tactics, however, only reinforce particular perspectives that reinforce relations of dominance rather than cooperation and are likely to be further

reproduce by students as norms. Hickey and Mooney (2018) also showed how pervasive discourses permeate through schools. They used Foucault's discourse-power relations as a framework to analyse discourses present at an all boy's school. They observed that a "discourse of hypermasculinity encapsulates a culture (accepted knowledge and practice) that outwardly privileges emphasised characteristics of male behaviour (stoicism, hardness and solidarity)" (p. 240). However, they also noted optimism and "identified a degree of fluidity and blurring of competing discourses, where power relations both incited struggles for ascendancy and promoted peaceful coexistence" (p.248) suggesting targeted approaches can "challenge macro-narratives of gender inequities" (p.248).

Reichert and Keddie (2019) also argue that there is room for hope through current school interventions suggesting "there is evidence of improvement in their prospects for healthier, more adaptive ways of being [boys]" (p.914). However, they also argue that political discourses that surround schooling continue to infiltrate in influence the treatment of boys. They argue that particular backlash politics for the reinstatement of more essentialised ideologies of masculinity are detrimental to the healthy development of boys. They add, "it is not masculinity that needs saving but boys themselves, from a boyhood that was not built to foster the development of their human capacities" (p.915). They suggest the importance of "productive pedagogies" that assist schools move beyond these constricted cultures by engaging boys' imaginations and supporting "their reflection on unhealthy norms, and that acknowledges their experiences of masculinity within spaces of social support and mutual respect" (p.915).

Complexity and Shifts in Masculinities at School

While schools are accused of reinforcing violent masculine norms, there is a growing acknowledgement to complexity of expressions of masculinity in schools. This literature is related to literature mentioned in the previous episode review (Hearn 2004; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Haywood 2008; Haywood & Mac an Ghail 2012; Hearn et al. 2012; Connell 2014) that attests to observations of shifts in the ways boys express their identities. While acknowledging schools sustain relations of domination and subordination, Swain (2005) discusses a complex interplay between society, school, persons and agencies that form an array of masculinities between and within schools' settings. He contends that "rather than the passive one-way

process of learning the norms, as suggested by sex-role and socialization theories, the construction of masculinity is the result of active, skilful negotiation and manipulation” (p.225). These manipulations are based upon not only the specific sociocultural, politicoeconomic, and historical conditions surrounding the school and pupils, but also the individual, rules, routines, expectations, and the school’s own use of resources and space (p.215). Swain continues to argue against the typologies often placed onto understandings of masculinity in schools and describes what he calls “personalized masculinity” (2006) as a way to explain how some boys negotiate and renegotiate a number of alternative ways of “doing” boy.

Similarly, Anderson (2005, 2009) developed what he calls “inclusive masculinity” after observing how dominant forms of masculinity based upon homophobia, misogyny, and violence were being contested and replaced in school settings. Anderson argues masculinity exhibits a constant ability to adapt and change in relation to other cultural, institutional, and organizational shifts. For example, Anderson and McGuire (2010) observed boys on a school rugby team contesting three fundamental orthodox masculinity principles of homophobia, misogyny, and excessive risk-taking. They therefore positioned “inclusive masculinity” as a new way for theorizing about horizontal (not only stratified) nuanced forms of masculinity that challenged existing theories of masculinity (such as Connell’s 1987, 1995). Anderson and McCormack (2018) and Anderson and Magrath (2019) continue to develop the concept of inclusive masculinity, and while acknowledging how intersections of class, ethnicity, religion, location, amongst others, influence the dynamics of masculinities, inclusive masculinity represents “a fundamental shift in the practices of masculinities” (2018, p.549). As discussed in the previous episode, Ward (2015) discusses the changeability within masculinity not only in particular settings, but also the “chameleonisation” of individuals expressions of masculinity depending on situation, context and particular need. Similarly, Mayeza and Bhana (2020) discuss a fluidity and malleability to masculinity within the school setting. They observed how boys who were regarded as ‘victims’ in particular settings can in other situations also defend and resuscitate masculinity that endorses violence. This suggests masculinity is never fixed even within the individual itself and that “boys perform masculinities in the intersection of age, physique, heterosexuality, class and gender relations of power” (p.440).

The importance of Place

Place and space as an additional non-passive intersection to a person's gendered performances have also begun to be discussed. Morris (2012), for example describes the complex interplay between gender, race, and class arguing how "gender performance infuses the everyday process of education" (p.170). Morris notes how place is an often-overlooked category in the formations of masculinity drawing further attention to how intersectionality affects the adaptations of masculinity available to young men. Masculinity in this perspective "is a situated accomplishment shaped by local context, racialized experience, economic inequality, and other factors" (p.171). He adds that we cannot therefore "continue to simply blame these boys for poor individual decisions" (p.173), "but should seek to interpret what purpose such behaviour serves" (p.176). Similarly, Ward, Featherston, Robb, and Ruxton (2015) argue that "young men's masculine identities are strongly defined by their locality, and that young men 'at risk' tend to be embedded in local cultures of 'hypermasculinity', often with problematic consequences"⁵⁴. Ward et al. (2017) similarly argue that "home life, street life, individual neighbourhoods, regions and nations all shaped the young men's identities and the practices they (and the staff working with them) drew on in order to create successful futures and 'safe' forms of masculinity" (p. 798). O'Donoghue (2019) argues that "to divorce place from our experiences, then, is to dismantle the very nature of those experiences" (p.3). In particular for O'Donoghue are the places and spaces that exist *within* the schools and the unique histories they carry suggesting that "something can be learned and understood about how students see themselves and others by paying attention to the places they inhabit, interact with, and become attached to overtime" (p.4). In this perspective, masculinities not only shape and give meaning to the places and spaces within schools, but that in turn, these places and spaces form and reproduce types of masculinities.

Post-Masculinity?

Finally, as raised in the previous episode, some are also beginning to argue for a movement away from associations of masculinity and towards aspirations for a *post-*

⁵⁴ <https://discoversociety.org/2015/09/01/beyond-male-role-models-gender-identity-in-young-men/>
Retrieved 01/10/2020

masculinity world where such terms are relegated as unhelpful. Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2012), for example, argue that “there is a conscious intention to avoid trying to make gendered subjectivities fit theoretical and empirical representations of masculinity” (p.588). In 2013 they add that they wish to “explore the possibility of understanding gender in a way that is not reducible to masculinity or femininity” (p.116) and that “we need to move beyond masculinity as a conceptual and empirical default position” (p.118). Drawing from Roussel and Downs (2007) they promote a ‘post-masculinity’ position that resists the whole apparatus of masculinity. O’Donoghue (2019) similarly uses a post-masculinity framework for his own arts-based study of boys’ use of space in school. Noting how existing typologies often stabilize what we see, he believes post-masculinity allows emergent ideas of masculinity to appear. O’Donoghue (2019) continues to argue that to adopt a post-masculinity perspective “is to continue to be committed to seeking an understanding of Male genders, but from concept other than those typically employed in gender research of the past – hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity, marginalised masculinity, subordinate masculinity and protest masculinity” (p.25). This position does not seek to demolish the concept of masculinity, but that “the theory of masculinity is but one way to understand men’s experiences, subjectivities, practices of interacting in the world and making it” (p.25).

Conclusion

Schools are complicit in reinforcing and reproducing particular forms of aggressive masculinity through both explicit and implicit means. These messages affect boys and influence their behaviours to correspond to often hierarchical and dominance-based typologies, discussed in Episode 2. Schools can position boys as violent, yet subtly mirror, practice, and endorse violence onto pupils as normative societal techniques. It is possible these subtle and hidden curriculums effected my experience at school. In this manner we were *all* influenced by the pervasive masculine undertones that ran through every aspect of our schooling. If so, we were only manifesting the expectations placed onto us by, and learnt through, our school’s practices. Schools were our “masculinity-making devices” (Connell 1989, p.291) that nurtured us to embrace a particular mould of manhood. But this mould was “precarious” (Vandello et al. 2008) and we had to utilise techniques expected of us out of fear of otherwise becoming “one of those subordinated boys/ men who provide a means by which other boys can assert their manliness” (Mills 2001, p.49). While

more inclusivity to masculinity has begun to surface in schools, boys still, “do not appear to be encouraged or supported to reflect critically upon many of the complex and contradictory aspects of their lives and development” (Harland & McCready 2015 p.5). This leads to many boys, including myself, being left bound to traditional and out-dated notions of ‘doing masculinity’ that leaves us “feeling ‘squeezed’ somewhere between masculine myths and reality and struggles of their everyday lives” (ibid. p.5).

Research Question:

What can I learn about my experiences at school from boys’ current experiences of school? Does masculinity still inform their experiences?

Sampling:

5 boys within a schooling context between the ages 10-11 years was recruited through my networks working in schools. Two schools were selected, one in the north of the UK (where I grew up) and one in the South of the UK for variation. This age was important as it is the age I experienced the fight and corresponds to Selman (1980) discussing this age as an optimum stage when boys come into conflict with one another.

Interviews

Terry Martin Charles Jack Raymond

Terry

Terry felt secondary school is difficult compared to primary school. He felt he could not be himself due to teachers' expectations and felt pressure to not make mistakes. While his friends make school ok, he often gets into trouble with them. Terry felt he had been labelled as "bad", and this was difficult to change. He agreed he had behavioural issues but wanted to improve so he could stop getting into trouble and do well. Terry wanted to prove he was mature so he could get a good job as a doctor.

Terry discussed how being new to his school is particularly hard as you get challenged by others and rumours will be spread about you. He discussed having a fight when he returned to the school after leaving for a couple of years. He described how he wanted to be the "bigger person" and not fight but had little choice as others put pressure on him. Terry felt that if he did not fight he would be labelled "a scaredy-cat" and bullied. Terry felt he had to constantly prove himself to the others, and fighting was the only solution.⁵⁵ From our interview themes of **Transitions**, **Pressure** and **No choice** emerged.

Reflective Account of Terry's Interview

Terry discussed finding the **transition** from primary to secondary school difficult.

"But [] as soon as I came to this school, I was still having issues because I kept acting like I was still in primary and after that got me detentions and detentions. Because it takes a period of time to develop something, it's not just something that will happen on that day in a few hours."

⁵⁵ On an extra note, Terry mentioned how he would not usually talk about these experiences as he felt he would be judged. However, he added that he liked the interview process and talking with me.

In particular, Terry suggested this was due to Secondary school becoming serious compared to Primary school and there was a need for him to not be his fun self.

“I’m more of a fun person, I love to joke around, but in [] school, you have to be serious because if you joke around it might get you detention.”

Terry therefore felt **pressure** to act in certain ways and felt pressure that he had to do well to succeed.

“it’s not easy, it’s hard because to be a doctor you have to get good grades [], because if I was to get five in every grade, I haven’t even got 1 nine, then I won’t be able to go to the universities like Cambridge or Oxford, and I won’t be able to develop what I need to develop to become a good doctor.”

Terry continued to discuss these felt pressures result in needing to constantly prove himself. Firstly, this is to prove himself to his teachers and get good grades.

“But I push myself hard as well...I’ve been improving in my grades so far.”

However, secondly, proving himself is also to his peers as being tough so not to be bullied.

“I think if he was to win the fight, it would just be like he would start bullying me because he feels like he has more power over me.”

This need to prove oneself seemed especially pertinent if one was new to the school and Terry described how he had to fight after returning to school after leaving.

“there was this kid that he just wanted to fight me. I said no a couple of times and then he wanted to fight me, so I ended up fighting him”

Finally, Terry described having **no choice** as fights were often set-up and fuelled by others.

“I had no options, to be honest, I had no options. Especially even before you’re going to fight someone, you see one person tells “ah, they’re going to

fight”, everyone makes a crowd around you and then after there’s no way you can escape”

Even if you do not wish to fight, Terry added that there was no choice as you would be labelled, and it would not prevent the fight occurring.

“if someone challenges you to a fight and you was to say no, they won’t see it as you being the bigger person, they will see it like you are the scaredy cat, you’re scared...even though you don’t want to do it, you’re going to end up fighting.”

Reflecting on Terry’s interview, I am struck by how many similarities to my own feelings emerged. In particular I recall feeling so much pressure from varied places while at school. I felt pressure to do well and to not get into trouble, but at the same time I felt pressure from my peers to not be a teacher’s pet, and pressure that I had to be able to prove myself. I also recall the pressure that I had no choice but to fight. That even though I did not want to fight the consequences of trying to avoid fighting were possibly worse and would likely still not avoid the fight anyway. I recall feeling a deep sense of powerlessness trying to adjust and negate this new world of secondary school.

Martin

Martin does not like school as it difficult and boring. He feels there is too much sitting and thinking, and not enough fun, physical, and creative activities where he can be himself. Martin wants to be seen as a good student but dislikes school rules and feels judged and labelled as being ‘bad’. He feels teachers do not listen to him and this leads to him getting angry and missing school.⁵⁶

Martin felt boys sometimes have to fight at school, especially if they are new, adding he had fights when he was new. He tried to avoid them but feels there is little choice unless you tell your teachers or brother. However, telling does not work and will likely not stop the fight or future bullying. Martin said he had to be someone else (tough) when confronted by people so as to not get into fights. For Martin gaining a tough reputation was important so to be left alone and not messed with. For Martin this was

⁵⁶ He said he usually does not come to school but did this day only to meet me.

achieved through using revenge or amplified force on others. From our interview themes of **Pressure** and **Proving oneself** again emerged.

Reflective Account of Martin's Interview

Similar to Terry, Martin discussed feeling **pressure** to do well at school.

"I want to be clever because in school I want to understand the hard stuff that I can't do and get high grades and stuff."

When asked why this was important to him, Martin added that he wanted to feel proud about himself, and this was based on others also being proud about him.

"So you feel proud of yourself, and your parents would feel proud of you as well."

Again like Terry, Martin, discussed difficulties transitioning to a new school and described pressures that he had to **prove himself** as others would challenge him being new.

"This boy was always walking on by me he was acting bad...he says that, "You can't do anything, because I'm stronger than you and I will beat you up."

Martin described how fighting was the best option to "solve" and prevent further issues by proving yourself to the other boys that you are not weak.

"You feel like fighting back because you can solve it, you can make them stop being rude to you, and they will stop and make sure you're stronger"

For Martin the importance of proving oneself meant winning and gaining a reputation that you were not to be messed with and should be left alone.

"Lots of people get to know my name and who I am, so they don't be rude to me or do anything that can make me upset."

Reflecting on Martin's interview I recall having a similar mindset that to prevent further altercations with other boys I had to prove myself with amplified force so no one would "mess with me". I recall this feeling creating a great amount of pressure and anxiety as I simply wished the attention to go away and did not wish to be violent to prevent violence. I also recall a fear that if I lost the fight I would be ridiculed, but if I won the fight, maybe I would be challenged by others. I contemplate what viable mechanisms there are for boys like myself to resolve conflicts at school without conforming to the exact violence they are wishing to negate.

Charles

Charles expressed difficulty balancing the expectations of different people at school. In particular he found it difficult pleasing his parents and teachers at the same time as his friends. This led to him feeling pressure to act differently with different people and feeling he was sometimes judged unfairly. For example, Martin discussed how his friends sometimes judged him when he had responsibilities at home.

Charles said he had not seen fights at school and that most fights tended to be older boys. Charles discussed how he avoided situations where he would likely get into trouble by listening to his inner voice saying, "what's the point?" Charles just wanted to get by and avoid getting into trouble and would go and speak with other friends to avoid bad situations. Charles discussed how things were easier when his friend was around. This friend left and it has been difficult, but he is learning a lot because of it. He discussed wanting to be brave and confident and said he feels being funny and kind is important. From our interview, themes of **how others perceived** Charles emerged, and how this created difficulties in **balancing relationships** and created **pressure to being accepted**.

Reflective Account of Charles's Interview

Charles discussed finding it difficult to **balance relationships** between **how he was perceived** by teachers and his friends. In particular Charles described how he could be judged by these different groups and that they were sometimes in conflict with each other.

“I feel like the friends is the hardest, because you don’t want to not be cool, but you do want to still be their friend. Because with teachers, if you get along with them, they don’t ... if you constantly shout out and stuff they’ll think you’re a bad child, but if you don’t they won’t. If someone’s shouting out they’ll think oh he has put him up to that, or something like that.”

Charles continued that

“if you want to do something with [friends], but you don’t really want to do it, that’s the hardest one, because it’s like impress them and get told off, or just stay back, but not be as cool sort of.

Charles therefore discussed how he felt **pressure** to impress his friends and be **accepted** by them even if it might result in getting into trouble.

“sometimes when all your friends do something, but you don’t want to, but it’s like peer pressure. You want to do it to impress them, but if you do it then it’s probably not the best thing to do.”

Therefore, it appears that **how he was perceived** by particular groups of people is important to Charles so that he would not become alienated.

“Because then if you don’t they think there’s no point hanging around with you if you don’t do what we do... Then you wouldn’t have any friends.”

Reflecting on Charles’ interview I recall how important it was, and perhaps still is, how people perceived me. I wanted to be accepted and be seen as part of the ‘cool’ group. However, this caused stress as I tried to balance the competing needs of also being liked by teachers and seen as a good person. There existed a tension achieving these seeming dichotomies and this in turn caused further pressure and anxiety as I tried to avoid being judged and alienated. I recall how I often tried to impress these different groups to be accepted (or not judged), however, ironically as I tried to impress a particular group, it would potentially counteract the image I was trying to foster with the other group.

Jack

Jack is struggling with school but feels everyone mostly gets along. He discussed arguments can be common and can often escalate into fights. He believed this was due to boys wanting to control others and be seen as the best. These arguments are usually over “stupidness” and trying to impress older boys. Jack discussed how there was no choice than to fight if it escalated as otherwise you would be labelled a “pussy”. This was increased if you were new to school as you would be tested and had to prove yourself.

Jack mentioned being influenced by others and having a reputation of being “cuckoo” that gets him into trouble. Jack gets angry when his reputation was challenged and he was being wrongly judged. This anger could take over and he would lose control to stop “rubbish” being said about him. Instead, Jack is trying to be a good person, get good grades, and wants to be “rich” to avoid becoming “a thug”. He keeps to himself and tries to ignore trouble. If he gets angry, he finds some space, breathes, and lets it go. From our interview themes of **pressure**, having **No choice**, **Being labelled** and wronged, and **Losing control** emerged.

Reflective Account of Charles’s Interview

Jack discussed **pressure** feeling he needed to be seen as good and get good grades to avoid ending up with a bad future.

[me: What’s important?] “Good qualifications and just get your head down in class...I want to be a good person and get a family life instead of just being stuck on the street, like a lot of people...Like be good, otherwise you don’t get good grades and stuff.”

Jack described how keeping “your head down” is difficult at school as often other boys try to get you involved in arguments.

“When there’s an argument going on, and people are trying to get you involved, but they really don’t want to get involved.

Jack continued that when this happens you have **no choice** and “You just have to get involved.” Jack recounted an incidence when he was forced to get involved and fight with another boy as other boys provoked and **labelling** him.

“because loads of people were coming up to me calling me loads of names and stuff.”

Jack felt he had **no choice** but to fight as if he tried to avoid it and get a teacher involved he would have been **labelled** further and this would have made life difficult for him at school.

“Because either way if I had have got a teacher involved, then loads of people would have been saying ‘Oh you’re a pussy’ and all sorts of names like that.”

Jack explained that he did not want to fight but that the fight followed him.

“I would have just walked away, but then I was walking away, but he kept on following me, and calling me all sorts of names, so then it just happened.”

Finally, Jack explained how he eventually **lost control** after being wronged by them saying “you’re a pussy”.

“So I ended up fighting him and then loads of people were trying to get me off him, but they couldn’t get me off him. And then I sprained his leg, and sprained his arm, and then [] a few girls took me away, and sat me down, and made me calm down.”

Reflecting on Jack’s interview I recall similarly feeling pressure to focus on my future. I recall feeling pressure and anxiety to get a well-paid job and recall hearing I had to “buckle down” to get good grades or else end up in a bad situation. As I reflected, I recalled feeling a lack of control throughout my school. This could be a lack of control through school’s expectations and proposed future for me, but also, like Jack, a lack of choice in the situations that arose at school. I began to question what agency I had as a young boy and recall how many things, including fighting, were not my choice. In particular, I recall my fight being created and demanded by other boys in my year, and not the person I fought. I remember feeling fear of being judged and labelled and how this would impact the rest of my school life. I wanted to mitigate this but had no

choice or control on how to achieve it other than fight. Finally, I recall a lack of control over my own emotional dispositions and a fear of incompetence about handling my emotions. I recall my uncontrollable angry, but also fear about 'losing it' and hurting the boy and getting into trouble, or worse, starting to cry.

Raymond

Raymond feels school is both good and bad. He feels there are too many lessons and wishes there were more breaks and time for lunch as this can lead to him getting into trouble. Raymond described how he wants to have fun with friends but then be serious in class and that both expected him to behave differently. This could be difficult if his friend's moods became "annoying" as he could get into trouble by being influenced by their moods.

Raymond felt a lot of boys just want attention, especially if they are bored with school or frustrated with something that happened to them earlier. Raymond believes if boys are frustrated at teachers they will take it out on others at break time. Raymond added that sometimes boys just want to feel better than others and tried to get reactions from people to feel better. Raymond felt the best response was ignoring these boys, as if you react, they get what they want, and you get into trouble. He mentioned his anger raises if he feels disrespected by others. In these situations he tells himself he will get into trouble and tries to not follow his anger. Themes of **being influenced by others** and needing a **release** and **attention** emerged.

Reflective Account of Raymond's Interview

Raymond discussed that he was trying to do well at school and not get into trouble. However, he explained this could be difficult as he could sometimes be negatively **influenced** by friends.

"Sometimes it comes into lessons if like I sit near my friends...But then other times it doesn't...And then if they're in a good mood, they'll make me in a good mood. But if they're in a playful mood, the same will happen to me."

Raymond described how he felt many boys become "annoying" when they were either frustrated with something that happened to them, or if they were bored. For

example, these frustrations might be to do with “[t]eachers, problems that they’ve had in lessons” and then “they carry it on to lunch and break”, or because “they get bored and just feel like being annoying”. Raymond thinks this is because “when they get in trouble in a lesson [] they can’t really do anything about it”. These frustrations might lead to them taking it out on someone to **release** it or try to get someone else involved so as to make them feel better about themselves.

“but when other boys get angry, then they might take it out on another boy...Because they’ve got no-one else to take it out on.”

Raymond continued that a reason boys do such things is to get **attention** “until someone finally acknowledges it”.

“Because that’s what they want. They want attention, no matter what kind of attention it is.”

Raymond added that this type of behaviour annoyed him because it would likely escalate into a fight and get everyone into trouble and not solve how they were feeling anyway.

“I wish they just didn’t do it in the first place. Because then if it ends up in a fight, then everyone’s going to get in trouble, everyone that watched it, everyone that was involved is going to get in trouble, so it’s worse for them.”

Reflecting on Raymond’s interview I also remember being influenced by others. This was generally in class, but also for the fight where I was persuaded that I needed to do it. As I reflect, I wonder whether I consented as I was desperate to be accepted and not alienated by my peers. I wanted to feel content⁵⁷ and have self-esteem, however, these feelings seemed dependent on the external recognition and acknowledgement from others. I therefore allowed myself to be influenced and often tried to impress others to get attention to be seen as one of the group.

The theme of release also resonated as I also recall feeling a need to release or pass on my emotions as if they were stuck inside of me. Perhaps again, I lacked mechanisms of understanding, dealing with, and expressing my emotions and

⁵⁷ And avoid the opposite of feeling bad/ unhappy.

required ways of expressing them so they no longer remained inside where they caused discomfort.

Overall Reflection

This episode revealed rich detail with several noteworthy themes relating to my experiences at school. Themes discussed below relate to two major themes of **pressure and anxiety** and feeling like one has **no choice**. Sub themes include: **being accepted, proving myself** and being concerned about **how others perceive you**. Also sub themes of **difficulties with emotional management** so as to get **good grades** and a **good job** also emerged. These sub themes appeared especially pertinent if one is **new to school** and might therefore also suggest a pressure and anxiety with **transitions**.

Interviewee	Themes	Underpinning Themes?
Terry	Transitions Pressure No choice	Pressure / Anxiety
Martin	Pressure Proving oneself	
Charles	How others perceived Balancing relationships Pressure being accepted	No choice
Jack	Pressure No choice Being labelled Losing control	Transitions
Raymond	Being influenced Release Attention	

Table 7: Secondary School Summary

As I reflected on these themes, I too recalled feeling **pressure and anxieties** throughout my secondary school experience relating to wanting to be **accepted** by both my teachers *and* peers. I felt I had **no choice** and little control in the decisions I made at school. This included trying to get **good grades** so I would be successful and not end up **stuck on the street**. I felt pressure to keep my **head down in class** and **push myself** to get **good grades** so that I could be **perceived** as **clever** and a **good person** and **feel proud of** myself. I also did not want to be seen as a **bad child** who gets **told off** and felt **pressure** that **if you do something bad once, you will have that reputation**. However, at the same time I felt **pressure** I had to **impress** my peers and felt **no choice** in **proving myself**. They were the ones who influenced me and would not see me as **being the bigger person** if I refused. Fighting was the only way to **solve** these conflicts and become **accepted** by my peers, and I knew it would keep **on following me** until I fought. I wanted to be seen as worthy and **accepted** into my peer group opposed to them thinking there was **no point hanging around with** me. I did not want to be seen as a **scaredy cat** or **pussy** and wanted everyone to **leave me alone**. Finally, I feel these anxieties related to not knowing how to **handle my emotions**. I perhaps did not fully understand them or feared I could not control them, and this caused **anxiety** in me. I wanted ways to release them and feared they might take over and I might **just lose it** and seriously hurt someone and get into trouble.

As I reflected on this episode I was brought to consider if **transitions** and uncertainty play a role in these themes. Some of the boys discussed difficulties moving to a new school such as moving from primary to secondary school. They mentioned how school became **serious** with new **rules** and discussed anxieties to get good grades. Transitioning to a new stage **takes a period of time to develop**, however, and some of the boys described frustration at being labelled as a bad person. Being new also meant you might be challenged to prove yourself and this can add extra pressure on you with no choice of avoidance. While I was not new to the school, I ponder if a recent change in physical stature changed my status in the eyes of my peers and needed to be tested.

Research Question & Literature

As I returned to the episode literature, five interlinked areas resonated with the boys' responses and assisted my understanding of my experiences. These five areas include:

- 1) The reproduction of hierarchal forms of masculinity through the schooling system.
- 2) Neo-liberal models of education
- 3) Transitions
- 4) Anxieties
- 5) Social and emotional learning (SEL)

1) Reproduction of hierarchal forms of masculinity

Particular forms of masculinity might become reproduced through schooling. Many of the boys' comments could suggest schools are still "masculinity-making devices" (Connell 1989, p.291) or "intricate masculinizing agencies" (Mac An Ghail 1994, p.31). In particular a competitive impetus is created to avoid subordinated positions on the stratified spectrum. Connell (1995) and Mills (2001) both discuss how masculinity attainment relates as much to *avoiding* subordinated positions than the successes afforded to those in the dominant positions. Mills (2001) discussed how each position was fragile leading to constant needs to prove and reprove oneself. The interviewees appeared to mirror my experiences to a lack of choice and requisite need to prove oneself to be left alone. Similar to Sundaram (2013), proving ourselves through proficiency in domination over others may provide the only viable techniques to achieving acceptance and being left alone. With lack of choice and lack of suitable alternatives, boys might draw upon the "available terms, categories and ways of thinking" that were in existence within the school (Gilbert and Gilbert 1998, p.51). This includes fighting to prove one is tough so they can survive through school. However, it is possible that this comes a great psychological cost to boys in the form of anxieties (Mac an Ghail 1994; Connell 1995; Mills 2001; Katz 2006; Rogers, Updegraff, Santos, & Martin 2017; Rogers, DeLay & Martin 2017).

Schooling may be complicit in creating the environments that leads to the normalization of male violence as are "powerful and efficient instruments of violence" (Cremin & Guilherme 2016, p.1126) that mirror structures of violence within society (Kenway & Fitzclarence 1997; Mills 2001; Skelton 2001; Harber 2004; Stoudt 2006;

Lingard, Martino, & Mills 2009; Haywood and Mac An Ghaill 2013; Hickey & Mooney 2018; Elliott 2018; Pease, 2019; Reichert & Keddie 2019; Osgood & Robinson 2019). While it is possible that more complex and inclusive ideas of masculinity are available to boys at school (Swain 2005; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2012; Anderson 2009; Anderson & McGuire 2010; Anderson & McCormack 2018; Anderson & Magrath 2019; Osgood & Robinson 2019; Mayeza & Bhana 2020), it still might be that many boys are “bound to traditional and out-dated notions of ‘doing masculinity’” (Harland & McCready 2015, p.5).

2) Neo-liberal models of education

Some have placed particular ideas of success placed onto the boys, like myself, as emanating from the neo-liberal system (Davies & Bansel 2007; Robbins 2008; Giroux 2011; Saltman & Gabbard 2011; Francis & Mills 2012; Haywood & Mac An Ghaill 2013; Connell 2013; Maisuria 2014; Brown 2015; Hursh 2017; Reimers & Martinsson 2017; Wilkins 2018; Hall & Pulsford 2019). Success within this system is measured through the attainment of qualifications that places individuals in competition over limited resources. The interviewees discussed pressure to change their behaviour to be more mature and get good grades for their future. This pressure to succeed causes anxiety that I too recall from my school experience. Giroux (2011) discusses how schools have become “...a training ground for a consumer society or a pipeline for the channelling disposable population into the grim confines of the criminal justice system” (pvii). Brown (2015) notes, neoliberalism is best understood “as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes the human itself exclusively as homo oeconomicus” (p.176). Haywood and Mac An Ghaill (2013)⁵⁸ suggest how this economical culture is based upon masculine ideals of competition and domination and therefore transforms baby boys as persons characterized by innocence, adorability and cuteness, into boys who become required to imitate older adults’ masculinity ready for competition in labour markets.

Biesta (2010, 2014) in particular has assisted my understanding of these effects of schooling. Biesta breaks the purpose of schooling into three parts: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. He discusses how a schooling system needs to

⁵⁸ Drawing from Shaloo (1993)

balance these three, however, in a marketized structure an over-emphasis is placed on testing and measurement. As I reflect, I wonder whether pressures to succeed and avoid becoming a “failed consumer” (Robbins 2008) causes anxiety onto pupils. This only further exasperates boys’ beliefs that they need to prove themselves and have no choice but to fight for their place in the hierarchies on offer, or fight to regain their lost sense of worth. These anxieties take emotional and psychological toles on the boys that needs to be released.

3) Transitions

Transitions between schools has also been discussed as causing anxiety (Rice, et al. 2011, 2014; Rae 2014; Wang, et al. 2016; Potter II, Koett. & Christian 2018; Jindal-Snape et al. 2019; Hedegaard & Fleeer 2019). Rae (2014) and Rice, et al. (2014) for example, note how transitioning from primary to secondary can cause significant stress. Rice, et al. (2014) note how transitions are “challenging, involves a period of adaptation and the majority of pupils report that it involves some degree of stress or apprehension” (p.8). Wang et al. (2016) describe how boys generally encountered increased victimization during transitioning to a new school in comparison to girls, adding stress onto boys.

4) Anxieties

These anxieties on boys may correspond to Ellis (2016)⁵⁹ who describes anxiety and humiliations as main causes to male violence. Ellis notes how violence can be used to “temporarily advert incessant feelings of humiliation, insecurity and anxiety” (p.35). Ellis notes that violence is mostly permeated by sense of “injustice, betrayal, victimisation, desperation, entitlement, humiliation, and an intensely overwhelming fear of ruminating over what could have been done, or what might have been” (p.102).

⁵⁹ Drawing on Winlow and Hall (2011)

5) Social & Emotional Learning

A final additional area of literature that assisted my own understanding was Social and Emotional Learning (OECD 2015; Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta 2016; Frey, Fisher & Smith 2019; Brackett 2020). In particular, this literature suggests the importance of helping youth come to understand, regulate, and express their emotions in constructive and healthy ways. Research out of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL⁶⁰), for example, suggests the importance of being able to identify and regulate emotions as a key competence for dealing effectively with daily tasks and stresses. One such program is the RULER model (Maurer & Brackett, 2004), that aims to help youth **recognise emotions**, **understand** their causes and consequences, **label** them accurately, **express** them appropriately, and find strategies to **regulate** them. Brackett (2020) culminates over 25 years of research into emotional learning attesting to the importance of assisting youth to becoming emotional aware and competent, and the benefits this has for their well-being and academic achievement.

Conclusion

Reflecting on this episode I can see the stress enacted on me being a boy at school. These stresses came from multiple directions and in turn created anxiety as I tried to navigate my school life. These anxieties led to feelings I had no choice but to prove myself and measure up to opposing standards of being 'good' and being accepted. I wanted to be accepted and wanted to feel I belonged and so was forced to endorse certain masculine traits that were perpetuated throughout the school system. These traits venerated competition, aggression, and dominance, but were not the ideas of masculinity I revered. However, these traits were policed by my peers to meet particular standards. To overcome these anxieties and regain some control in my life I was forced to use the only accepted masculine currency of violence to fight and beat the boy.

While I was not new to the school, I had recently changed in physicality and popularity. This may have resulted in being challenged as I was challenging the existing hierarchy (Connell, 1995). I now question whether my opponent wanted to

⁶⁰ <https://casel.org/>

fight. Was he also like me put under pressure? He was higher than me in the hierarchy but had not changed in recent time. Was he being forced to prove his position? I recall how the fight was incited by other boys and do not recall arguing with the boy himself. Rumours were spread and the fight was created. *We* had no choice! I wonder if these fights act more for releasing frustrations at a lack of control at school and the anxieties that ensue for boys. Endorsed throughout society these standards of fighting become reproduced as expectations that boys *do*. However, I contemplate whether it is less the participation in violence but the watching that acts to “temporarily advert incessant feelings of humiliation, insecurity and anxiety” (Ellis 2016, p.35). We all play along, as it is the only story we are taught. I had no choice and played my part in reproducing the masculinity I resented. This was not the end of my masculine journey however, and I was left asking, how did I attempt to reclaim a balance between my masculinity aspirations while measuring up to being a man?

Alternative Practices

Vignette

I'm standing in a room that smells of hard-earned sweat. The atmosphere is thick and pushes against the body. Around me are others working to test and improve themselves. My training partners, my mentors, my friends. Amidst the respite to catch our breaths, the usual sounds of shuffling and physical jostling is exchanged by momentary ease and joking. I've been coming here for over a year since moving to this city. These congregations act as metaphysical grounding in my transient life.

Martial arts have been something I've done since watching the Karate Kid and Bruce Lee. My mother says that when I was too young to remember all I did was pretend to be a Kung Fu master or First Nations warrior. Practicing martial arts is not like the movies and not like I thought as a child. It is punishing work, frustrating, and often painful. But the challenge is life giving. It provides something that fills my whole being. The physicality, the cognitive stimulation, the emotional regulation, the spiritual nurturing. All tempering my soul. I come to know myself, my body, my boundaries. I come to *be* myself. These arts are no longer a part of what I do, they are part of who I am.

Practicing these arts has pushed me to many places trying to quench my thirst for practical and philosophical answers. These questions concern becoming the man I aspire towards in a world that promotes violence. Many martial arts studios encourage this violence, but I searched for a different art, an art of balance, an art of peace.

I take a breath and look at this motley crew. I question whether in any other place, in any other life, would we be friends? Such a band of misfits. But here now sharing the sweat, diving into ourselves together, we are a band of brothers. Warriors for the peaces of our souls.

Question:

I was drawn to martial arts and other practices that drew from different cultures as I felt they offered aspects unfulfilled in my life. What did such alternative activities offer my masculinity?

Literature Review

To refine the literature review this section engaged literature on martial arts and how it relates to masculinity and peace. This required disregarding literature on similar practices such as yoga or mindfulness as well as other combative sports such as boxing. While I have experimented with these practices⁶¹, it was the traditional martial arts of Japan and China that initially drew me and acted as my entry-point into these other practices. Therefore, 'martial arts', 'masculinity' and 'peace', along with 'benefits', 'health' and 'effects' were explicitly searched through the aforementioned databases.

Martial Arts and Masculinity

Most of literature discussing masculinity and martial arts focuses on the 'hard' competitive arts such as karate and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). These discuss how hard martial arts generally endorse traditional masculinities, such as toughness, and endow certain identities onto the practitioners that provide them privileges within the masculine hierarchy. For example, Vaccaro and Swauger (2015) discuss the rewards that placing oneself through painful and risky situations give to one's status as a primal form of masculine attainment. Bowman (2020), however, argues that MMA can embrace the full spectrum of masculinities. He adds that the stories selected and told through media representation of MMA, however, often overrepresent and reproduce particular forms of toxic masculinity.

Autobiographical accounts of MMA also exist within the literature. Stenius (2015) discusses the reflexive and embodied learning that comes from subjecting the body to pain and refining it into something new. He continues to discuss the paradoxes involved in becoming an MMA fighter with the contrasts of pain and pleasure and disgust and delight, towards an empowerment felt in both body and mind. Gottschall (2015), a professor of English, discusses his experiences with MMA and how he believes such ritualistic "monkey dances" provides opportunities to show physical courage and prove oneself. He also believes such rituals serve vital social functions often dangerously marginalised in modern culture. Gottschall believes the

⁶¹ Including Russian Systema, Wing Chun, western boxing, yoga, meditation, and First Nations rites of passage, along with other competitive sports, such as rugby.

opportunity to fight in relatively controlled and safe environments helps men work out conflicts and sort social hierarchies. He continues to state that without such opportunities the world might be a more violent place. Brent and Kraska (2013) similarly discuss this social function of ritualistic violence. Through interviews with illicit underground fighters they found “uncontained brutality pave an outlet for ephemeral excitement and self-actualization” (p.368). They believe such expressions of violence are a visceral reaction to societies rationalized and controlled modes of governance. A central reason for fighting was therefore “the means necessary to alleviate existential pains” (p.369). These activities were life-enriching, “providing them with a sense of identity, excitement, authenticity, and power and control otherwise not available to them within the confines of contemporary social life” (p.369).

While not drawn to competitive or more aggressive forms of martial arts, the martial arts I practiced still offered a masculine capital I was seeking. I felt that they provided an identity that separated me from the usual humdrum of life. Practicing martial arts provided initiation, release, and ways to prove and development myself. I felt it made me somehow a higher man, especially the philosophical internal arts I practiced. It was about gaining access to esoteric knowledge from hard work and becoming initiated into something different. It was about belonging and apprenticeship.

Bonde (2009) similarly discusses the ritualistic allure of martial arts, discussing that youth choose martial arts as it provides rites of passage. Bonde believes that boys are drawn to such rites of passage as in “our non-sensuous, highly technological welfare society...young men have a strong need to experience the limits of the body” and yearn for a “manhood test...where they are taught masculine codes of behavior” (p.1523). Bonde continues to discuss how boys may be attracted to martial arts due to the drudgery of modern life, and an inner longing for a heroic path. Boys are further “spellbound by some deeper philosophical layers to which they are only gradually introduced” (p.1526), and desire more than the lives that are available to them. Tied within this are notions of male bonding that are often missing for fatherless boys and a yearning for initiation into something more. Boys are drawn to martial arts due to a “need to seek the mystical (the monk) and omnipotence (the samurai) in a society that often offers powerlessness and a paucity of sensuous experience” (p.1529). He concludes by noting this fascination with the martial arts “may certainly be seen in connection with the loss of apprenticeship and the overall undermining of craftsman-like mastery” (p.1536). Similarly, writing for the ‘Good Men

Project', Pennington (2015) describes how martial arts are similar to alchemic processes. He suggests, "like alchemy, martial arts is about transmutation, specifically transmutation of the entire self — mind, body, and spirit — into something greater and more profound in nature."⁶²

Martial Arts Effects

Literature on martial arts often focuses on effects on practitioners. These focus on either the reduction of negative anti-social behaviour, such as aggression, or the promotion of pro-social behaviours, such as self-esteem and confidence. A note should, however, be mentioned to the reliability to many of these studies, with many suggesting rather generalised claims from relatively small samples. It should also be restated that positivistic and generalising paradigms are not endorsed by myself. These studies have been included, however, as they culminate to show the need for more nuanced pictures.

Martial Arts & Aggression

Many studies focus on whether practicing martial arts reduces aggressive tendencies in practitioners. Similar to the above section, the majority of this literature focuses on competitive martial arts and MMA. Within the literature, divergent findings appear.

Trulson (1986) for example, focused on the use of martial arts programmes for youth with delinquency records. He found that traditional arts that incorporated psychological and philosophical aspects, decreased aggressiveness, lowered anxiety, increased self-esteem, increased social adroitness, and increased value orthodoxy in practitioners. Interestingly, the second group that practiced non-traditional, modern fighting arts, showed increasing levels of aggression. Twemlow and Sacco (1998) also looked at the effects of martial arts programmes as a treatment for violent adolescents through a meta-analysis of literature on martial arts programmes aimed at violence prevention. They found that elements of self-control

⁶² Spencer Pennington Feb 1st 2015, accessed 21/11/20: <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/the-alchemy-of-martial-arts-wcz/>

and community service encouraged in the traditional arts assisted the adolescents in the control of aggressive impulses (p.517).

Reynes and Lorant (2001, 2004) focused on competitive martial arts and argue that arts such as karate showed neither positive nor negative effects on aggression while 'softer' judo showed decreases in aggression. They added that the results suggest an importance of kata or meditation on self-control acquisition for boys. A study by Lamarre and Nosanchuk (1999) similarly showed decreases in aggression through judo practice. Björkqvist and Varhama (2001) argue that studying martial arts can also impact practitioner's approaches to conflict. Focusing on external martial arts of karate they found that males who practiced were less likely to endorse violent conflict resolution in comparison to non-karateka practitioners⁶³. Other studies include Tejero-González and Balsalobre-Fernández (2011) who found that martial arts practitioners "declare significantly lower levels than the control group, both in general violence and gratuitous violence" (p.13)⁶⁴. Shachar et al. (2016) specifically note how martial arts appealed to boys creating self-control skills which lead to decreased aggression.

However, not all studies show consistent reductions in aggression. A meta-study by Gubbels et al. (2016) found there was "no overall relation between martial arts participation and externalizing behavior in juveniles" (p.73). Another meta-study by Harwood, Lavidor, and Rassovsky (2016) also discovered mixed results within their sample of studies. In general, however, they argued "it appears that martial arts has a potential to reduce externalizing behaviors in youth" (p.96). However, as noted above, these studies provide little discussion on contextual variables with only a cumulative picture being provided. Noting these inconsistent findings Pels and Kleinert (2016) suggest the results can be explained "by subsequent research that indicates that the influence of combat sports on aggression and aggressive feelings is dependent on how a combat sport is instructed" (p.973).

⁶³ Interestingly they found the opposite for female practitioners who endorsed the use of violence more than non-practitioners.

⁶⁴ However, they were not lower in scores for violence linked to self-protection.

Martial Arts & Pro-Social Attributes

Studies also focus on pro-social by-products of learning martial arts. These include physical benefits associated with exercise, but also mental well-being benefits. Similar to the above, mixed results appeared.

Both Lakes and Hoyt (2004) and Twemlow et al. (2008) argue that school based martial arts programmes showed results that indicated pro-social improvements. For example, Lakes and Hoyt (2004) saw improvements “in areas of cognitive self-regulation, affective self-regulation, pro-social behaviour, classroom conduct, and performance on a mental math test” (p.283). Specifically, they also noted significant improvements for boys in cognitive self-regulation and classroom conduct in comparison with girls.

Theeboom, De Knop, and Vertonghen (2009) acknowledge the contrasting effects of martial arts involvement, especially with regard to youth. However, they believe findings may support the relationship between martial arts practice and positive socio-psychological responses, arguing “almost all children⁶⁵ have indicated that they experience positive changes which have an effect on the way they feel and behave” (p.26). They continue to discuss how participating children “experienced behavioural changes mostly in the way they responded to conflicts” (p.26). Similar to above, however, concerns may be raised over the small sample sizes used in this study. They conclude by discussing a need to look at differences between soft and hard martial arts in effects regarding violence use. Reviewing the Tai-Chi literature, Posadzki and Jacques (2009) focus on the meditative and spiritual benefits of Tai-Chi suggesting how this aspect is often overlooked due to an over-emphasis on physical and mental benefits. They argue that ‘Mediation in Movement’ may also bring benefits to the social and spiritual, as well as physical and psychological spheres. They add that through the meditative aspects of training the “quality of interpersonal relationships may be improved, spiritual development enhanced, structural and functional homeostasis facilitated, and psychological well-being strengthened” (p.109). While this study is mostly speculative, they feel Tai-Chi should be seen as “holistic health” for self-realization, self-understanding, and self-control.

Chinkov & Holt (2016) researched implicit transfer of life skills through learning

⁶⁵ 34 out of 40, attesting to the small sample in this study.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ). They noted how participants thought BBJ had changed their lives through the acquisition of life skills reflecting values and characteristics of the sport: respect for others, perseverance, self-confidence, and healthy habits. Central to these feelings of positive change were the relationships fostered by the instructors and the peer support they gained from being part of the BBJ community. Kistorz, Gniezinska, and Nawrocka (2017) also looked at how martial arts relates to values and self-esteem. They note how male practitioners in their study “were characterized by a higher level of self-esteem” and attributed a larger importance to “‘fitness and physical strength’, moral values and religious sanctities” (p.16). They acknowledge that factors of “perception of their coach and his competence, interpersonal relationships, sense of quality of life, level and type of motivation, emotional intelligence, empathy and mental resilience” (p.16) need to be considered.

Bird, McCarthy, and O’Sullivan (2019) delivered MMA in tandem with counselling to ‘at risk’ boys. They argue that the martial arts provided structure and fitness and helped to reduce stigma associated with engaging in psychotherapy. The participants also noted how the male relationships were particularly impactful. Finally, Blomqvist Mickelsson (2020) explores MMA and BBJ for youth’s sociopsychological development. His study suggests that both practices increased self-control and pro-social behaviour, however, he noticed that MMA practitioners reported increased aggressiveness whereas BJJ practitioners experienced a decline in aggression. He continues that “modern martial arts and MMA may not be suitable for at-risk youth to practice, whereas traditional martial arts and sports with a healthy philosophical foundation may be effective in reducing antisocial behaviour while enhancing socially desirable behaviour among young people” (p.386).

However, again, not all studies correlate findings. Strayhorn and Strayhorn (2009), for example, found that “martial arts variable failed to show a statistically significant effect on behaviour” (p.1) from a psychiatric perspective. They argue their study fails to support assumptions that enrolling children in martial arts improves the mental health outcomes of self-esteem, self-confidence, concentration, and self-discipline it markets. Similarly, a meta-study by Vertonghen and Theeboom (2010) showed contrasting images. They argue that even though a considerable amount of social psychological research has been undertaken, “it has not brought clarity in the existing duality regarding the possible effects of martial arts involvement” (p.528). Beesley and Fraser-Thomas (2019) argue that “the claims of developmental outcomes and facilitation of positive youth development appear misguided and raise

concerns for parents seeking information on child MMA programs” (p.1).

Identity

Beyond pro-social benefits martial arts practice could also provide practitioners opportunities to develop and embody identities. Rosenberg and Sapochnik (2005) discuss the integrative space that martial arts practice provides beyond the apparent enactment of violence. They argue that such arts may “appeal to the many who search for some form of sublimation for their aggressive impulses, or for a way to abolish feelings of vulnerability, or perhaps the hope of managing their fear of uncertainty” (p.453). Similar to the transmutational potentials discussed by Bonde (2009) and Pennington (2015), they add how martial arts offer opportunities “to experience something that he may have not known he was searching for: psychic integration” (p.457).

Speaking directly to the differences between traditional martial arts and the Westernised competitive versions, Channon (2012) looks at the significance of Eastern martial arts in British men’s narratives of masculinity showing how “these arts continue to hold spiritual and philosophical significance for Western practitioners” (p.112). Channon notes how practitioners deliberately differentiated themselves as partitioners of traditional arts versus Western competitive arts positioning themselves as ‘better people’. Themes that emerged in his research included notions of ‘self-improvement’, interests in the ‘philosophical side’, ‘introspection’, ‘self-development’, a ‘co-dependent nurturing of ability’, as well as a belief they provided a sexual attractiveness beyond the general shallowness of other sports. While traditional masculine traits of fighting was still valued, “fighting to ‘prove’ oneself was [] criticised as betraying character flaws such as insecurity and lack of control, which undermined rather than proved masculinity” (p.121). Their abilities were therefore portrayed as “sacred” as only revealed in self-defence. Channon adds that Eastern arts therefore “became a device for their active construction of a resistive position within a hierarchy of masculine styles” (p.126). The arts provided forms of agentic contestation, and forms of resistant masculinity through promoting the types of men they *were not*. Channon concludes that therefore ‘traditionalist’ Eastern martial arts provided “a framework around which to substantiate and defend a particular vision of masculinity, which was cast as morally superior to the otherwise normative alternative associated with Western sport – a more or less ‘toxic’

masculine archetype (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005)” (p.126).

Foster (2015) similarly discusses supplementary purposes of studying non-competitive internal martial arts. He argues that such arts also provide metaphors for practitioners to live by. Foster argues that practitioners “routinely use the particular way the body is deployed in aikido as a metaphor for how they strive to manage non-physical challenges in their everyday lives” (p.176). This in turn may provide the individual with a particular identity that they wish to be perceived as. Foster discusses how practicing aikido provides somatic metaphorism that “indicates that the body is an essential metaphorical tool for social cognition—people interpret and make sense of the social world, in part, by bodily metaphor” (p.179). Training in aikido is as much about the person you wish to project and is thus a form of “‘cross training’ in the social world; self-defence is also social-defence (Farrer and Whalen-Bridge 2011)” (p.181).

Morgan (2016)⁶⁶ discusses how martial arts can offer a rich soil for growing and nurturing “enlightened masculinity”. Morgan positions how learning martial arts provides sanctuaries for positive masculine values where being over-masculine is discouraged in favour of more balanced healthy masculinities. These learning environments can provide strong role models, and opportunities to be a positive role model yourself. Martial arts also provides opportunities to understand, protect, and nurture your body, understand and manage your emotions, and experience and explore intimate non-sexual touch. Editing a recent special issue on Masculinities in martial arts, Schiller (2020) notes how martial arts therefore “can play an important role for the construction of masculine identities” (p.292), and “are often assigned a heightened symbolic importance for masculinities in relation to other gender, sexual, ethnic and intersectional identities” (p.292).

Martial Arts and Peace

Finally, traditional martial arts have been associated with peace and peacefulness. This was definitely a belief I had and drew me to the arts as I tried to find ways to be a non-violent male. Many associations are often through the integration of martial

⁶⁶ The Good Men Project, Kai Morgan March 20th 2016, accessed 27/11/20: <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/the-martial-art-of-good-men-wcz/>

arts principles into communication techniques and conflict resolution. Books often integrate martial arts philosophies such as notions of blending and harmonizing. Books such as *Getting to Yes* (Fisher & Ury 1981), *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense* (Elgin 1985), *Verbal Judo* (Thompson 1993, 2014), and *Verbal Aikido* (Archer 2013, 2020) all use principles of non-resistance and *flow* to redirect 'opponents' aggressive advances. Haroun (2016), for example, compares the complementarity between Aikido with Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and elicitive conflict transformation. Haroun connects these complementarities to Aikido's concept of Aiki as sharing NVC principles such as empathy and active (non-judgemental) listening.

Other authors also draw from the martial arts philosophies and discuss reconceptualising how we perceive conflict (Crum 1987; Dreher 1990; Ringer 2006; Kroll 2008; Rosenfeld 2013). They position conflict as an opportunity for growth opposed to something to be avoided. Crum (1987), for example, draws from the martial concept of being centred, arguing it is essential in verbal conflict situations and aggressive confrontations. He also draws from a central philosophical idea of interconnectedness that perceives the world as "an interdependent, vitally alive organism, of which you are an integral part" (p.189). He continues to suggest that conflict produces energy that "can produce a precious gift we could never have experienced alone" (p.189). Kroll (2008) similarly notes that although aikido is developed as a method of responding to physical attacks, "it provides a framework for understanding many types of conflict" (p.452). Kroll suggests that rather than being tactics of defence, such approaches are instead an "art of peace" (p.246)⁶⁷.

Johnson (2018) discuss how taekwondo is more than simply communication tactics and instead a form of "soft-diplomacy". Noting the conundrum between the violent art and peace, Johnson argues that it is taekwondo's teaching of self-discipline, encouraging mental cultivation, and its focus on a 'martial way', that navigates this conundrum. He adds that through values of "courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit" (p.1646), practitioners are taught "that their training has purpose beyond mere pugilism. In short, they are taught to transcend and transplant the skills they learned in taekwondo practice into their daily lives, and the

⁶⁷ See also Steven, J. (1992). *The Art Of Peace: Teachings of the Founder of Aikido*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Classics.

goals of a better world and service”⁶⁸ (p.1646).

Similarly, some are beginning to suggest martial arts study as influencing peace practitioners’ abilities to not only communicate differently but also affect and transmute conflicts through their presence. Wagner (2015), for example, edits chapters that focus on the use of aikido for both intra- and inter-personal conflicts. Here new ways to train peace workers beyond the epistemological turn in peace studies (Dietrich 2012) are discussed. This turn positioned the Western educated peace worker as constrained by epistemological assumptions they took for granted. These chapters argue that by practicing aikido new epistemological frameworks are provided that create new capabilities to work in and affect conflict. Dietrich and Wagner (2015), for example, consider the philosophy of aikido as “oriented towards the basic aspects of inter-human relationships, towards the connecting intellectual and spiritual values of human existence; to communication, communion, conflict and confluence” (p.11). They add that aikido emphasizes many aspects central in elicitive conflict work: “awareness of the present, elaborate control of breath and body, control of one’s language and gestures, agility, release of muscle tension, empathic resonance with the adversary” (p.12). These abilities forge people who are “thoughtful, responsible human beings, that is, beings who connect mind and body and who are capable of acting responsibly without hesitation or doubt, understanding the power exercised by the word over physical violence” (p.12). Later, Wagner (2015) writes that “the syllables ai, ki and do represent three fundamental principles of any kind of conflict transformation” (p.17) concluding that “conflict-transformation can only elicit from an interaction of interactive conflict regulation (ai), self-regulation (ki), and self-transformation (do)” (p.63).

Bryant (2019) similarly discusses how aikido can be used as a tool for teaching about elicitive conflict transformation. He argues that tenets of being centred, letting go, non-competitive, contact, and philosophies of correspondence, resonance, and harmonizing, are central to both practices and can be learnt both philosophically and practically through aikido. Central to these compatible practices is self-knowledge, as “one can learn to fight with no one by learning about oneself” (p.27). Aikido provides a physical manifestation for engaging with conflicts as “how one carries one’s body reflects one’s inner life, and it is of course a recursive relationship in that one’s inner

⁶⁸ Drawing from Mayen, J., Johnson, J. A., & Mayen Bosch, R. (2015) ‘Taekwondo as One’s Life Philosophy’, *Journal of the International Association for Taekwondo Research* 2, no. 1 (2015): 24.

life is represented in the way one uses the body” (p.27). Aikido is therefore an integral practice where “the body is activated by the physical training, the mind is activated by the theoretical [philosophies], and the spirit is activated by the feelings of beauty that come with the other two” (p.27).

Conclusion

Martial arts carry appeals for some men that may result in positive effects. While some divergence exists in the research, results suggest reductions in negative behaviours, such as aggression, and increases in pro-social characteristics, such as self-esteem. However, there may also exist benefits beyond health that include integrative spaces for crafting one’s identity. Metaphors made available through practicing martial arts may provide alternative identities outside of traditional masculine norms and spaces where youth can transition from boyhood to manhood in supported ways. Research may also suggest that philosophical aspects underpinning traditional martial arts provide new ways of interacting in the world. While some note these intrinsic assumptions attributed to Eastern arts are romanticised (Moenig & Kim 2018; Benesch 2020), they still might provide philosophies one can incorporate that diverge from those offered by hegemonic ideas of masculinity. As I reflect on this literature, I recall that these were my motivations for learning martial arts. Martial arts provided a vehicle to separate myself from the trajectories of hegemonic masculinity but in ways that were perhaps still accepted. Martial arts provided avenues to explore and embody the masculinity I wished to carve. I too felt there was something ‘higher’ to being a traditional martial artist as if these arts provided physical and philosophical apprenticeships towards mastery of a ‘better’ peaceful masculinity. It was about becoming proficient in the required skills of being a man, but also proficient in how I interacted with the world where I did not need to recede into techniques of violence that lacked the control I craved. It was of being a samurai, a monk, or Jedi, and martial arts provided an alternative philosophy and practical manifestations I could live by.

Research Question:

What can I learn from other male practitioners of arts, such as martial arts, that draw from alternative philosophies regarding masculinity and peace?

Sample:

5 male arts practitioners were sought through my martial arts networks. This specifically included aikido or Taoist martial artists, but also included one who predominantly trains in yoga and one who discussed other arts he was drawn to after practicing martial arts, such as First Nations practices⁶⁹. Ideally these were men who commenced their arts around age 15 as this correlates to my age of starting martial arts.

⁶⁹ It was originally anticipated that they would discuss martial arts, however, one focused upon another practice he does: yoga, while another discussed how as well as doing martial arts he was drawn to explore other alternative practices, including First Nations practices. It was decided to include these interviews as they provided a similar expression of prescribing to alternative philosophies with some added diversity. As mentioned, I too practice yoga and First Nations rituals, even though these came after starting martial arts.

Interviews

Luke Sean Peter Kevin Robin

Luke

Luke grew up in a relatively abusive household in a conservative part of the US. Luke described himself as a nerdy shy kid who started martial arts at 15 as a way to remedy his physical deficits. He started Aikido when a friend told him “you use their energy against them”, which appealed to his beliefs in intelligence over physicality. Over time martial arts became something he identified with and recalibrated how others saw him as “an edgy outsider”. Over time, however, Luke became frustrated with the quixotic nature of the arts he practiced. Things, however, changed for Luke when he met his current teacher upon seeing “the way this guy moved and I saw his potency and his intelligence, and was very attracted to that”. This became a turning point in Luke’s practice as he became less interested in combat and more interested in becoming a steward to the techniques and lineage. As well as physical this art was cerebral and spiritual, bringing him full circle back into his initial interests, but from a place of tradition, personal growth, and deep presence in the world. Through our conversation, themes of **integrated presence** and **integrity** emerged.

Reflective Account of Luke’s Interview

Luke discussed how martial arts allowed him to come into his body. This was achieved through the masculine, expressive aspects, which were both easier and more accessible for him, and allowed him to express and explore masculine aspects within himself. Through this masculine entry point he was able to explore more feminine soft subtleties that might otherwise be abjured.

“it’s largely male in the beginning, you know. As you’re just learning to express power and dominate the person that you’re doing this paired set of movements with. That drive to dominate and be effective is kind of the foundation for much more sophisticated things that are much less masculine-feminine. Maybe they’re more feminine even, but that base is a very masculine exercise.”

Luke continued that this exploration of masculine-feminine “energies” teaches appreciation for both and creates a desire for balance and **integration**.

“yang is the sort of big garage door that you drive through in the beginning, and then you reach a point where that becomes your enemy...And more intermediate and advanced stages are much more about having the sensitivity you need to be perceptive. If you’re going to be perceptive, that is to me more of a traditionally feminine attribute. You have to shut up to listen.”

Luke described how this masculine-feminine balance brings a self-aware grounded **presence** in the world. This awareness creates a desire for **integrity** in how we are in the world. Luke added the arts are “a machine” that “if you do the work it outputs integrity”.

“the way that martial arts can contribute the most to a person who lives in a non-violent, non-warzone place...is by knowing the self, by becoming someone who’s solid, by learning what you care about and what you believe, and projecting integrity.”

Luke expressed how practicing his arts changes the way he is in mind and body, and how he is in the world.

“the techniques worked me and then I looked back one day and I realised that I wasn’t the same. My body moved differently. My mind worked a little differently. And you keep down that path and you realise that integrity is absolutely essential to being happy, you know. If you’re going to be at peace, internal emotional peace with yourself, you need to have integrity.”

Much of Luke’s conversation resonated with me. These practices allowed me to come further into my body in masculine sanctioned ways and allowed me to be perceived differently by my peers. As I look back, this was a key need I had at the time: acceptance and respect. Practicing martial arts allowed me to enter through the accessible masculine and the physical, allowing me to feel ‘manly’. I was a physical boy but did not like too much aggression and also liked the idea of intelligence over physicality. Through the physical, I was able to explore the softer aspects of myself in ways that would otherwise be ridiculed. It allowed me to find a self-aware balance, and through that balance it allowed me to find integrity in myself: in my body, mind,

heart and spirit. It was a presence of integrity I was looking for and had admired from the original images of the Jedi warriors or Taoist monks I saw as a child. I wanted to feel that others perceived me with integrity. These arts provided access points to achieving that feeling.

Sean

Sean first practiced judo around 13 by going to a community centre with a friend. He liked wrestling when younger and liked the discipline and competition style progression in judo. However, Sean found he got “knocked about” in the class and stopped going. Later he started kickboxing, possibly because of watching Bruce Lee films, or because he was “an idiot” at school and got into confrontations. Sean practiced rather “rough” styles in his early years, but his wife-to-be convinced him to quit. Sean initially wished to learn martial arts to be able to stand up for himself and others, but when it became about who was toughest, he lost interest. Sean struggled to find an art that fit his esoteric and artistic interests. He eventually found Tai-Chi and became “hooked” because of “the people, and the philosophy, the quality of movement, and this idea of having strength through softness”. Sean feels Tai-Chi is “a bottomless pit” in relation to personal and physical development and life philosophy, and he brings it into his life as a daily “prayer” to feel balanced and mindful. Themes that emerged through our interview included, **less violent** and a **philosophy** of life.

Reflective Account of Sean’s Interview

Sean admitted he appreciates physicality with other men as it provides ways to diminish his ego.

“I find it quite helpful to actually engage physically with another man, in a way that has a competitive nature, but not combative...there was a value to be learned from being thrown around, and being hit again, and being physically threatened although not with damage, but just your ego goes, your sense of performance goes out the window.”

However, Sean described how since learning Tai-Chi he has become **less interested in violence**.

“I haven’t really had a violent encounter since going into these styles of martial arts, just it isn’t there...to me it tends to diffuse the violent tendency and channel it more into a creative physicality.”

Sean described the results of his practices as creating self-imposed expectations for him being in the world.

“it’s not just because Tai Chi is soft and relaxed and everything, it comes from that kind of ... you expect something of yourself. If you’re practising all the time, and you’re looking and reading and contemplating either Eastern philosophy, or Western versions of it, you expect something of yourself. It’s maybe when you reach it you know it, rather than letting it spiral out of control.”

Sean ascribed to the **philosophies** of yin and yang underpinning his arts as they “just made sense” to him and provided “a tool to kind of check in”.

“there’s something about it that I think speaks to anybody if you look outside the window, or look inside. So for me the philosophy that went with Tai Chi, which was philosophical Taoism, spoke to something that felt natural to me, so I aligned with it.”

This changed the way Sean saw and interacted with the world, providing “a way of moving through the world”.

“that merging of mind and body with the land, with the air, with the world, being part of the planet, which is important, I think. If you have that kind of sensitivity that you can show and give to people, then they’re less inclined to want to step on a spider, or kill something, or pollute something. So I guess that’s kind of a sacred thing for me.”

For Sean, Tai-Chi was more than a practice, but “a mindset...a feeling inside your body”, a “kind of prayer”. It was “a way” and “a guide to moving through life”.

Reflecting on Sean’s interview reminded me how I too was drawn to the idea of strength through softness, as this, I believed, would set me apart from the aggressive

expectations of masculinity while also providing the masculine status of strength. Connected to this was a desire to be able to protect myself and others, but in ways that diminished committing the violence I attributed to being a bully. It was, in my mind, a more developed or higher form of manliness – one that was powerful and assertive, yet in control and sensitive. To be able to animate this, I needed a philosophy to ascribe to, and similarly to Sean, the philosophy attached to my practices provided similar perspectives. This philosophy provided practical ways to ‘move through the world’. It also provided spiritual justifications of treading gentle on the Earth while not averse to masculine precepts. As I reflect, I understand that having an *accepted excuse* for not being violent was important for my sense of masculinity.

Peter

Peter was exposed to violence from a young age and struggled to “fit in” at school. He was very energetic but was labelled as ADHD, ADD, and bipolar making him feel “stupid”. Peter began to act out with impulsive behaviours until he struck a teacher and was sent to an alternative school. Here Peter became initiated into a gang where he developed anger issues and trauma from continuously deteriorating life circumstances. This culminated in an incident where he was sent to jail. Here Peter began “looking inside” and reflected on his life, realising he had to change. Peter joined classes such as restorative justice and non-violent communication that shifted his “mental trajectory” and assisted him understand violence. At this time he also became interested in Buddhism, mediation and yoga that brought him mental clarity and calmness. Peter enjoyed the physical challenge of yoga and it provided him time to breathe and reflect. Yoga provides Peter a new perspective of perceiving the world as interconnected. It slows him down and makes him more aware, preventing him from reacting. From our interview themes of **taking time** to breath and **letting go** due to **interconnectedness** emerged.

Reflective Account of Peter’s Interview

Peter discussed how yoga provided him **time** to himself, which allowed him to breath, reflect, and provided calm.

“It provided me with a sense of calm. It was time for myself, it was time to self-reflect and be in my own thoughts, but also to breathe.”

Peter explained that this breath was “one of the most impactful lessons” he took from his practice, letting a “cleansing breath flow through your body”. Time to breathe and reflect brought new awareness to Peter that allowed him to choose how he responded to situations as opposed to being driven by the impulsive reactions that drove many of his previous decisions.

“it’s to breathe and then respond. And it’s getting out of that reactive state of mind and getting to more of a responsive state of mind to where you can respond with clarity. It’s the first reactions where we fuck things up, but when we take a step back, and we allow ourselves to take a step back, and realise there’s no rush.”

Interestingly, while this breath and reflection brought a sense of control over Peter’s responses, he mentioned that it went together with a **letting go** due to an awareness that things existed outside of his control, and that “this universe, this society, it’s bigger than we are”.

“And it’s realising how ridiculous the situation is and to give up control when you need to give up control...I ask myself, “Is there anything, absolutely anything that I can do in this moment that will change this outcome?” And if not, then I’m going to chill out and I’m going to enjoy the ride and I’m going to get there when I get there.”

This seeming dichotomy of being in control though letting go of situations outside of one’s control connected to a worldview that Peter had adopted through his practices: that everyone and everything is **interconnected**. This affected the way he saw and interacted with the world towards being more conscious and conscientious.

“we need to step away from this entitled position [] where we think everything else is here to serve us...And through seeing that, the interconnectedness of all things and beings and life in general, it gives you a lot more – you step a lot more carefully. And you’re a lot more aware of how you’re impacting environments but also people.”

Reflecting on Peter's comments I recall how I was drawn to my practices with the hope they would provide more calmness and clarity in a world where I felt anxious. I remember feeling a lack of control in my life including issues around pressures of measuring up to standards of masculinity I felt at school. My practices similarly brought a new interpretation of the universe that resonated and provided philosophies of being able to feel in control while simultaneously letting go of feeling I had to control everything⁷⁰. Finally connected to this philosophy, the centrality of slowing down and breathing provided both a practical tool to avoid reacting, while at the same time provided an image of masculinity that I could incorporate: a man that was calm, grounded, in control, yet also gentle. This provided power and control over how I could portray myself to others and provided choice for whom I could be.

Kevin

Kevin grew up in a military family describing himself as a rather “big-mouth” child who was put into martial arts classes to learn self-discipline. Kevin recalled getting mixed messages from his father who reprimanded him about fighting while proud he stood up for himself. At 11 Kevin discovered Bruce Lee who became a role model, introducing him to Eastern philosophy and mysticism. Kevin became known as the martial artist at school, which led to him getting into less fights. He believes this was partly because martial arts assisted him resolve his anger. However, when Kevin was in his 30's he worked as a nightclub doorman and realised his practices did not have “efficacy in real world violence”. Kevin abandoned traditional arts for combative styles. However, over time Kevin went “full circle” as he believed balance was needed between practical protection and the ethical underpinnings that initially drew him to the arts. After his father's death, and becoming a father himself, Kevin is integrating his studies into what he calls “warriorship”. Martial arts are an “anchor point” and “channel” on his “journey” as he tries to develop himself. Through our interview themes of **Warriorship, self-development, being, and choice** arose.

⁷⁰ A masculine trait in itself?

Reflective Account of Kevin's Interview

Kevin discussed how he separated being 'a man' from being masculine.

"Being masculine are all of the genetic things for me that come along with having the chromosomal structure I've got....Being a man, is the negotiating with the feminine to bring those inherent qualities into alignment and a balance."

For Kevin, training in martial arts provided access and practice into finding this balance between his masculinity and femininity.

"so much of combative and martial arts trainings is about embracing the feminine actually. It's about learning to yield. Learning to be soft. Learning when to be hard. When to be strong. When to be gentle."

Kevin's martial arts experiences have created beliefs in an image of being a man around what he calls "warriorship". This **warriorship**, provides a model for constant **self-development** and ways for being in the world.

"There was a sense of which I wanted to pick up warriorship again rather than just the ability to perform violence. I'm still negotiating that journey now really and the language around that."

This way of being in the world is based upon a constant self-development of integrating protection with ethical 'peaceful' foundations so that one has "the skill so that you don't need to use it".

"peaceful warriorship is having the ability to participate in violence skilfully but choosing not to do so."

What comes with this for Kevin "is a way of being in the world. A way of being present, a quality of attention. A quality of engagement with other people... It's integrated in the way in which I engage in the world". For Kevin, this way of **being** is based upon "autonomy".

“It gives me access I think to a kind of being in the world where it’s about autonomy and critical thinking...[]...It’s about sovereignty I think.”

Autonomy culminates in **choice** for Kevin, providing a framework for being in the world through a self-actualised “movement away from instinct and towards choice”. This connects directly into the differences between masculinity and a crafted manhood for Kevin.

“masculinity doesn’t afford choice. Masculinity results in the necessity to inflict violence or to force your agenda because there is no other tool available. I think manhood and peace, where it comes in is because once you have to some degree become integrated and self-actualised you have the choice to yield.”

Reflecting on Kevin’s words, I recall how martial arts for me were also about self-development towards being balanced and autonomous. It was a way of crafting a manhood that I aspired towards, a warrior who was able to use violence, but chose not to. Martial arts therefore concerned regaining control and agency in my actions and reputation. There were very strong ethical underpinnings to this image that I wished to emulate to be seen as a person of integrity. However, there was also a realization that to be able to be in control of violence (within myself or between others) I must have experienced it to be reputable. The image of a peaceful warrior is one that resonates with me as I seek to develop an image of myself as one who is in control, strong, and protecting, yet also calm, sensitive⁷¹ and non-violent. Martial arts practices were central to this image as well as provided practical steps I could experience to develop this sense of self in the world.

Robin

Robin grew up rural Canada. He was soft, emotional and gentle, and struggled to relate to his strong masculine German father. When young, Robin spent a lot of time alone in the forests and became interested in being a warrior through Heavy-Metal music and Bruce Lee, and so he began practicing martial arts. Robin made several “poor decisions” that led to him getting help from men’s groups. These groups helped him explore masculinity and femininity and introduced him to practices including

⁷¹ Sensitive in demeanour and sensitive to the situation.

breath-work, Taoism, shamanism, and First Nations practices, that helped him “discover what it is to be a man”. Each of these has brought insights, but each alone was insufficient. Robin explained he finally took a “risk”, quit his job, and become a facilitator in breath-work and began drumming and sweat lodges⁷². These practices have helped Robin with the “woundings” in his life and have helped him find balance between his masculine and feminine sides. Robin feels this work draws him into his “shadow”, helping him move forward with his life with healing and a positive outlook. From our interview, themes of **working on oneself** and **control**, towards **being the best version of yourself** emerged.

Reflective Account of Robin’s Interview

Robin described the value he gets from **working on himself**, seeking to find balance even though it is difficult.

“I want to go to the mountains and never come back, but when I stay in and I work through it and I see that the only reason it’s been brought up is because it’s something of my masculinity or my femininity that’s out of balance, and I go, “Oh, okay, well, maybe I should stay and actually stick this out.”

Robin attributes these masculine and feminine imbalances as accumulated through his life. He feels breath-work acts as a way to perceive these imbalances and work through them towards self-integration.

“Everything about masculinity and femininity is stored somewhere in our body and the fact is how do we unlock it, how do we find it and how do we clear the garbage in front of that stuff that we can really show up exactly the way we are. Well, it’s breath-work because it activates stuff in our field that was so dormant for so long and brings it to the surface.”

For Robin, awareness must move beyond the “heady stuff” as otherwise it remains “too complicated and it doesn’t really solve the issue around masculinity and femininity and how we can really bring it into our lives”. Robin explained the practices

⁷² A sweat lodge is a North American Indigenous practice

he does is *felt* and brings “clarity” through allowing one to “channel through what’s really going on...and what’s really the reason why I have these certain behaviours”.

For Robin, his practices increase inner ‘peace’ and change how one is in the world, creating peace between people.

“The practices create peace within ourselves and when there’s peace within ourselves, there is no separation between us. When there’s a peace within our own soul, we don’t go looking for fights, we don’t go looking to antagonise people.”

Through these practices “we’re more grounded in who we are as men” and regain **control** where “no-one can really rattle us unless we allow them to, to shake our cage, our bars”. For Robin his practices are about working on himself towards “living the most fulfilled life” and becoming the **best version** of himself.

“It’s becoming the best version of myself, so in order to become the best version of ourselves, I believe we do have to do practices that bring that out in us.”

Reflecting on Robin’s interview, I too recall feeling how my practices were about developing a best version of myself. Perhaps I was drawn to doing such practices through a personal desire to try and become the best version of a man I could. I believed that this best version was someone who was grounded as had worked through their stored difficulties. These stored difficulties were embodied and therefore required challenging embodied practices to release. I believed that such practices resulted in a deep self-knowledge and knowledge of the world that created states of self-control and internal peace. Through being in touch with and balancing mind, heart, body and spirit, I then hoped to be able to act with equanimity. This was the image I wished for, and an image I wished to be perceived as. As I reflect, I see I longed for confidence that I believed would be achieved through competence attained from undergoing such experiences. I wished to emit a courageous, worldly and experienced explorer: someone who had journeyed to the unknown and returned stronger.

Overall Reflection

Reflecting upon this episode I realise how many themes resonated with my own experiences and beliefs. For this section three main themes shall be explored as potentially underpinning the above themes:

1. Being in the world.
2. Self-Development.
3. Philosophy to believe in and live by.

Interviewee	Themes	Underpinning Themes?
Luke	Integrated presence Integrity	<p>Being in the world</p> <p>Self-development</p> <p>Philosophy to live by</p>
Sean	Less violent Philosophy of life	
Peter	Taking time to breath Letting go Interconnectedness	
Kevin	Warriorship Self-development Being Choice	
Robin	Working on oneself Control Being the best version of yourself	

Table 8: Alternative Practices

A sense of **Being in the world** was shared by the participants reminding me of how I undertook my practices to find practical ways of **moving through the world**. I felt confused how to be in the world where I did not wish to be violent but wished to be respected and accepted by my peers. This *being* included balancing and projecting seeming dichotomies: **physical**, **practical** yet **sacred**; being in **control** yet **letting go**; **strong**, and resolute yet **sensitive** and **gentle**, **choosing not to react**; and an **autonomous** and **sovereign** self that is **interconnected**, **grounded** and '**deeply present**'. It was about trying to be the **best version** of myself. I was searching for ways to come into my mind, body, heart and spirit, and find balance and **integration** between them. I wanted to **step carefully** on the Earth with equanimity, **ethics** and

integrity, yet also feel safe, respected, and accepted as a man. Being in the world was about controlling how I was perceived where I would not become subordinated (Connell 1995). I hoped to emit a certain *presence, projecting integrity* onto others so that I felt I was someone of worth. I was searching to become “*integrated in the way in which I engage in the world*”.

To be able to ‘*be*’ this way I required methods to **develop myself to becoming the best version of myself**. For me this was a desire to *become*, a desire to *craft* myself into a competent and confident individual. I desired developing myself to be seen as someone with *integrity, integrated or self-actualised*, and who *expect[ed] something of myself* as means to *set me apart*. Essential to this development was not just a need for physical embodied practices, but also spaces to reflect, and a spiritual **philosophy to believe in**. The physical embodied routines allowed me a break from the world and provided space where I could breathe, slow down, release, test myself, reflect, and transcend to *let go* in mind and heart. It recharged my soul. The spaces connected me to a lineage making me belong to something bigger than myself, and provided mentors that guided my journey. The spiritual philosophy *grounded* me and provided practical embodied directions *more accessible and more available than heady Western philosophy*. The philosophy depicted an *interconnected* world and spoke to *integration* between intrapersonal and interpersonal states of being. It carried a *spiritual element that was very different to what I was used to*, and connected me to myself, *to earth and...to everyone else* with a *sacred little bit of earth magic* to help me *step carefully* on Earth. This philosophy provided guidance in relation to finding balance in myself and allowed me to *live authentically...to stop thinking about what other people thought about me...and start living from the heart*.

Research Question and Literature

Returning to the literature, four areas of relevance to the interview themes emerged: Masculinity and peace; Agency; Motivation; and Slowing down/ breath.

Masculinity and Peace

The initial literature review discussed how practices such as martial arts can positively impact men. Studies included effects on decreasing male aggression, increasing pro-social attributes, effects on one's identity formation, and relationships to peacefulness. Similar to Vaccaro and Swauger (2015), many of the participants discussed how they felt their practices either assisted their sense of being masculine or replenished any deficits they felt in their masculine performances. This masculine attainment provided privileges with their peer groups where they were left alone or accepted as "an edgy outsider". The interviewees also discussed how undertaking their practices provided outlets and ways to express their masculine aggression similar to Gottschall's (2015) "monkey dances", with a resultant decreased desire to enact violence in the outside world. While it is difficult to know whether these men actually were less violent, I too practiced martial arts as a way to feel masculine and be accepted by my peers. By-products of both this acceptance and the exorcism of my aggression in controlled sanctioned ways led to me facing less violence and having less desire to enact it. This in turn assisted abolishing feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability I had (Rosenberg & Sapochnik 2005). Similar to Foster (2015)⁷³ the arts provided a "cross training' in the social world; self-defence is also social-defence" (p.181).

Practicing martial arts seemed to provide the interviewees, as well as myself, a path or type of purpose for how we envisaged life. While this might have been naïve with each of the participants discussing frustrations with the reality of martial arts, it could be said that the practices provided metaphors to live by, "to seek the mystical (the monk) and omnipotence (the samurai) in a society that often offers powerlessness and a paucity of sensuous experience" (Bonde 2009, p.1529). While this image was not always realistic, I cannot help but recall how it provided me with a way to shift to a different way of being in, and interacting with, the world in comparison to the

⁷³ Drawing from Farrer and Whalen-Bridge (2011).

stereotypical images provided by traditional forms of masculinity. The martial arts I practiced therefore offered “a framework around which to substantiate and defend a particular vision of masculinity, which was cast as morally superior to the otherwise normative alternative associated with Western sport – a more or less ‘toxic’ masculine archetype (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005)” (Channon 2012, p.126).

Agency and Motivation

Through the interviewees’ interpretations and performances of their masculinity, a theme of agency emerges. Returning to the literature this agency may correspond with Foster’s (2015) somatic metaphorism, where the arts provided both a philosophy and embodied practice which practitioners could live by. Similarly, the act of practicing these arts, and being known as practicing these arts, provided “a sense of identity, excitement, authenticity, and power and control otherwise not available” (Brent & Kraska 2013, p. 369) as well as “a device for their active construction of a resistive position within a hierarchy of masculine styles” (Channon 2012, p.126). This agency seemed to be intricately interwoven with ideas of being in control and being peaceful relating to the comments made by authors like Kroll (2008) by providing “a framework for understanding many types of conflict” (p.452) towards acting non-violently. As I reflect, I wonder whether such mechanisms connect to peace theory such as Galtung (1975) as ways for me to develop both keeping peace (security and defence), making peace (calm respond not react), and even positive notion of building peace (personal development/self-actualization, philosophy of interconnectedness and care for others). As Dietrich and Wagner (2015) state, these abilities forge people who are “thoughtful, responsible human beings” (p.12) who are “oriented towards the basic aspects of inter-human relationships, towards the connecting intellectual and spiritual values of human existence; to communication, communion, conflict and confluence” (p.11). As Bryant (2019) adds “how one carries one’s body reflects one’s inner life, and it is of course a recursive relationship in that one’s inner life is represented in the way one uses the body” (p.27). This might further connect to human **motivation** theories mentioned previously (Maslow 1943; Ryan & Deci 2000; Griffin & Tyrrell 1998, 2013). Studying martial arts may have provided potential tools and frameworks to meet aspired needs such as security, autonomy and control, receiving attention, connection to community, status, competence and achievement, and meaning and purpose (see Tyrrell & Griffin 2013), all of which provided a sense of control in my life.

Slow down and Breathe

A final reflection might provide an interesting future avenue to explore. Participants shared how their practices provided periods of slowing down, breathing, and taking a break, and how this helped them act differently in the world. Similarly, I recall how my practices provided both metaphors and spaces for me to slow down and reflect on the norms of masculinity surrounding me. Research is beginning to attest to the benefits of slowing down, especially in relation to breath. These studies suggest slowing the breath can positively influence stress and anxiety by moving practitioners from the sympathetic nervous system associated with the fight, fright, and freeze response, to the para-sympathetic response system or rest states (e.g., Brown, et al. 2013; Jerath et al. 2015; Russo et al. 2017; Zaccaro et al. 2018; André 2019⁷⁴). While these studies might corroborate with the positive health benefit discussed earlier, I contemplate whether such practices provided me breaks from the continual anxiety caused by the incessant pressures of standards of masculinity. My practice might therefore have provided opportunities for me to self-regulate and negate becoming overwhelmed by anxiety while also practicing abilities of remaining relaxed. As Ellis (2016) notes, many boys enact violence due to overwhelming feelings of anxiety and fears of humiliation and I question whether this might be due to prolonged periods in fight, fright, and freeze states that might have negative effects on one's well-being.

⁷⁴ Scientific America accessed 30/11/20: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/proper-breathing-brings-better-health/>

Conclusion

Reflecting upon this episode I realise how important the practices I sought out were for my own development and *being* in the world. These arts provided me with new philosophical and practical frameworks that allowed me to find and express a masculinity that suited my needs while subverting the masculine stereotypes I abhorred. The practices allowed me to come into my body, heart, and mind in competent and confident ways, and feel a missing spiritual element that appealed. They helped me feel safe and resilient from the possible violences I could encounter. They provided releases to pent up anxiety I was feeling and provided ways I could regain elements of control and agency in a world where I felt powerless in choices. These practices helped me feel integrated and grounded in a tumultuous world of pressures and anxieties of being a man and provided breaks and space from the stresses of my life. Learning these arts was about trying to be something better, someone I aspired to be, and they provided the philosophy and opportunity to practice becoming the best version of myself. As I look back, perhaps I was drawn to these arts not only because of the masculine requirements they provided, but also because I needed them to heal and discover myself.

Male Peace Academic

Vignette

I'm sitting at my desk looking out of the window. Outside the green of trees and the air is filled with winter fire smoke above the houses. I've come a long way, both mentally and physically. I took the risk and moved to a far-flung land that I once called home to try and find answers to my unresolved lamentations. Lamentations in work, lamentations in life, lamentations in myself. Sitting here I digest the words of books my starving mind craved. I thought it helped, I thought it provided answers. I felt so close. But once again I become overwhelmed with uncertainty. I feel out of my depth, an imposter in my own skin. I am once again cut adrift in the storm of my doubt, further lost, further without direction. Will I never find peace or never find my bearing?

I want to find my place in this world, but I need to know who I can be. I need to find the balance between peace and masculinity. What can I endorse and personify with authenticity and integrity? These same issues endure and cut to the quick of my identity. I fear I have wasted my time, wasted my life. I made a mistake and only created more confusion. I fear time is running out and I have cut myself out of my future. I need answers that fill the gaps and placate my soul. As I sit here my mind begins to wander and wonder how I will find peace in a future as a male peace educator: a peace educator of men for the 21st Century.

Question:

This final episode seeks to find final reflections to these persistent questions: What is my direction and where is my place in peace with men? I find academia to be a lonely and often critical affair where one spends their time deep in the issues of a field. If one is not careful, however, the mud becomes one's life, dense and tiring. I am here for tilling that field so that I can plant and grow fruits: fruits where I can finally emerge with purpose, competence, and confidence, and hopefully fruits for the field of peace education. What innovations within the field of peace education can help?

Literature Review: Innovations

I once again returned to the peace education literature to seek potential innovations that might draw my remaining threads together. As discussed in the first episode, many criticisms have been levied onto peace education. However, responses are also being positioned. Within these responses, two main innovations emerged: critical peace pedagogies, and alternative epistemological peace pedagogies. While predominately discussed as separate areas, authors like Reardon (Reardon & Snauwaert 2015a) have noted that these two ideally need be combined towards more holistic *analytic and affective* approaches. These innovations may provide the new directions that suit my aspirations as a peace “pracademic” (Miall 2016; Volpe & Chandler 2001) that engages young men.

Critical Peace Pedagogy

As previously mentioned, critical peace education (CPE) draws from Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy (1970) that aims towards raising ‘critical consciousness’ or ‘conscientização’, for those involved (Bajaj 2008, 2015; Brantmeier 2011; Hantzopoulos 2011; Bajaj & Brantmeier 2011; Reardon & Snauwaert 2011; Brantmeier & Bajaj 2013; Gill & Niens 2014; Standish 2015b; Zembylas 2015, 2016, 2018a; Jenkins 2016). CPE aims to tease out issues of power, domination, symbolic violence, and cultural impositions inherent in particular systems (Bajaj 2008, p.5). Bajaj adds that for this to be possible, pedagogies must see beyond the teacher as a catalyst for transformation to ones where the teachers’ own transformation is also central (2011, p.208).

Central to CPE pedagogy is reflection of all involved. Reardon and Snauwaert (2011) contend reflective pedagogy is central as “[t]ransformative action is a reflective-practice” (p.3). Reardon continues to suggest this reflective inquiry is pursued “in analytic, ethical and contemplative modes” and is both an inwardly and outwardly focused practice directing individuals to create new possibilities from dialogue and reflection. Brantmeier (2011) adds that “a critical peace education approach is one characterised by its linkage to social justice” (p.355). Through “examining power, oppression, privilege, marginalisation, difference, and social stratification” (p.355), critical peace education is education “for the elimination of direct, indirect, structural, and cultural forms of violence” (p.356). For Brantmeier, CPE contains five steps:

raising consciousness through dialogue; imagining non-violent alternatives; providing specific modes of empowerment; transformative action; and reflection and re-engagement” (ibid. p.356). Writing with Bajaj (Bajaj & Brantmeier 2011), the authors add “rather than status quo reproduction, critical approaches in peace education and peace research aim to empower learners as transformative change agents (Freire 1970) who critically analyze power dynamics and intersectionalities” (p.221). In this regard, the purpose of CPE, “is not about finding definitive answers, but rather letting each new question generate new forms and processes of inquiry” (p.223).

Bajaj (2015) draws on Brantmeier’s (2011) five stages of critical peace education (p.356), to propose 7 core competencies of a *pedagogy of resistance* able to create resistance and change: Critical thinking and analysis; Empathy and solidarity; Individual and coalitional agency; Participatory and democratic engagement; Education and communication strategies; Conflict transformation skills; Ongoing reflective practice (p. 162-163). Similarly, Bajaj (2018) conceptualised the importance of transformative agency needed in CPE pedagogies. Drawing common tenets of Liberatory Education, she argues a need for “1. Contextually relevant Curricula/Pedagogy 2. Deep analyses of social inequalities 3. Fostering of critical consciousness 4. Cultivation of transformative agency (p.7) for transformative action to occur.”⁷⁵

Building upon Reardon’s (1988, 2002) *Comprehensive and Transformative* peace education, Jenkins (2016) argues for a *transformative* CPE that “fosters the development of a self-reflective praxis and nurtures a holistic, inclusive relationship between the inner (personal) and outer (political, action oriented) dimensions of peacebuilding. This praxis is the basis for both internal consideration and social and political action that is pursued by peace studies” (p.1). He argues peace “is a radical endeavour” and is “rooted in a Meta-cognition” (p.5). Transformation occurs through dialogical encounters that create reorientations to “new rendering of the world and one’s place within it” (p.2). Writing in 2019, Jenkins adds these transformative pedagogies are ultimately “futures oriented, seeking to nurture those inner peace capacities that are essential to external political action necessary for social and political change” (p.1). Essential to these is a need for the educator to mirror being “edu-learners” (Reardon 1988). Teaching peace education, therefore, “requires the

⁷⁵ She adds that Transformative agency requires a combination of four dimensions of agency: Sustained Agency; Relational Agency; Coalitional Agency; and Strategic Agency.

educator to be a reflective practitioner – reflecting on their own reality while simultaneously reflecting upon and learning from the reality of the learners” (Jenkins 2019, p.6).

For Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) historical and narrative critical pedagogies seek to ‘de-essentialize identities’ and move beyond the taken-for-granted assumption at the heart of the previous critiques to peace education. Zembylas and Bekerman (2013) argue the aim for critical peace is therefore to “reontologize what has been epistemologized” (p.205). Zembylas (2012) adds that such CPE needs a critical emotional praxis beyond rationality as it offers “opportunities to produce transformative action, because teachers and students can translate their critical emotional understandings into new ways of living with others” (p.22). Bekerman and Zembylas (2014) argue that to be able to achieve such practices in peace education, there is a need for a critical ontological, contextualized and historicized approach where teachers must be able to “interrogate the entanglement between the ontological and the epistemological, without ignoring the power relations involved that often make the ontological and the epistemological difficult to distinguish” (p.58). Zembylas (2018a) highlights three pedagogical approach he feels are important towards non-violent change: “(i) pedagogies of discomfort; (ii) the pedagogical principle of mutual vulnerability; and, (iii) compassion and strategic empathy” (p.586).

One could, therefore, argue that CPE seeks to build reflexivity within individuals and communities towards analysing pervasive structures that cause and reproduce violence. They then aim towards visioning a future based upon positive peace (Galtung, 1975) and encourage and motivate action towards those goals. However, as noted in the first episode some have begun to call for critical practice to be turned back onto the CPE pedagogies that use them, to turn “reflexivity on reflexivity itself” (Kester & Cremin 2017). Scholars have therefore begun to draw upon post-colonial insights onto CPE itself towards a CPE that also reflects on its own assumptions and goals as part of the pedagogies and future visioning. As Rivera-Clonch (2018) suggests, “it is imperative that Western educators, who are often in positions of power and influence, are constantly raising their own consciousness and that of their colleagues around their global north identity. Without this, West is Best implicit bias erodes and undermines the potential for transformative classroom experiences” (p.310). Similarly, Zembylas (2018b) notes there is a need to incorporate a post-colonial lens to problematize the Eurocentric Freirean approaches often co-opted in many CPE suggesting “postcolonial and decolonial perspectives require peace

educators, researchers, policy actors, and practitioners to interrogate and raise questions that better reflect the historical and political contexts that shape peace education research and praxis (Shirazi 2011; Zakharia 2017)” (p.14).

Kester, et al. (2019) look at the pedagogies and praxis of peace in University settings within Korea to explore how teaching peace becomes reproduced. They note “global educational decolonization movements need to be strengthened” (p.1) through “developing a critical relationship with Western theory” (p.12). They continue that decolonizing pedagogies for peace education must therefore “draw theoretically from various conceptual frameworks (e.g., postcolonial studies, spatial theory, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, Black feminist theory) so that educators and learners are offered the tools to re-contextualize peace and peace education” (p.13). Similarly, Hajir and Kester (2020) argue for a holistic combination of a ‘pedagogy of resistance’, ‘pedagogy of discomfort’, and ‘pedagogy for the privileged’ in CPE to critique the reproduction of even the most mainstay of theories within the field itself.⁷⁶

CPE pedagogies arose out of needs for transformation within education and society (Freire 1970). They provide useful approaches to disentangle the relationships between individuals and the structures that reproduce violence and provide skills and motivation towards action. However, they may paradoxically only reproduce status quos if simply unreflexively placed onto participants. Luckily Hantzopoulos and Amani Williams (2017) add that “ironically, peace education needs the aforementioned challenges and its own discontents, because together, they constitute a dialectical relationship, in which boundaries are constantly being re-contoured and re-envisioned” (p.6). They continue that peace education “can play central roles in disrupting staid circuitries, and re-imagining and enacting more just and equitable trajectories and ways of being with(in) ourselves, with each other, and with the world” (p.6).

⁷⁶ For example, Galtung.

Alternative Epistemological Approaches

A second developing area within peace education that might provide practical directions for my practice draws from this self-reflexive analysis of the underlying assumptions within peace education. Similar to the above innovations within CPE that aim to bring conscientização (Friere 1970) to Western-centric structures, these innovations go one step further to incorporate alternative onto-epistemologies outside of the Western tradition. The intention here is that by incorporating more diverse epistemologies, new ways to experience and learn peace can be fostered. Furthermore, by studying and appreciated alternative ontologies or worldviews of peace and society, more nuanced ways of relating to the world could become available. As Galtung (2011)⁷⁷ states, each culture “has some kind of gift to a world culture of peace” (p.4). Alternative onto-epistemological approaches to peace expose the over-reliance on Western-centric epistemological paradigms. Through the incorporation of these alternative onto-epistemologies, holistic and anti-hegemonic versions of peace can emerge and be explored. These approaches draw emotions, body, and spirituality into pedagogies in addition to the Modernist rational mind. They often promote ‘Affect’ as important as effect and draw from different worldviews based on notions such as interconnection between all things (internal and external). While not specifically discussing the use of alternative epistemological approaches to peace, McGregor (2014) notes that “resisting centric approaches to peace education opens the door to deeper insights into the hegemonic influence of foundational underpinnings for a peace philosophy, regardless of the source” (p.164).

Weil (1994), for example, believed an overreliance on the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm led to fragmented, atomised, and disconnected human interactions. Arguing for a holistic approach to peace, he incorporated Eastern traditions of *harmony* between living things and *inner* as well as *outer* peace. For Weil, this education for peace “directed to the person as a whole to help him or her maintain or re-establish harmony between senses, feelings, mind and intuition” (p.36). Cremin and Bevington (2017), argue that peace education “needs to take global traditions of peace from the East and South into account, and not draw purely on Western securitised notions of peace” (p.8). More holistic and sustainable approaches to peace therefore “needs to engage more with affect, embodiment, spirituality and

⁷⁷ From Matyók, Senehi, & Byrne, (Eds.) (2011) based upon four Johan Galtung lectures between 2007-2009 (see note 1, p.18).

complexity, and that it needs to shift from a pure focus on outer (interpersonal and global) peace to an integrated focus on inner and outer peace” (p.8). They draw insights from indigenous cultures, such as the Māori and First Nations, as well as contemplative traditions, such as Buddhist and Taoist philosophies. To explore these onto-epistemological insights to peace education, four main areas of innovation shall be briefly discussed: Affect; Alternative Onto-epistemologies; Transrational Approaches; and Diffraction.

Affect

While focusing on peacebuilding, Lederach (2005) discusses incorporating aesthetics into peace approaches. He specifically embraces complexities and paradoxes opposed to the neat delineations associated with Modern Western paradigms. Similarly drawing from Freire’s work, Lederach promoted an ‘elicitive’ approach (1995), which draws on local contextual knowledge opposed to knowledge from outside and above. Moving away from simple rational approaches, Lederach brings spiritualities, metaphors and stories into peace projects. He strives for ‘affect’ and believes when we find and express our ‘deep voice’ with others we become true to ourselves and affect those around us in ways that rationality cannot capture (2005, p.167).

Cremin (2018) explicitly showcases this potential for affect and aesthetics in communicating peace through using the methodology of autoethnography to ‘evoke’ emotions (Ellis & Bochner 2000) from her audience. Incorporating stories and metaphors, Cremin builds on her 2016 article where she draws from both Lincoln and Denzin (2000), and Ellis and Bochner (2000) to suggest the potential for twenty-first century peace inquiry to be “minimal, existential, autoethnographic, vulnerable, performative and critical” (p.10). Her article takes the audience through a vivid poem of her aspirations, struggles, and elations of being a peace educator and was a major motivation for my own selection of autoethnography. The personal nature of the poem seeks to engage the audience in emotional self-reflexivity, becoming, in itself, a form of peace pedagogy through encounter (Gur-Ze’ev 2011).

“I come to you Not
As teacher...”
“I come to you
As gardener...”

I come to you
As visitor-host,
My-your space
Gives warmth,
Hospitality,
Connection
Nourishment.
I come to you as migrant.
Pilgrim,
Witness,
Weaver,
Dreamer.
Educator for peace.

(2018, p.6-7)

Zembylas (2018c, 2019, 2020a, 2020b) also focuses on the notion of affect in education. Zembylas discusses how 'affect' is related to 'counter-conduct' (2018c), and anti-complicity (2020a), and that a move to 'Affective Hospitality' (2020b) is required towards cultivating resistance and change. In these writings, Zembylas calls for critical pedagogy to acknowledge the affective dimensions of education and "grapple with the materialities— [] with the affectivities—of particular bodies within particular settings" (2020b, p.48). He continues that educators, therefore, "need to help students navigate through the affective and political dynamics of complicity in both critical and strategic ways" (2020a, p.317).

Alternative Cultural Perspectives

Some scholars have specifically aimed to incorporate conceptions or pedagogies of peace emanating from different cultural traditions. Brantmeier, Lin, and Miller (2010) for example, draw together authored chapters positioning peace education from multiple world traditions "to more deeply explore the universal and particular dimension of inner and communal peace" (p.xii). Examples of peace from many world traditions existed in the literature attesting to the diversity of peace. These could bring new insights to pedagogies and actions for peace education. Examples included Japanese philosophy (Goulah & Urbain 2013), Chinese philosophy (Sun 1995; Zhang & Veenhoven 2008; Li 2010; Wang 2013b; Berthrong 2014; Pynn 2020), Indian philosophy (Biswas 2015; Standish & Joyce 2017; Joyce 2020), First

Nations Philosophy (Bryant 2019), Buddhism (Brantmeier 2007; Tanabe 2014, 2016; Arai 2017) and African notions of Ubuntu (Murithi 2009; Isike & Uzodike 2011; van Stam 2014; Ujomu & Bature 2018; Tom 2018; Tiky 2018). Wang (2013b), for example, draws upon Taoist and Confucius ideals to stipulate the importance of *self-cultivation* in peace. She argues that the cultivation of inner peace acts as a bridge towards outer peace. Self-cultivation requires an inward journeying to *balance* any inner and outer disputes. It is through this inner journey that a “harmony in difference” and “tranquillity in turbulence” (p.73) can be fostered where internal and external dimensions find balance. Similarly, Bryant (2019) draws the Canadian Indigenous Hesquiaht Nation’s term “wiwikink’api” (“fighting with no one”) and the Japanese martial art of Aikido’s principles of blending energies to discuss how they have influenced his own approaches peace.

Transrational Approaches

While acknowledging the insights offered by Western interpretations of peace, Dietrich (2012, 2013) seeks an integrated, or “Transrational”, approach to peace that also incorporates aspects found from other world traditions. Drawing on both postmodern sensibilities and “energetic” peace traditions from the global East and South, Dietrich elucidates key lessons from each tradition into a ‘many peace(s)’ model. Here, Harmony, Justice, Security, and Truth all become integrated into a holistic Transrational approach. For Dietrich, Transrational peace starts with an inwardly gaze before redirecting towards external relational interactions. He views conflict as a social dissonance where energies become shifted from one interconnected place to another if not transformed (p.9). Conflict manifests where “blockages of energy” (p.8) build. For the blockages to be released and transformed a ‘twisting’ or ‘verwunden’ is required where each of the Transrational needs are met. Dietrich feels not only one’s mind, but one’s body needs to be engaged towards this endeavour. This approach led to the innovative Masters program at the University of Innsbruck⁷⁸ that integrates all the five ‘families’ of peace⁷⁹, including not only academic and theoretical approaches to peace, but more practical simulations and experiential experiences (such as holotropic breathing).

⁷⁸ Unit for Peace and Conflict Studies: <https://www.uibk.ac.at/peacestudies/ma-program/index.html.en>

⁷⁹ The five families are: Energetic; Moral; Modern; Post-Modern; and Transrational.

Transrational approaches have been discussed by other authors (Cremin & Bevington 2017; Cremin & Archer 2018; Cremin, Echavarría & Kester 2018; Echavarría Alvarez, Ingruber & Koppensteiner (Eds.) 2018; Kester 2018; Taylor 2019; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019; Bryant & Taylor 2020; Koppensteiner 2020). Cremin and Archer (2018), for example, draw directly upon Transrational approaches to argue for a transrational peace education that incorporates harmony, justice, security and exploration of truth(s) believing these are required to foster “curious, confident, wise, compassionate and knowledgeable learners” (p. 298). Kester (2018) builds upon these comments to promote “a more holistic approach that emphasizes relationality and teaching to students’ bodies — through embodied learning, meditation, and experiential activities — that links the subject with her psyche and society” (p.12). Cremin, Echavarría, and Kester (2018) call for space for alternative epistemologies in peacebuilding education and argue for a “transrational pedagogy that gives attention to the emotional, embodied, and metaphysical aspects of peace learning” (p.299) to transcend the fields limited analytic, rational, and psycho-social approaches. Finally, Koppensteiner (2018; 2020) builds upon the Transrational framework towards approaches to research and facilitation. Koppensteiner (2020) particularly suggests these two as inseparable, arguing facilitation as an act of research and research as an act of facilitation that both call into existence awareness(es) at intra and inter-relational levels. He integrates five different ways of knowing of mind (thinking), body (sensing), heart (feeling), soul (intuiting) and spirit (witnessing) drawn from different onto-epistemologies into his pedagogical approaches. Only by becoming in touch with all of these areas can the student/facilitator/researcher engage their whole self and how it relates to conflict and peace. Transrational approaches, therefore, draw from alternative epistemologies but seeks an integrated approach that synthesises all of human knowledges.

Diffraction

Finally, a further innovative area of inquiry draws from the emerging field of feminist new materialisms and the works of Haraway (1997, 2016) and Barad (2003, 2007). This work seeks to build upon the incorporation of alternative epistemologies discussed above but also seeks to decentralise the human from knowledge production. These approaches particularly draw from *diffraction* as a way of producing differences from the interplay between different sources of knowledge and the creation of new “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” (Barad 2007). Some peace

education scholars are therefore beginning to explore diffraction in relation to its ability to destabilize the reproductive nature of peace education. As noted in the first episode authors have begun to critique the potential post-structural violence (Kester & Cremin 2017) or epistemological damage (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017) that can occur through peace education. Bozalek and Zembylas (2017), for example, suggest “diffractive analysis can make visible new kinds of material-discursive realities that have important epistemological, ontological and methodological consequences” (p.116). They describe how they use diffraction in their reading groups as it “allows us to explore ways of mapping routes of ‘reading’ through space and time and to create collaborative cartographies that are not merely ‘representational’” (p.120). They conclude that working with diffractive methodology opens space “to enable us to see that it is not the (reflexive) self that has constitutive force, but self and others (social and material elements), entangled in multiple ways and across multiple spaces and times” (p.123). Similarly, Kester (2018) draws diffraction, second-order reflexivity (Kester & Cremin 2017) and Transrationality (Dietrich 2012) together as potentially useful directions for peace education. Discussing how transrational, analytic and embodied, and material approaches allow for a diffractive exploration of knowledge production, he suggests progression,

“may be through marrying subjective experience with structural critique, and diffraction with reflexivity, for a second-order reflexive peace education agenda that takes account of the dialectic of structure and agency, power and empowerment, and other field-based orthodoxies that scholars find themselves entangled within (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016; Brookfield 2009; Lather and St. Pierre 2013)” (p.10).

Finally, Kester, Archer and Bryant (2019) further build upon transrational approaches and diffraction to call for an “integration of multiple ways of knowing, such as mind, body, heart, and spirit, in conjunction with multiple ways of being (p. 14). They argue for a “balance between the analytical, affective, and new materialist approaches in theory and method to seriously engage with diverse onto-epistemologies” (p.14). By de-psychologizing peace education, they believe it “allows for more collective engagement with bodies amongst scholars, students, schools, and society at large” (p.13) to become the process of peace education and a vital way to mitigate reproductive pedagogies of peace. Peace in this light become relational, co-produced, temporal and spatial, as well as ethical, by not judging one knowledge above another. The hope within these approaches is that ethical, contextual, and

relevant notions of peace(s) can be created and constantly reworked. It was for these reasons that diffraction became an additional element to my research methodology.⁸⁰

Conclusion

To move beyond the violences levied at peace pedagogies a need for a deep critical reflexivity to be incorporated as part of peace education has been suggested (Cremin 2016; Kester & Cremin 2017; Bozalek & Zembylas 2017). This reflexivity suggests the need for a critical peace education that analyses the structures and cultures that often go uninterrogated, but also turns that critical lens back onto itself to analyse the violences it can also reproduce. While CPE provides insightful ways to illuminate these violences, peace pedagogies could also draw upon alternative epistemologies, transrational, and material-discursive practices. These practices allow the diversity of human knowledges to provide directions for the exploration of peace as well as de-centring the human to include other-than-human's role in knowledge production. Peace education in this manner requires to be *analytical* and *affective* (Reardon & Snauwaert 2015a; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019) towards the construction of peace(s). These insights could provide practical directions for working with young men. Firstly, for the analytical exploration of structures that influence and reproduce men's thoughts and actions.⁸¹ Secondly, for a more affective exploration of the emotions, embodied, and even other-than-human aspects of being male to be explored and shared.⁸² Finally, with the inclusion of alterative onto-epistemologies, new pedagogies may foster nuanced ways of interacting in/with the world that challenge the taken-for-granted norms of 'being' promoted by dominant Western interpretations. At the centre of these pedagogies is the educator as an edu-learner (Reardon 1998; Jenkins 2019) who *walks their talk* by exploring peace *with* participants, realising they are inseparable and co-producers of violence and peace.

⁸⁰ See page 27.

⁸¹ These critical reflections on Masculinity have been discussed by a colleague and mine's recent article that uses Galtung's peace frameworks as a critical pedagogical tool for exploring male peace (McInerney & Archer, under review).

⁸² These notions of affect are the topic of a colleague and mine's current article that draw together the potential for affective methods to engage men in peace (Archer & McInerney, in progress).

Question:

I have learnt so much on this journey. However, there still remain challenges in my direction. What can I learn from male peace academics about possible directions for working with men through peace education in the 21st Century?

Sample:

Five male peace academics were engaged for interviews through my networks as a recent academic.

Interviews

Johnny William Richard Harry Anthony

Johnny

Johnny described himself as an “organic peace educator” who had never been professionally trained in peace education. However, he had been studying, researching, and actively contributing to research and publications in the field for 20 years. Johnny believes the sphere of peace education is becoming popular with substantive research emerging through both “theoretical musings” and empirical research, especially concerning teacher education and contemplative practices. Johnny’s interests are in the “triple bottom line” of “people, planet, and profit or healthy ecosystems, viable economies, and social equity issues”. These focus on “cultural violence, structural violence, and ecological violence, and ecological justice, structural justice”. Johnny believes the future of peace education is how to “provide transformative learning opportunities” for participants and how to move beyond the narrow fixation on humans. This includes focus on pervasive “dominator models” to one of ecosystemic and partnership models of leadership for sustainability. Central to this for Johnny is contemplative practices that “decolonise our minds” and foster “relationships with other people, other groups of people, and the human being’s relationship with the planet”. From our interview themes of **Critical Awareness** and experiencing the **Whole Range of Human Experience** emerged.

Reflective Account of Johnny’s Interview

Johnny discussed how men’s peace education should provide **critical awareness** on the powers, structures, and systems that reproduce particular narratives.

“Peace education can offer a place to look at one’s own mind, and one’s own experience, look at how boys and men are socialised, and look at how they enact certain narratives.”

Johnny believes “we just have to understand the source of violence and kind of contest those institutionally”. He continues that this critical awareness can be accessed through the individual’s personal experiences and how they perpetuate these narratives without awareness.

“in order to decolonise my own mind, and my own masculinity, and my own male socialisation, I have had to, and continue to...figure out the messages that I am reproducing.”

Deconstructing one's own male identity is a “powerful journey” towards change for Johnny, and within deconstruction, language provides one site in which peace education can critique. Deconstruction would make visible the constructed dichotomies and binaries that often disconnect us from each other, from nature, and from other human experiences. For example, Johnny added he believed an alternative masculinity “would not be in dichotomy ... it would not be a binary construct with femininity”.

Johnny continued that critical awareness therefore brings awareness of the **range of human experiences** that are being missed “if we decide to perform the boxes of our inculturation and socialisation”. Opening ourselves to new, often maligned, experiences brings new awarenesses that change the way we perceive our lives. Johnny therefore discussed an importance for holistic education, drawing from Jack Miller's (e.g., 2014) “idea of the thinking heart” or “the connected heart”. Johnny added that in his “strong cognitive field of study” he is left asking “where's the heart in that, where's the body in that?” Instead, Johnny argues “we operate on a layer of the body, the heart, the mind...kind of an integrated type of experience”. He relates this directly to young men suggesting socialization and the binary language around young men results in a need to teach emotional literacy.

“I have talked to young men who don't have the vocabulary...to express the full range of human emotions that they experience, and part of it is because they were never taught the words.”

Exploring aspects of heart, body, and even spirit that proposes, “we are connected on a very deep level” are important for Johnny and “is a critical missing piece” to peace education. Johnny believes contemplative practices are particularly helpful as they hold the ability to “not do away with the theoretical” but “blends the cognitive with the emotional landscape and its embodied experience”. He also believes using embodied practices of sport and martial arts provides ways to engage young men to experience, explore, and then “redirecting energies” towards more non-violent and cooperative models of manhood.

Reflecting upon Johnny's interview, I too feel peace education maligned aspects of human experience. I feel an embodied and even spiritual dimension of peace interests me, and its absence in favour of overly cognitive interpretations of peace may have led to my frustrations in the methods I was teaching, and possibly the disengagement I perceived in the young men with which I worked. Of particular interest was that Johnny saw value in using sports and martial arts as masculine entry points for conversations with young men about masculinity. His drawing from 'spiritual' traditions (including Buddhism and earth-based traditions) as a way to make visible, deconstruct, and decolonise the narratives of the youth he worked with also resonated with my own reflections.

William

William described having a "deep curiosity" to try different things to understand himself. This emerged through frustrations and a sense of being completely imbalanced from his "stifling" and "irrelevant" formal education. William therefore started on an enduring self-exploration to discover better ways of relating to and making sense of himself. William believes there is currently an appreciation that the "classic methods" of (peace) education don't work, especially from a practical "when the rubber meets the road" standpoint. He believes there is presently a move "away from this very reduced and formalised skill training" of peace education towards more "holistic" and "experiential engagement". William added this is becoming more "acceptable to the mainstream, and much more sought after"⁸³. William also believes there currently exists a growing awareness from academics that they cannot continue to talk *about* conflict from detached positions. There is an increased curiosity to learn techniques for being in conflict and learn about how to work in a "relational" manner on the topics of peace and conflict. From our interview, themes of meeting people **where they are** and exploring their **holistic full self** towards **new options** emerged.

⁸³ However, he did add that there exists a backlash insisting a "need to shore up the classic or the conservative, the skill-oriented training, that then also becomes marketable".

Reflective Account of William's Interview

William was “struggling” with some of my questions as he felt education should be “the other way around” where “the methods have to follow from the situation” rather than presenting topics onto participants.

“It’s not so much a question of what our concepts of masculinities are, and how do we educate people to get there, but the other way around, what are the concepts that are there, and what are the struggles around that that people have?”

William believes peace education should “pick people up **where they are** [with] as little predefined concepts as possible”. He continued that peace education “relates to who we are in the world”. Therefore, masculinity would likely be “one of the prevalent topics that immediately comes up for any type of peace education and work that goes a little bit deeper”.

“And of course, masculinity, the identities we construct, and those always are gendered, the identities are always a hot topic for that.”

To be able to explore what emerges for participants, William discussed using experiential methods that make visible the **holistic and full self**. William argues that “peace touches us in all levels of being, and therefore any type of education, any type of teaching and training that works with peace, needs to take the full human potential into consideration”. These levels include the linguistic, embodied, and spiritual aspects, but also the darker “shadow” aspects of oneself. In particular William discussed looking at words that emerge, highlighting the concept of the hero as “an incredibly relevant topic for peace [] and conflict studies, and also relates to many of the typical images around masculinity”. By exploring such concepts if they arise allows for integration of how it “can be played in many, many different ways, and can be understood in many, many different ways”.

“who is the hero really? I would say a rather obvious answer is well the one who is able to confront, see, and maybe in the end even embrace the monster, and there you have both of those aspects already together very well, and of course this type of hero work is shadow work.”

William connected this work to trauma and pain that can emerge from our lives, with the additional importance to actively explore these aspects of ourselves.

“Because the topics ... the pain that make it really pronounced trauma, doesn't go away because we don't look at it, you know? And it is only in looking at it I think that we get to more aliveness or we get to more flexibility.”

It is through this active looking into our trauma that “opens up a whole **new range of options**” for how we can be in the world.

“from coming out of now or coming from within myself, I can through a different perspective, open up additional options for myself, that then might also allow me to move in my social environment in a different way.”

Reflecting upon William's interview, I see a need for not just proactive communicative skills training perpetuated through my own peace education models, but to actively look into the deep, hidden, and potentially unresolved aspects of ourselves. These aspects should not be forced but allowed to emerge through group interactions. These explorations emerge not only cognitively, but experientially: emotional and embodied. It is only by acknowledging and exploring these aspects of ourselves that our full selves can be understood, integrated, and new options for moving in social environments becoming available. As I reflect, I wonder whether I have unresolved trauma issues with masculinity that created my crisis with peace education and required resolving through undertaking research.⁸⁴

Richard

Richard believes the current field of peace needs reflexivity about how peace is practiced. Richard perceives the contemporary peace field as “**siloed**” where different communities working on similar issues and with similar social purposes are disconnected and inconsistent with each other. He places much of these siloes down to “**Neo-colonial**” and “**privileged scholars**” that are detached from the real experiences of those facing the violence they discuss. Richard believes key attributes for scholars to create “**authenticity**” in the field include collaboration, self-

⁸⁴ Indeed, maybe this is what drew me to peace education in the first place as well as leading to the sticking points and this research needing to be undertaken.

awareness of assumptions, and “vulnerability” to not pretend to know answers. Until this occurs scholars will not “do justice” to those worked with. Richard continued that academic-practitioners need to “suspend our own sort of arrogance or professional needs” and move away from the idea that we are “experts”. Scholars need to “reflexively look at ourselves in terms of the privileges that we have that allow us to do this and understand that a lot of the [] people we work with don’t have these privileges”. Instead, Richard promotes being “honest”, “elicitive” and explorative in “authentic” ways with participants towards achieving “social justice”. Themes that emerged included continuous **vulnerable self-reflection** towards creating **explorative, elicitive** spaces.

Reflective Account of Richard’s Interview

Richard discussed the importance of being truly **elicitive** in our work with communities. To be truly elicitive, however, requires the processes themselves to be reflected upon as otherwise they become “orthodox and traditional” and a simple “checklist” to be achieved. When these processes become projected onto communities without question, they are “not the kind of integral and truly transformative type of stuff that Freire was talking about”.

“we have a responsibility not to project onto them our sort of theories and ideas about how to create peaceful communities, but we also have a responsibility to give them something. That is what they are asking for.”

To prevent this inauthentic interaction of peace requires a **vulnerability** by academic-practitioners to deeply reflect on their own assumptions and roles within the communities they work. Only then can an authentic elicitive process be garnered.

“we have to do a tremendous amount of work ourselves to distance ourselves personally from that idea [as ‘experts’] and to distance ourselves in terms of the image that people perceive of us so that a true collaborative learning community is created.”

Richard continued that it is “vulnerable to go into a community and not have the answers” as this is “hugely vulnerable on both sides not just us as the practitioners but also the young men that we are working with because they are seeking for

answers”. However, by being vulnerable the vulnerability of participants can also be encouraged that allows participants to arrive at “the types of questions that they want to ask us so that we can then respond to their questions”.

“I suppose the way that we articulate it is that we are going to provide a brave space for young men to share with each other about the challenges they are facing, to come up together with collaborative sorts of responses to those challenges that come from the young boys and men who are facing them.”

Through this elicitive and vulnerable space, **exploration** of the structures and systems that affect these particular communities are explored.

“And I think when young boys start to go through these [vulnerable] processes they realise again that there are structures above it and that not everything is personal.”

Richard added that focusing on masculinity was important and was surprised it “doesn’t come up as much as it could in the literature”. For Richard, when youth “explore why we are socialised in this way” and “become a systemic thinker” they “feel empowered” and can look at “alternatives”. This vulnerable process must “realise that there are many sorts of responses. It might be rational, it might be embodied, it might be emotional, or it might be spiritual”. However, the goal concerns “how do we feel more authentic to ourselves? And how are we able to become the person that we want to be?” For Richard “peace is the process” but “not necessarily the outcome that we are trying to achieve”. Instead, the outcome is trying to achieve “social justice”.

Reflecting upon Richard’s interview being vulnerable stands out as a vital attribute for me as a male facilitator to engage with male participants. Richard’s interview seemingly suggests an importance to walking our talk throughout our practices. This must include being reflexive of ourselves and our methods. Rather than playing the role of expert, being open and vulnerable about our fears and limitations and being truly elicitive to accept whatever arises in that space, rather than projecting our theories and ideas onto participants, is key to creating authentic and useful spaces for participants.

Harry

Harry believes the schooling system is misguided. He feels schools are “pushing the kids [] to achieve” and are not “paying attention to the wounding process that takes place”. Instead, Harry believes emotional development should be prioritised along with intellectual development. Peace education therefore needs to be “affective and focus on the feelings” opposed to tradition conflict resolution. He feels this can be achieved through sharing stories about the “wounds” and “trauma” of growing up in a “violent world”. However, to do so peace education needs to “figure out how to get these guys to express their pain” in creative ways beyond verbal communication. He promoted using group-based sessions that “listen carefully to what the young boys offer” and provide alternatives that “release [them] from their torments” and “stanch the flow of [] spiritual blood if you will”. Finally, Harry showed frustration with what he felt was a feminized field where masculinity is often portrayed as equalling a “hydrogen bomb” while femininity equals a “heart”. He believes there needs to be more research about men, by men. Through our interview themes of peace education as **support** towards **alternatives** through **affective methods** arose.

Reflective Account of Harry’s Interview

Harry discussed how boys were subjected to pain and trauma from being in the world.

“I think we have to realise that a lot of young people these days are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders...because they’re in this very violent world.”

He believes this trauma needs to be recognised and young men **supported** so their “torments” can be released.

“people have to be more articulate in noticing and tending to, the pain that people have to overcome to become a man.”

Harry added that young men are searching for ways of *being* in the world, but due to trauma and a lack of support they often feel lost.

“they don’t know anything about peace, they don’t know how to talk about peace...they’ve had no experience of it so they’re very angry and very hostile and that creates big problems for them in their lives.”

To achieve this support Harry believes it is important to focus and build upon the “lots of positive aspects of masculinity”. He added there exists a “warrior” energy within boys that can be utilised in positive ways for peace. Peace education can help young men find these ways of expressing themselves in the world.

“you need that kind of energy because of the violence that inevitably seems to seep into our societies and the warriors are the ones who step forward and confront the violent guys. You need people to do that.”

Harry therefore believes that peace education can assist boys look at **alternative** ways of being in the world and support them find different ways of being men.

“I’ve done this in very [] violent environments with violent men, that they’re very grateful to learn another way of being, because nobody ever taught them a different way.”

Essential to this type of peace work for Harry is **affective** approaches where young men share their stories with each other and “focus on their emotional development”.

“we need to be very, not effective but affective and focus on the feelings of the young boys, the young men and encourage them to get in touch with their feelings as opposed to doing didactic conflict resolution exercises.”

Harry believes this affective education should be done through group environments that provides a network of support. It would often start with a question, like “introduce your father”, and then must listen “carefully to what the young boys offer in terms of what it’s like to live in this violent world”. Harry also added that these spaces should not rely only on “verbal” methods but use “a variety of different exercises” such as art and poetry and “figure out how to get these guys to express their pain and bottled anger correctly, it’s a very masculine thing to do”.

Reflecting on Harry’s interview, I become aware of the importance of supporting young men through the trials and tribulations they experience on their journeys to

becoming men. Maybe I was drawn to peace to process the traumas I had experienced, to locate a therapeutic supportive space to find answers to my questions. In this manner perhaps peace education was an existential endeavour about crafting *being* in the world. Harry's comments about balancing energies and warrioriness resonated with my own beliefs and I too feel metaphors are useful to engage young men. Finally, his comments about using Affective interactions may further attest to an importance of interactive encounters as means to creating change within ourselves, but also in others.

Anthony

Anthony believes issues in peace education are “to do with liberal Modern education and its wrongs. Its wrongs for all those that are not blessed by being privileged”. He argued that the system does not fail as often discussed, but actually “succeeds, they just lie about their goals”. For Anthony schools never deal with learning but “arranging the society into levels”. He is critical of education that is built upon the “fanaticism” of Modernity and Western positivist philosophy, and “psychological bases which are transcendental, dualistic and church-like”. Education results in “exchanging soul for cognition” and “learn[ing] how not to learn”. Anthony feels peace education should “replicate what children are born with by nature: An endless curiosity to encounter problems and finding solutions by just doing finding solutions”. Peace education is not about peace for Anthony, but rather about understanding and coping with the systems and structures surrounding us. It is about getting people “to be able to read the way the world is constructed” and inducing theory “from good descriptions of the world” rather than falsely “deduced” predisposed categories. From our interview themes of **criticality** to be able to **interrogate systems** emerged.

Reflective Account of Anthony's Interview

Anthony discussed how current education is based upon a “wrong epistemology” of positivism from Modernity and that a “true social scientist” should be **critically** trying to understand “how the world that is assumed to be natural is constructed”.

“you are dominated by psychology, you give into nationalism as it would be a true, instead of being critical, as any social scientist should be. You use

categories that reflect on this, things that are assumed to be natural and are not.”

For Anthony this epistemology created simplified constructed categories that disconnect people to the processes occurring in the world.

“And we’re totally dishonest in the type of descriptions that we offer the world about what the problem is. For example, most of Modernity is inclined to decontextualise problems, dehistoricize them ... put them as if they exist in themselves in a type of bubble that is totally disconnected from process.”

Instead, Anthony believes blame for problems of the world should be shifted “to realise that the answers are not in people’s heads, but in the world”. We must therefore account for “the outside world which is involved in creating us while we create the world”.

Anthony therefore believes peace education concerns “being able to understand a system where great inequalities are created structurally and trying to deal with them”. He adds, “the problem is not a rocket or a gang. The problem is a big system, and the approach has nothing to do with peace”. Therefore, Anthony’s approach to peace is to move beyond the taken-for-granted and “teach them how to read the world” in all its complexity through different lenses.⁸⁵

“I try to get them to abandon abstraction, which means abandon a positivism in the social sciences...Abandon deduction in the social sciences and move into what anthropology for the last...80 years [] has been saying; look at the world and do not deduce but induce. Bring up theory from good descriptions of the world. And to do good descriptions you need eyes and sense that can read the world properly.”

Anthony believes that good descriptions are achieved by responding to the needs and what emerges within the communities through an interactive **interrogation of systems**. Masculinity should therefore be interrogated if it arises for what it is, a category that is constructed in the particular.

⁸⁵ For example, “architectural, economical, historical, interpretative, whatever you want.”

“some of them take as natural and some others take them as constructed and try to understand how they are constructed...It depends on which masculinities we’re talking about, in which context. It’s always particular, it’s never generic.”

Reflecting upon Anthony’s interview, I am reminded of the importance to remain critical in peace education about the taken-for-granted assumptions and norms that are imbedded in structures within society. However, Anthony goes further to suggest that if we wish to move beyond the constructed norms of particular societies, we must also question and move beyond the very epistemologies we rely upon. If we fail, we will only reproduce the same categories and end up reinforcing the same structures we seek to destabilize. This would also include pre-existing categories of masculinity and peace. Creating epistemologies with participants may help reread the world and interrogate the system’s influence on us. By doing so it might expose complexities and surface new insights on how we wish to construe the world in different ways.

Overall Reflection

This episode provided rich information that evoked many personal thoughts about not only peace education, but also about what I perhaps needed to understand to develop my own masculinity when younger. For this overall reflection, two major themes of **Awareness** and **Support** emerged. These two will be further divided into notions of **Critical Analysis** and **Affect** through **multiple, elicitive, methods**.

Interviewee	Themes	Underpinning Themes?
Johnny	Critical awareness Whole range of human experience	Awareness
William	Meet where they are Holistic full self New options	
Richard	Vulnerable self-reflection Explorative spaces Elicitive spaces	

Harry	Support Fostering alternatives Affective methods	
Anthony	Criticality Interrogate systems	

Table 9: Peace Academics Summary

As I reflect upon all of the interviews a key theme of **awareness** emerged. Awareness had multiple layers of exploration that included both mental awareness but also of **embodied, emotional and spiritual** awareness to encompass the **whole range of human experience**. Awareness was explored through multiple methods as a way to come to 'know' or make visible both the individual's self, but also **differentiates individual from systemic**. This allows participants to be **able to understand a system**, showing how structures influence individuals to becoming partially reproducing actors.

These methods therefore contained both **Critical analysis** (mind) and **Affective** (evocative) aspects that could include **stories, contemplative practices, arts, ecosystems and nature**, and **experiential activities**. They were perceived as **holistic** towards an **integrated type of experience** drawing from **multiple lenses and frameworks** that transcend the traditional **wrong epistemology** relied upon in Western approaches to peace education and takes **the full human potential into consideration**. This results in new perspectives and knowledges beyond the existing **created, constructed categories** being **elicited**. To achieve such awareness, peace education must also walk its talk and constantly turn the reflexive lens back upon itself to highlight the taken-for-granted assumptions and **privileges** that go unperceived, including the processes and practices of peace themselves that are not **a-theoretical** or beyond critique. Peace education was instead perceived as problematic due to unquestioned ties to **Modernity**, with **psychologised** and **dualistic, liberal**, and **neo-colonial** undertones. Awareness of such legacies in peace education, however, could provide entry points into deep discussions that open new ways to **read the world** and **learn []other ways of being**.

Awareness, however, should be done in **supportive** (potentially **therapeutic**) and **elicitive** spaces that act as a **rest when outside is tremendously hurtful**. Elicitive spaces should meet people **where they are** and seek to elicit **honesty, authenticity**

and **vulnerability** from *all* involved, including the facilitators and **experts**. It was noted that only by creating such truly elicitive spaces would workshops be **meaningful** and, **provide all of us practical tools to respond to the challenges we have in our communities**. After all, **usefulness is something that they will decide. Usefulness is not for you to convince. It's for them to sense**. It is this that perhaps provides the tangible directions I seek.

Research Question and Literature

Returning to the episode literature, correlating themes of using combined approaches of **Critical Analysis** and **Affect** in peace education emerged. As part of this critical and affective approach, exploring the various **inner** and **outer** dimensions that surround and permeate the individual also arose. Important to this exploration was elicitive methods to meet participants where they are. Finally, incorporating alternative **onto-epistemologies** into peace education could **diffract** perspectives on peace and masculinity and offer new directions for young men.

1. Critical Analysis and Affect

The literature echoes many of the limitations discussed by the interviewees regarding peace education, in particular its unquestioned epistemological foundations (Gur-Ze'ev 2001; Page 2008; Bekerman & Zembylas 2012; Dietrich 2012; Cremin 2016; Kester 2018). Within these critiques the importance to reflect beyond a partial first order reflexivity towards a more encompassing second order (Kester & Cremin 2017) was discussed to make visible the biases and assumptions that go unquestioned through peace education. Interviewees retorts suggested an importance of using both critical analysis to explore norms, language, and systems, but also the utility of using affective methods to move beyond the reliance of the head and incorporate participants' knowledges from the heart and body. This sentiment is replicated by Reardon (Reardon & Snauwaert 2015a) suggesting that the methods of peace education "should be both cognitive and affective and the purposes both intellectual and political" (p.82).

"The questions are pragmatic, political ones, which are also ethical and intellectual in the best problem-solving sense of the word. They are also

profoundly affective, for they deal with the most powerful and deeply rooted human emotions, fear of death, in this case the death of us all, and love, love of life and of our fellow beings.” (ibid p.90).

This combined approach promotes a holistic method to education that seeks to incorporate knowledges from the head (reason), body (embodiment), heart (emotions), and even spirit. This approach corroborates ideas discussed in the literature review of critical peace pedagogy (e.g., Bekerman & Zembylas 2014; Brantmeier 2011; Bajaj 2015; Jenkins 2016), but also incorporates affective methods such as aesthetics (Lederach 2005; Page 2008), arts-based (Cremin 2018), and Transrational approaches (Dietrich 2012; Cremin & Archer 2018; Koppensteiner 2020).

2. Inner and Outer Dimensions of Peace

Connected to the above, peace was discussed in relation to internal and personal dimensions, such as one’s own struggles and traumas, and an outer, relational and structural dimension, such as one’s interactions with others and societal structures. These two may seem difficult to differentiate with both influencing the other. However, these again correlate with the literature concerning an importance of exploring (critically and affectively) the individual’s inner states while placing them into the context of the structures and cultures surrounding that individual. These could correlate to Galtung’s (1975, 1996) discussions concerning the individual’s attitudes, behaviours and contradictions that can lead to direct violences, while placing these violent manifestations within the indirect, latent structures and cultures that embalm each of us. Furthermore, these ideas of inner and outer dimensions of peace are discussed by Dietrich (2014) who proposes a Transrational Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM) tool that *elicits* both the intra-personal “layers” of sexual, socio-emotional, mental and spiritual awareness, as well as the interpersonal layers of family, community, social, policitary, and global structures surrounding participants (p. 52). These layers would correspond to a holistic approach to peace education (Weil 1994; Brantmeier 2018; Tanabe 2019) and integrate the different ways of knowing in the head, heart, body, and spirit (Koppensteiner 2020).

3. Onto-epistemological Diffraction

The above discussion also correlates to literature discussing the utility of incorporating alternative epistemologies to assist the exploration of peace with participants (Dietrich 2012; Cremin 2016; Cremin & Bevington 2017; Kester 2018; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019; Koppensteiner 2020). Alternative epistemologies firstly open up the discussed avenues to explore peace beyond the over-reliance of cognition prioritised in Western approaches as they open “attention to the emotional, embodied, and metaphysical aspects of peace learning” (Cremin, Echavarría & Kester 2018, p.299). These additional sites of exploration would complement exploring peace through cognitive analysis alone. Secondly, by drawing upon alternative epistemologies from other cultures, new perspectives on peace may open new avenues for relating to each other and the world.

The utility of alternative epistemologies led to a personal exploration of another recent innovation being applied to the field of peace education: diffraction (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017, Kester 2018; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019). Diffraction may provide means to use alternative epistemologies to diffract one’s own *first order* knowledges and illuminate how “it is not the (reflexive) self that has constitutive force, but self and others (social and material elements), entangled in multiple ways and across multiple spaces and times” (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017, p.123). Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) add,

“To engage in diffractive analysis means to study the practices of knowing as they are enacted in the materiality of the world, in a state of interdependence with other parts of the world. This onto-epistemological thinking, as Barad (2007) calls it, decentres the researcher as knowing subject and takes us ‘beyond the dominating subject/object, human/non-human, as well as the discourse/matter and nature/culture dichotomies’.” (p.118).

Through using alternative epistemologies, a diffractive analysis may generate new knowledges previously unavailable due to being trapped within the constitutive force of one’s own onto-epistemology. Kester (2018) believes using alternative epistemologies, such as Transrational approaches, could diffract our understandings and provide the *second order reflexive* methods that move through the limitations hidden within existing “modernist, neo/liberal, individuated, and psychologized

approaches to peacebuilding and education” (p.15). By using such methods peace becomes a co-production to be researched in the “relationality of each/other, nature/culture, ontology/epistemology/communication, mind/body/spirit, and matter/what matters that sustainable peacebuilding through education becomes possible” (p.15).

Practically this would result in peace education no longer relying upon pre-disposed notions of what peace *is*. Instead, collaborative elicitive spaces would aim to diffract realities towards generating multiple knowledges. This would be achieved through the use of critical and affective inner and outer explorations through head, heart, body and spirit, and incorporating multiple epistemological perspectives (Kester, Archer, & Bryant 2019). The peace educator in these spaces becomes what Koppensteiner (2018) calls a “(re)source” *with* the group opposed to a detached educator imposing pre-scribed ideas. This further corresponds with the interviewee’s reminders and the literature’s propositions to remain “elicitive” (Lederach 1995), caring (Noddings 2003), and self-reflexive (Kester & Cremin 2017) without illusions they are separate and detached (Cremin 2018), but rather, uniquely entangled (Barad 2007).

Conclusion

As I conclude this episode, I am further comforted that the limitations I felt of peace education have been acknowledged. Rather than increasing the paralysis I felt, this episode has encouraged me that there exist exciting innovations that may allow me to re-enter the field in ways that meet my ethical stipulations. Central to this is a necessity for peace educators to *walk our talk* and place our-selves into the process.

In particular, diffractive approaches to peace education may provide exciting frameworks to overcome the limitations of the field by gazing directly into them. By incorporating alternative epistemologies to complement the dominant Western knowledges, nuanced ways to *come to know* peace may emerge. By exploring concepts through these different epistemologies as they arise for the group may foster the individually relevant, practical, and potentially transformative aspects that I pursued for my participants. As I reflect on this new type of peace education, I wonder whether this diffractive process was what I required, and what I hope to

achieve through my research journey. As two of the interviewees noted, perhaps I was drawn to peace education as I too was looking for ways to process my masculinity to find ways of *being* in the world.

“do some of us choose to enter into the field because we are processing and dealing with our own masculinities?” “It’s probably why you do this work, trying to fill that hole.”

Discussion: Western Literature

““Finding yourself” is not really how it works. You aren’t a ten-dollar bill in last winter’s coat pocket. You are also not lost. Your true self is right there, buried under cultural conditioning, other people’s opinions, and inaccurate conclusions you drew as a kid that became your beliefs about who you are. “Finding yourself” is actually returning to yourself. An unlearning, an excavation, a remembering who you were before the world got its hands on you.”
Emily McDowell (see <https://emandfriends.com/>)

This chapter aims to synthesize the themes from across the five separate episodes. This will involve drawing themes together and returning to literature from the Western academic tradition used throughout the five episode chapters.

This chapter is split into three sections. Firstly, the chapter will summarize the key reflections from the five individual analysis chapters in the form of a table. Secondly the chapter will position five themes that emerged while reflecting and indwelling (Moustakas 1990) across the five chapters as a whole. This section shall postulate reflections to how these themes provide personal insights for my research. Finally, a section shall describe Western academic literature that assisted my understanding of these cross-cutting themes before a conclusion.

1. Summary: The Five Episodes

Each of the five episodes provided rich insights assisting my heuristic reflections for that incident. These reflections provided understandings that have assisted some resolution on each of these experiences. The table below summarizes these key reflections.

Episode	Overall Themes
1. Peace Education	1. Misguided theory of change 2. Facilitation 3. Space
2. Primary School	1. Attributes (Provide & Protect) 2. Vulnerability 3. Motivation 4. Stress

3. Secondary School	1. Pressure & Anxiety (Being accepted, proving oneself) 2. No choice 3. Transitions
4. Alternative Practices	1. Being in the world. 2. Self-Development. 3. Philosophy to live by.
5. Male Peace Academics	1. Awareness (Analytical, Affective, Multiple Epistemologies) 2. Support

Table 10: Episodes Overall Summary

2. Cross Episode Reflection

While each episode acted as an individual case study some coalescing themes emerged through reflecting upon the research as a whole. These are personal reflections that emerged through indwelling and focussing on the whole research process 'as I came to love the question' of the research (Moustakas 1990). The purpose of this section will be to discuss five major themes that surfaced from this process: **Anxieties**; **Competence**; **Authenticity**; **Support**; and **Space**. After each theme has been discussed, personal reflections on how they resonate to my life will be introduced before a return to the literature.

i) Anxiety

A first theme that cuts across all the subsequent themes was perceived anxieties felt by many of the participants. These anxieties were caused by fears of not being accepted by their peers (or society) as well as anxieties caused by uncertainties relating to periods of transition (such as primary school to secondary school, adolescence to adulthood). These anxieties appeared to be caused by insecurities about whether they would fail to measure up to particular standards set by their peers or society. Transitions might frame this theme of anxiety and prove an important aspect on its own with a possibility that anxieties were caused by impending change. For example, the primary school boys discussed anxiety of moving to secondary school as they felt things would become serious and they had

to prove themselves as longer being children. The secondary school boys discussed anxiety due to pressure to get by, not get into trouble, and get good grades otherwise they might not have a “good life”. The pressure to do well was framed by leaving school, entering the job market, and being a responsible adult. Finally, the alternative practitioners discussed anxieties feeling like they needed something that assisted them transition towards becoming safe and accepted by their peers while allowing them to embrace who they wished to be. Alternative practices provided a stable anchor for many as they went through anxious times of change in their lives. Similarly, the male peace educators also discussed supporting young men who are struggling to find stability in their turbulent lives. They also discussed the anxieties many participants feel caused by pressures to become certain people. The peace educators mentioned that dealing with these anxieties to measure up and become a particular type of person was a cause towards many young men getting into violence. Reflecting on this theme I too recall the anxieties and fear caused by wanting to measure up at particular stages in my life. I feared not being accepted by my peers and that this would mean I was inadequate: that I had failed to *make the grade* between the next stage of development.

ii) Competence

Secondly, a sense of competence emerged. I reflected that many across the episodes seemed to be looking for some sense of self-competency and control in their lives. For example, the primary school boys reflected on a desire to be able to become someone (a footballer or chef) that was able to *provide* and *protect* for themselves and those close to them. The secondary school boys, similarly, discussed wishing to develop themselves so they could succeed (e.g., emotional regulation and get good grades). The alternative practitioners went further and discussed using their practices as self-development towards crafting ways of being in the world. From this notion of competence a resultant desirable characteristic of confidence seemed interlinked. Competence and confidence might act towards the defence against the above theme of anxiety as competencies may provide means to negate the anxieties caused by uncertainties in life and provide a sense of control in the individuals lives.⁸⁶ Reflecting on my own search for building particular

⁸⁶ These anxieties were either directly experienced in the moment due to an event or were a secondary anxiety to the perceived potential of projected anxiety needing avoidance now.

competencies I wonder if they were a means to ward off and avoid these pressures as if certain competencies and skills might make me worthy and bring acceptance from others. I continued to contemplate whether attaining such competencies would in turn provide a sense of control in my life that often felt dependent on outside influences and cultivate more confidence and self-esteem in myself and my place in the world.

iii) Authenticity

A third interrelated theme revolved around a notion of authenticity. Authenticity seemed to cross-over the episodes in two ways: firstly, a personal desire to find one's own authenticity, but also secondly, as a competence that brought about connection with/to others. Firstly, this theme may be a personal desire that connects to competence and confidence discussed above. I reflect on whether some might think that once one has gained control and negated pressures to be accepted, one can finally be authentic. In the cases of the primary and secondary school boys, and the alternative practitioners, authenticity was a sense of *control* they could exhibit once they had managed to negate the pressures placed on them by others. This was achieved in some part through developing competencies they felt were important. The primary school boys, for example discussed doing things they felt they were good at and represented who they saw themselves as. Similarly, the secondary school boys discussed the importance of just being yourself and not allowing the pressures from others get to you (even though it appeared these pressures did). Finally, the alternative practitioners discussed how their practices offered ways to express themselves and provided mechanisms (philosophical and practical) of being authentic in the world. I began to wonder whether authenticity was something I constantly negotiated as I tried to find a balance between feeling like I had control with who I was, and whom I wished to be seen as, while also being accepted by those around me. This balance of authenticity might itself be a competence I was pursuing, in the belief that it would also produce confidence in myself.

A secondary implication of authenticity also emerged implying its connective power. Here I reflected upon how the peace educators and peace academics responded that engaging young men required authentic interactions. This would mean being honest as a facilitator and relinquishing control for sessions to be directed by participants. This authenticity carried risk and vulnerabilities on behalf of the

facilitators but was essential if they hoped the participants would engage in honest and 'real' conversations. Reflecting further, I began to see a possible connection between doing the work on oneself in relation to finding competence and confidence in one's authenticity before being able to authentically connect with others. I reflected on whether this was something I was struggling with as I sought to connect with the participants but believed that my own authenticity was unprofessional⁸⁷ as a teacher. I wondered whether I had not fully accepted myself as 'competent enough' and this impacted the 'realness' of the sessions as I instead played the role of the educator.

iv) Support

A fourth interlinking theme was support. Support related to a possible need to support participants through particular aspects they were facing. This support includes the anxieties discussed above, support in attaining the desired competencies deemed important, and support in developing and accepting one's authenticity. The primary school boys, for example, discussed role models who were people they looked up to and supported them in their life. The secondary school boys discussed needing support with their behaviours so they do not get into trouble and succeed in life. The alternative practitioners also discussed what kept them practicing particular arts were the people who they connected to and offered a particular image to emulate. Finally, the peace educators and peace academics both discussed how many young men are looking for support and role models who could provide an alternative trajectory than those offered by their current peer groups.

As I reflect, I feel this support had two applications: towards eradication and towards acquisition. Support towards eradication targets alleviating the anxieties, tensions, and transitions that some experience. Support towards acquisition is more proactive towards developing the desired competencies and confidence some felt they required to feel accepted and authentic.⁸⁸ I recall how I was looking for role models and support to help me develop into who I wanted to be. I wanted to find a teacher, a master who I could learn from towards my own mastery. This was about initiation into something bigger and a transition towards becoming the authentic man I wished I could be.

⁸⁷ That being seen as professional was itself a pressure and a competence I needed to master.

⁸⁸ This could also be applied to negative and positive ideas of peace and development (Galtung 1970).

v) Space

Finally, a theme of space emerged. I began to reflect on a conception of space that encompasses different notions: a physical and material space; space as in timeout; and a reflective analytical and affective space. Together, *physical space* provides a safe place where participants can come to take a break (*timeout*) from their anxieties and reflect and explore their (*inner*) selves. This was discussed as a main need from both the peace educators and peace academics in relation to working with young men and seems to be a reason why the alternative practitioners enjoyed their practices.⁸⁹

In relation to the purpose of these spaces, I wonder if it allows for both a place to take a *therapeutic break* and step back to *reflect* upon the way the world is, and reflect upon their place within it. This would include reflecting about the frustrations of the world, but also about their anxieties, desires and needs to fit into the world. This space is not only an analytical space, but a felt affective explorative space. These spaces provide support the individuals need to explore and build competencies, control, confidence, and authenticity in their lives.

If the space is facilitated there might be a simultaneous need for the space to held by authentic facilitators to create the connective space discussed above. Authentic spaces might be only those that could cultivate the environment required for support and self-reflection. How one is in these physical spaces might be key and may relate to how others respond in these spaces. As the peace educators discussed, *being real* is essential to connect with young men. This real, authentic being in space was not simply about a mental disposition but about bringing one's mind, body, heart and spirit into the space. Creating the right space provides the affective environment to support the whole of the participants and requires an analytical affective focus.

As I reflect, I recall how the practices I did were about providing me space to slow down, take a break, reflect, and recuperate. They allowed me to go inwardly, explore and develop my whole self, and place myself in the world with an authentic 'being'. Moreover, these spaces were about beginning to finally accept myself. The spaces I hold for others in peace education sessions are no different as they are also spaces

⁸⁹ Interestingly, when I checked whether the participants wished to see what I had written, many of the adult participants commented how they were surprised to have reflected on the topic quite a bit since the interview. Something that they had not previously given much space or thought about.

that allow me to continue to develop an authentic sense of myself, but also provide me with a sense of competence and confidence as I try to provide supportive spaces for others. Perhaps I had begun to fall out of love with these spaces as I left my authentic self at the door due to fear it was not professional. Instead, these spaces simply became a task to complete as I was motivated by pressures to achieve certain outputs by the end of the session. This pressure weighed on my sense of competence as an educator and took me further away from being myself. It is perhaps exactly this authentic presence, however, that is essential for these spaces to achieve the aspirations I have for them. This aspiration is both for the participants to develop their lives but also for my own sense of self-worth as an educator.

3. Literature

Each of the original five episodes explored useful literature for my inquiry into the episode incidences. This literature was useful for finding resolutions for those particular episodes but is also useful in understanding these above synthesized themes. Literature that assisted understanding these themes will be described below. I believe this literature provides useful insights towards the initial research questions to be discussed in the conclusion chapter. The selected literature includes literature on masculinity, motivation, authenticity, therapeutic interventions and embodied space.

Masculinities

The literature on masculinities is substantial but often correlates to effects masculinity, as a social construct, has on boys and men. From the seminal work of Connell (1987; 1995) masculinity has been positioned as a spectrum of gender hierarchies that seek to maintain a patriarchal order. This hierarchy creates competition between boys and men to avoid becoming subordinated by others. Connell initiates the discussion of masculinity, or masculinities, as diverse suggesting that tension exists for individuals to find ways to express their own individuality within this gender hierarchy. While some have critiqued Connell's linear hierarchy (e.g., Wetherell & Edley 1999; Demetriou 2001; Hearn 2004), the insecurities and anxieties described for the pursuit to 'measure up' to masculinity continues to persist in the academic literature (Haywood & Mac An Ghail 2013; Harland & McCready 2015;

Ellis 2016; Kimmel 2017; Messerschmidt 2018; APA guidelines 2018; Flood 2019; Pease 2019). Ellis (2016) has been particularly useful for my own understanding, especially as his focus is on Northern England where I hail. Ellis' description of violence as the only resource available to young men to "avert incessant feelings of humiliation, insecurity and anxiety" (p.35-36) helps me realise how impactful masculinity has been on my own struggles and decisions in life. It is the pursuit of finding alternative resources in the form of competencies that I hoped would mitigate the fears of humiliation, insecurity, and anxiety I felt, and the fear of becoming subordinated if not measuring up to the standards of masculinity imposed onto me. I wonder if other young men feel such anxieties and whether they would benefit from exploring them together. These fears and anxieties levied by constricting ideas of masculinity perhaps connects to the following literature on motivation and authenticity.

Motivation

The second body of literature useful for my understanding of my incidences is motivation. This built upon humanistic psychology including the work of Maslow (1943) who discussed an individual's drive towards attaining desired needs. Ryan and Deci (2000; 2017) and Human Givens theory (Griffin & Tyrrell 1998, 2013) have proved particularly insightful. Ryan and Deci (2000) discuss motivation with regards to desires to feel competent, related, and autonomous. These three act as resources that in turn build the self-esteem of the individual. Similarly, Human Givens theory (Griffin & Tyrrell 1998, 2013) positions certain needs believed required to develop healthy adults. These needs include security, autonomy and control, attention, intimacy, community, status, privacy, becoming competent at something, and finding meaning towards building a personal sense of well-being. While one article (Cole et al. 2019) was found in the literature correlating these motivations with masculinity, this particularly focused on how gender-role conflict can impede one's abilities to feel competent, related, and autonomous. I wonder whether there could be further connections between the above discussion and whether seeking out these competencies could be a means to negate the anxieties felt by many young men, like myself.⁹⁰ I now understand that I was searching for such competencies to provide me capital in the gender hierarchy and protect me from becoming subordinated. This

⁹⁰ As noted in footnote 50, p.106 some child resiliency literature that draws upon similar notions could be interesting to include here (see for example Ginsburg's 7 C's 2015)

might connect to the next section on authenticity with relation to finding competencies to mitigate tensions between being accepted while also finding control, autonomy, and authenticity.

Authenticity

Authenticity is a disputed concept in the literature regarding whether an authentic self exists (e.g., Adorno 1973; Foucault 1984; Parfit 1984; Archer 2003; Gardner 2003)⁹¹. However, Brene Brown has been extremely useful for my interpretation of authenticity. While writing in more popular literature spheres, Brown has researched authenticity at the University of Houston since the early 2000's. Brown (2012; 2017) discusses how we often trade authenticity for the approval of others and how real authenticity stems from the courage to be oneself coupled with the maintenance of personal boundaries that one refuses to traverse in the quest to be accepted. Key to authenticity for Brown is the courage to be vulnerable. Vulnerability, she explains (2012) is "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure" (p.34). She adds:

"Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path." (2012, p.34)

This notion of vulnerability as key to authenticity is similar discussed in both the peace and education literatures. Parker Palmer (2007) for example, discusses the courage needed to embrace vulnerability to find one's authentic selfhood. Authentic selfhood is crucial in teaching as it reaches out and connects with others. Parker notes,

"in every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with this subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood - and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning." (2007, p.10)

⁹¹ For a thorough review of authenticity see also <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/authenticity/>

Peace academic Edward Brantmeier (2013) also discusses the importance of vulnerability and authenticity in education by positioning a *pedagogy of vulnerability*. Brantmeier believes that if educators are able to bring their full-selves to the classrooms “students will model that self-examination and go deeper in their learning; learning becomes relevant, has value beyond the classroom, and new meaning is constructed in the process” (p.97). McKenna and Brantmeier (2020) continue that without vulnerability entering into educational spaces “we short-change ourselves and others in the learning process” and “quickly become a mechanism for delivery of content rather than creating spaces for learning” (p.7). Kester (Cremin & Kester 2020) positions the vulnerable educator: “(a) enters into the teachable moment with all of her/himself, body, mind, heart and spirit; (b) is open to the other, noticing them, beholding them, delighting in their presence; (c) allows others to affect him/her, is challenged, confirmed, inspired by others; (d) takes note of the learning that does occur and plans for development and growth; and (e) practices critical yet compassionate thinking” (p.37). Vulnerability takes risk, but as Lederach (2005), a prominent peace scholar, notes, we “cannot listen and provide support to others as they find their voices”, nor expect them to “enter the mystery of risk”, unless we ourselves “understand and engage the mystery of risk” (p.169).

Support

Supporting participants through the anxieties and vulnerabilities of masculinity drew me to person-centre therapeutic literature as it connects to the humanistic tradition discussed in the motivation section and the above theme of authenticity.⁹² While counselling is not directly related to the educational endeavour, I do believe it relates to the facilitator’s role. Mearns and Cooper (2018) for example, deliberately use ‘facilitate’ to describe the therapist (p.133) as they differentiate the person-centred approach as one that trusts the client to find their own direction. Mearns, Thorne, and McLeod (2013) add that the task of the counsellor is “to be the kind of companion who can relate in such a way that the client can access their own wisdom and recover self-direction” (p.2).

⁹² As previously noted in the methodology chapter, Trauma Informed literature (e.g., Brunzell & Norrish 2021) could offer additional insight on support as some young men may have experienced trauma during their upbringing including possible pressures attaining/ maintaining masculinity. This literature was not selected due to direct relevance to the topic nor emerging from the interviews as a requirement.

Central to a person-centred approach is the work of Carl Rogers (e.g., 1951). Rogers specifically discusses this approach in relation to education (1969) and promotes three conditions for any supportive relationship: unconditional positive regard and acceptance; empathy and understanding; and congruence (authenticity or genuineness). Person-centred therapy is predicated on the belief that these conditions create relationships, and that from these relationships people are motivated towards the best fulfilment of their actualizing potential. It places these genuine relationships at the centre of its practice, believing that authentic, or *congruent*, counsellors/ educators support people in their existential development. Mearns, Thorne, and McLeod (2013) add,

“The more the counsellor is able to be herself in a relationship without putting a professional front or a personal façade the greater will be the chance of the client changing and developing in a positive and constructive manner. The counsellor who is congruent conveys the message that it is not only permissible but desirable to be oneself.” (p.13)

To be able to achieve congruence the counsellor, or facilitator, needs to fully explore and support their own self. Mearns, Thorne, and McLeod (2013) describe the importance of on-going ‘listening to the self’ as it relates to building both congruence, but also confidence from a personal competence gained over ones-self.

“Not only is such regular listening crucial to the development and maintenance of self-awareness, but it is also an essential element in ensuring the congruence or authenticity that will subsequently characterise the relationship with clients...it also helps establish the inner confidence of which self-knowledge is a primary ingredient and thereby lessens the fear of becoming entangled in the others confusion or anguish.” (p.38)

Congruence therefore also requires risk and vulnerability on the behalf of the facilitators, discussed in the previous section, as it “involves the therapist being able to be close to their own personal depths. If we can be close to these dimensions of ourselves that are of profound significance to our sense of our own existence, then we are at a depth appropriate to that at which we are hoping to meet our client” (Mearns & Cooper 2018, p.163).

Space

Space became important in relation to both a physical and temporal space for taking a break and enabling reflection and self-development. These reflections took me to two areas within the literature: materiality and resonance. For example, literature from Feminist New Materialism that draws from the works of Haraway (1997) and Barad (2003, 2007) became insightful. Key themes within this literature are posthumanist understanding of how matter, matters, and how relationality between humans and non-humans produce (and reproduce) performativity. The belief here is that there is no clear separation between subject and object and that 'we' are affected by matter and in turn influence discourses on matter. Barad (2003) notes how *all bodies* "come to matter through the world's iterative intra-activity—its performativity" (p.823) and that "agential intra-actions are causal enactments" (p.824). This means that space is potentially influential in our own becoming and should be considered.

"what is important about causal intra-actions is the fact that marks are left on bodies." (Barad 2003, p.824)

This new area of scholarship is of personal interest as implications could provide insights into what *matters* in peace education spaces to make them conducive for the requirements of alleviating anxieties, focussing on competencies and confidence, building authenticity, and providing support. From a pedagogical perspective this could redirect our attentions from the techniques of facilitators to include an importance on the materiality of the space. This could include aspects that contribute to the creation of safe supportive spaces but also move our attentions to other agential aspects, such as more spatial and metaphysical implications informed from alterative epistemologies.⁹³ A deeper exploration of these areas could provide interesting innovations.

Finally, connected to this notion of materiality is the *being* of the facilitator and how that influences the space/ participants. This *being* focuses not only on what the facilitators *does* in the space, but also how they *are* in these spaces. This could connect to person-centred counselling literature in relation to *resonance*. For

⁹³ For example, ideas of interconnection and how therefore external states affects internal states, and vice versa.

example, Mearns and Cooper (2018) describe resonance as “an empathetic attunement with the *whole* of the clients being” (p.49) brought about when one is fully present and bringing their whole genuine being into encounters. This resonance is described as a holistic attunement that includes not only empathetic but also embodied alignment. Authors (e.g., Shaw 2003; Stone 2006; Ogden & Fisher 2015) describe the importance of the therapist’s body in therapeutic encounters as inter-subjective receivers and transmitters in counselling interactions. Siegel (2010) discusses how research suggests “that our presence...the way we bring ourselves fully into connection with those for whom we care, is one of the most crucial factors supporting how people heal - how they respond positively to our therapeutic efforts” (p.xi). Siegel continues to describe how from presence and attunement, resonance emerges.

“Resonance is the coupling of two autonomous entities into a functional whole. A and B are in resonance as each attunes to the other, and both are changed as they take the internal state of one another into themselves. When such resonance is enacted with positive regards, a deep feeling of coherence emerges with the subjective sensation of harmony.” (p.54)

Resonance and the *being* of the facilitator have relevance to the innovative Transrational approach to peace (Dietrich 2012). Dietrich (2014) describes resonance as a tantric principle where the conflict worker is able to feel and resonate with the life energy emanating from the conflict and can “contribute to balancing the system” (p.55). He concludes that “resonance among the parties as well as between the conflict worker and each participant of a conflict on all layers, are the fundamental ingredients for this type of conflict work” (p.56). Koppensteiner (2020) builds on the Transrational framework and discusses the implication of resonance for research and facilitation. Koppensteiner argues that resonance occurs when a contact-boundary is formed between facilitator and participant. This encounter is mutually affective and contributes to the “unfolding” of them both.

“Understanding the human being as a contact-boundary at work, transrational facilitation not only assumes that persona and self are linked intrapersonally, but that the space that a facilitator will be able to open and hold gains its contours from the larger interpersonal resonances between selves and through their transpersonal embeddedness.” (Koppensteiner 2020, p.209)

Resonance for Koppensteiner is both an intra and inter relational aspect. Firstly, the facilitator finds resonance in themselves, their inner space, by becoming grounded and balanced (*sic* authentic). When the facilitator is in an authentic resonance within themselves, they affect the space they inhabit and become able to strike resonance with those around them.

“When I have reached an authentic place or moment in myself, I get the impression of a reciprocal interpersonal resonance.” (ibid. p.236)

Resonant relations are mind (thinking), body (sensing), heart (feeling), soul (intuiting) and spirit (witnessing) (Koppensteiner 2018; 2020). These ideas of the matter and resonance might provide new innovative ways to conceive of peace education spaces that are supportive, engaging, and able to foster the analytical and affective (Reardon & Snauwaert 2015a; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019) aspects required for exploring the topics of peace and masculinity.

Conclusion

Concluding this discussion chapter, I realise the research journey I have been on. Through the five separate episodes I have come to not only find personal answers and resolutions to the questions that surrounded them, but also answers and resolutions that might help me move through the initial research questions that framed this research journey. These answers focus on the toll masculinity has taken on me, and my desires for competencies to circumvent the anxieties I was feeling. I was looking for alternative ways of being that would provide confidence, control, and authenticity, but needed mechanisms that would support me on that journey. These mechanisms included practices that provided space where I could build these competencies I desired and therefore also build confidence in myself. The spaces provided valuable time for me to take a break, reflect analytically and affectively, and develop a version of myself. Becoming involved in peace education was part of this developing space: firstly, to further develop competencies and confidence in myself (competencies of peace), but then secondly, as an educator by providing a space I could embody the image I was trying to project. This role of an educator, however, lost its effectiveness in supporting this desired image because I perhaps ceased to be authentic. This authenticity was instead supplanted by anxieties that showing my

full-self was averse to the competent professional educator I wanted to be. Perhaps a leap of faith and risk is required for these sessions, where I embrace my whole authentic vulnerable self. Bringing this into session spaces to resonate and support the participants might be the missing key to achieving what I am looking for: providing effective and affective supportive spaces for young men. If I am able to achieve these spaces I might, in turn, regain the lost feelings that I am someone of worth and making a difference.

Discussion: Epistemological Diffraction

“We gaze up at the same stars, the sky covers us all, the same universe encompasses us. What does it matter what practical system we adopt in our search for truth? Not by one avenue only can we arrive at so tremendous a secret.” Symmachus. Relatio 3.10 (cited from Renshaw 2019)

Introduction

While the literature in the previous discussion chapter provided apposite information towards my research, some literature questioned our reliance on particular epistemologies and promoted *diffracting* our perspectives (Barad 2007; Dietrich 2012; Cremin 2016; Bozelak & Zembylas 2017; Kester & Cremin 2017; Kester 2018; Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019; Koppensteiner 2020). These reflections provoked me to question the ubiquity of conclusions I make and led me to question whether by remaining within more traditional approaches to research I might not be walking my talk that I set out as central. Rather than simply discussing these needs for alternative epistemologies, these reflections stimulated me to incorporate alternative research methods and led to me incorporating diffractive methods discussed in the methodology chapter. These additional steps were incorporated to firstly embrace these recent innovations and mitigate “epistemological damage” (Bozalek & Zembylas 2017), but also as a means to hopefully maintain my aspirations to truly walk my talk through the act of research as well. I hoped that through diffracting my research through an alternative epistemological lens new and potentially profound resolutions could emerge. Therefore, this subsequent chapter describes these insights from the selected tradition of North American First Nations.

As previously noted, this is not to suggest that these rich and diverse traditions can be homogenized into one single onto-epistemology but should be seen as a diverse tapestry of many traditions placed under a bracket of Indigenous worldview (Ross 1992; Peat 1994; Rice 2005; Brass 2009; Robbins & Dewar 2011; Four Arrows 2016). Caution and respect should therefore be taken to mitigate a further form of cultural violence done by Western academics onto other traditions (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). For the purpose of this chapter, the philosophy provided by the Medicine Wheel was initially used. While each Nation uses the Medicine Wheel differently it is often positioned as an over-arching philosophy (McGaa 1990; Loomis 1991; Brokenleg 1998; Regnier 1995; Dapice 2006; Wenger-Nabigon 2010). The Medicine Wheel therefore provided the framework for this chapter with the many books that

exist on the topic. I seek to use these traditions with the utmost respect and humility. Right intention is of great importance for these traditions⁹⁴, and I aim not to suggest that I can truly understand or represent such epistemologies from a brief exploration from a distance. However, I believe this approach matches the heuristic aspiration of this thesis and corresponds to taking “global traditions of peace from the East and South into account” (Bevington & Cremin 2017, p.8).

The first section of this chapter shall utilise the proliferation of Medicine Wheel books to lend new perspectives to my research. Some of these books are written by First Nations authors, however, many are written by non-Native authors *about* the Medicine Wheel’s philosophies. This could conjure new areas for discussion regarding authenticity, appropriation, and colonialization not possible for discussion here. To assuage this tension, as well as mitigating simply relying on another form of analytical reflection, a second supplementary section was undertaken. This second section shall describe the traditional rite of passage of the Vision Quest that I undertook under the permission and guidance of a First Nations Elder. The purpose for undertaking this Vision Quest was to experience these different processes of knowing as they are intended: experientially. This second section is built on the understanding that these traditions are not learnt from books, but experienced. The roots of these particular epistemologies therefore concern different processes of knowing that involve altered states of consciousness as opposed to being a different hermeneutic process of analytical interpretation. To remain within the books *about* Indigenous perspectives may otherwise simply remain with one foot in the Western epistemology it seeks to mitigate.

Section 1: Medicine Wheel

This first section shall briefly introduce the Medicine Wheel as a philosophical and educative tool before discussing how these philosophies could inform my research. Finally, what such insights could offer an educational perspective will be discussed.

⁹⁴ As described to me by my Elder in these traditions, Doreen “Bald Eagle Who Leads” Spence O.C. of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Alberta, Canada.

The Medicine Wheel and the Four Directions

The Medicine Wheel is often positioned as a central organising ideology for the North American Indigenous peoples. There are a variety of Medicine Wheel depictions depending on the specific Nation, however, all use a circle split into four quadrants. Each of these quadrants represents a cardinal direction based upon North, East, South, and West. Each of these cardinal directions represents an educative tool to transmit the teachings, or medicines, of that particular Nation. For example, these four directions often correspond to seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, to elements of air, fire, water, and earth, to aspects of spirit, heart, body, and mind, and to cycles of life of birth/childhood, adolescent, adulthood, and elderhood/death. Philosophies that underpin these medicines include beliefs in interconnected relations of all things; cycles; and propensities towards harmony. Loomis (1991) for example, notes “separation is an illusion” (p.2), and Cajete (2000) positions “all relationships are related to other relationships” (p.41). Four Arrows (2016) adds that in an Indigenous worldview, life is seen as “a complexity of ever-moving, cyclical interactions and relationships that seek harmony” (p.6). Harmony is sought through pursuing right relations: with ourselves, our communities, and nature, and is often conceptualized through the Lakota prayer “Mitakuye Oyasin”, or “all my relations” and “we are all related” (McGaa 1990; Cajete 2000; Dapice 2006).

The particular Medicine Wheels I was introduced to⁹⁵ were the Cree and the Blackfoot traditions. Below illustrates the Cree Medicine Wheel from Wegner-Nabigon (2010).

⁹⁵ With great gratitude to Elder Doreen “Bald Eagle Who Leads” Spence O.C. of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Alberta, Canada for her permissions in sharing these traditions.

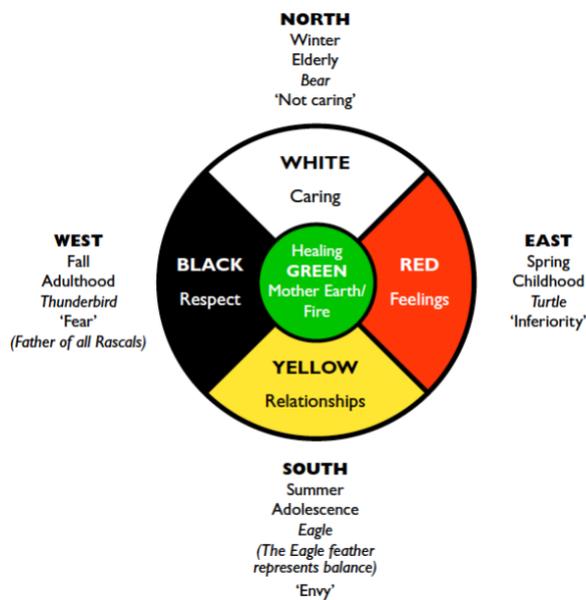


Figure 9: Example of Cree Medicine Wheel, taken from Wegner-Nabigon (2010, p.145)

Health Through the Medicine Wheel

A purpose of the Medicine Wheel is to educate and promote health of individuals and communities. Four Arrows (2016) describes the interconnectedness of health where, “[i]ndividual health reflects relationships in the world and balance between the relational, mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional” (p.6-7). Loomis (1991) notes Medicine Wheels provide “a tool for achieving this balance and harmony” (p.1). McCabe (2008) adds that while the Medicine Wheel is a physical representation of a circle, it is also “a process (healing), a ceremony (sweats, sharing circles) and teachings (a code for living)” (p.144). It is therefore “the way of understanding, centering and balance” (McCabe 2008, p.144). This educative tool therefore serves a purpose of communicating models of health and well-being for the individual and the interconnected community based upon the principles of interconnectedness, harmony, and relationships. Wegner-Nabigon (2010) adds that the Medicine Wheel represents methods to “teach the idea of balance in human development in order to maintain the sustenance of all living beings, including all aspects of the planet, which is considered a living being” (p.150). Healthy human development, she continues, is “inextricably linked with healthy environmental conditions” (p.150). Callahan (2010) argues that the Medicine Wheel teachings teach about our place in the interconnected whole. She notes how the Medicine Wheel,

“help us learn more about the natural world in which we live, and as we learn more about that world we discover more about ourselves. As we learn more about our relationship to that world, we better understand our relationships with others. As we learn about the power of that world, we learn how to draw upon the power to help us live more balanced and harmonious lives.” (p.xiii)

Reflections from the Medicine Wheel

To discuss how these teachings informed a different perspective and *diffracted* the reflections provided in the previous chapters, four sources proved useful (Little & Foster 1998; Wegner-Nabigon 2010; Plotkin 2008, 2013). These four were particularly relevant as they were accessible literary sources that discussed development from an Indigenous health-based perspective.

Each of these sources uses the Medicine Wheel to describe developmental stages and trajectories based upon the four directions and corresponding four seasons. Each of these directions and seasons carry particular lessons and developmental requirements for the healthy development of individuals. For example, Little and Foster (1998)⁹⁶ refer to each season as ‘shields’ required for a holistic developed person, while Wegner-Nabigon (2010) discusses such stages as ‘doors’ that one goes through. Within each of these directions/ seasons particular developmental focuses are described along with their corresponding “malady” (Little & Foster 1998) or “rascal” (Wegner-Nabigon 2010) that results when developmental focuses are neglected. Unlike many Western phased developmental theories⁹⁷ these trajectories are not necessarily linear (Wenger-Nabigon 2010), are independent of chronological age (Plotkin 2008), and instead relate to an individual’s flourishing. For example, one’s inner child, inner adolescent, adult and elder all require nourishing within a given individual as they all contain valuable lessons (medicines) for a healthy flourishing and balanced individual. Each of these recommended requirements is further correlated to the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the individual. What follows are key reflections from these models in relation to my own research. In particular transitions through childhood and adolescence shall be focused upon as my research depicts these phases in my life.

⁹⁶ Accessed through <http://www.schooloflostborders.org/content/four-shields-wholeness-excerpts-four-shields-initiatory-seasons-human-nature-lost-borders-pr>

⁹⁷ For example, the works of Piaget, Erikson, or Kohlberg.

i) Childhood

Firstly, these models help describe the healthy development of the child. For example, Little and Foster (1998) describe the Summer Shield where, “healthy persons would be athletic, earthy in a physical sense, instinctive, playful, emotional, sensual, innocently erotic, with a strongly developed sense of the child within. There would be a good deal of skin-skin contact with the earth.” They add that the resultant malady of this stage is where one “was hurt or never quite grew up and has turned away from the Fall passage of inwardness and feeling.” They continue this malady also results from the Winter Shield (opposite on the Medicine Wheel) being undernourished and affects the other shields in turn. They suggest that if the requirements of this shield are incomplete this ‘child’ becomes,

“given over to tantrums, anxiety, fear, hypertension, hysteria, jealousy, violence, sexuality, cheap thrills, greed, game-playing, attention seeking, manipulation, parasitism, gluttony, irresponsibility, materialism, etc. Self and Self-serving have become all important...(s)he is at the mercy of the environment, and incapable of acting appropriately of self-reliantly in the face of crisis.”⁹⁸

For Wegner-Nabigon (2010) this child phase resides in the East Spring Door. Drawing from Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996) she explains the East Door represents being able “to have an awareness of emotions and an ability to share them with appropriate language and expression, as well as being able to reduce stress through laughter” (p.144). She continues that developing self-esteem and self-love makes it possible to deal with the “rascal” of the East Door: inferiority, and that this negative aspect of the East Door “creates shame, anger, feelings of inequality, powerlessness and victimization” (p.144). Quoting Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996), she suggests that “[u]nless children are allowed to feel they have some power of choice over their own lives as they grow up, they are likely to feel they are victims, or at the very least, they will fear people they perceive as having authority over them. This perception is often carried over into adulthood” (Wenger-Nabigon 2010, p.52). Developmental difficulties in the East Door will impede the development of self-esteem and personal agency necessary for healthy adult functioning.

⁹⁸ All from above School of Lost Borders source.

These child stage teachings could relate to my own childhood and the stage explored in the primary and secondary school episodes. In particular many of the primary school children discussed very physical attributes and desires for fun and playfulness. I recall myself wishing to emulate athletes and people who were renowned for their physical prowess, be it sports persons or warriors depicted from history. Fear of inferiority also provides an interesting reflection as many of the primary and secondary school children worried about not being accepted or 'making the grade' to the next stage (be it moving to secondary school or getting good grades and a good job). I also recall these feelings of frustration and powerlessness that caused anxiety and fear, and often led to jealousy as I compared myself to others. Starting to practice martial arts and other alternative practices could have been my mechanisms through which I hoped to regain notions of power, choice, personal agency and self-esteem.

ii) Adolescence

Little and Foster (1998) discuss the Fall/ Autumn Shield where "such persons would be capable of deep introspection, would crave solitude in the psycho-sphere, feel deeply and empathetically, love self, possess a conscience, and dream the dreams of the sacred ancestors". They add, "having internalized their mother and father through rites of initiation, they would have adopted a greater mother and father. They would be people of inner character and possess a soul". The corresponding malady of this shield is when "the adolescent (of any age) has fallen into the quicksand of feelings, and is depressed much of the time, a helpless victim, deeply wounded by love, assailed by doubt, addicted to guilt, narcissistic or suicidal, a rebel without a cause, beset by troubling dreams and self-consciousness, unable to kindle up a spark of creative insight, seemingly incapable of loving him/herself, and probably having difficulties integrating the anima or animus". They continue that the opposite Spring shield remains undernourished and the contiguous shields "are sucked into a psychological maw where everything is felt and nothing is resolved".

Wegner-Nabigon (2010) classes this adolescent phase as the South Door. Drawing again from Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996), she explains how through this door the primary task of adolescent development is development of one's identity. This is "located within the primary function of learning about relationships with the self and with others" (p.152). Key attributes for this phase include developing patience,

learning to listen, and development of one's self-identity. If these attributes are neglected, she notes "feelings of anger and alienation are believed to arise from not learning how to listen to the Self, from not having good relationships with others or healthy connections to community" (p.152). Envy is the rascal of this developmental door, which is "defined by the Elders as wanting something without being willing to work for it" (p.146). Here teaching patience, spiritual reflection, quietness, and self-awareness are essential to "...become aware of our mind, body, and spirit" (p.146).

Reflecting on these adolescent phases I am drawn to the overarching theme of authenticity that emerged in the research. In particular, episodes discussed tensions between trying to find and develop an authentic sense of self, while also being accepted and not alienated from one's peers. I recall feeling constantly under pressure to 'be man enough' and at times I felt I insufficiently measured up to my peers' standards. I felt like I had to constantly prove myself and often did not like who I was. This led to increased feelings of anger, mostly directed towards myself. I recall many of my choices concerned this tension of acceptance and authenticity, and I too craved solitude, introspection, and self-exploration (of body, heart, mind and spirit) to try and come to know myself and resolve the incessant feelings of doubt and fear. The practices I undertook aimed to achieve this deep solitude and self-exploration of myself and were designed to provide not only a mental, physical, and emotional exploration, but provide new philosophies that allowed me to explore the spiritual aspects I felt went undernourished in me. These practices were also aimed at providing a vehicle to *becoming*: becoming the person I hoped I could be, calm, knowledgeable, kind, competent and confident. They were desired to assist me transition away from my 'mother and father' towards participating in something bigger, towards purpose and meaning, towards someone that was 'enough' and that I could feel good about.

For both Little and Foster (1998) and Wegner-Nabigon (2010), it is only through the fostering of these child and adolescent periods where one is able to become a healthy adult "capable of mature judgment, self-control, appropriate action" (Little and Foster 1998) and growing into respect and reason (Wegner-Nabigon 2010, p.146). As I reflect, I ask whether this is what I still search for and whether I retain doubt in my abilities to be this mature, controlled, and sufficient adult.

iii) Plotkin

The third author whose work is inspired by the Medicine Wheel is Plotkin (2008, 2009, 2013). Plotkin (2008) developed what he calls the ‘Soulcentric Developmental Wheel’ and the Wheel of Life, which he describes as a nature-based model for “growing a genuine elder, starting, that is, at birth” (p.5). He describes this approach as a *wholeness-centred approach* in comparison to what he believes is the pathology-centred approach of Western development models. While he acknowledges that this approach is not a direct description of Indigenous models, he believes the wheel resonates with the ways of many traditional peoples. This model postulates eight stages of development starting in the Eastern direction with the *innocent in the nest*. Plotkin describes each of these stages as containing particular tasks, gifts, and centre of gravity that relate to the developing individual. Below is his representation of this Wheel.

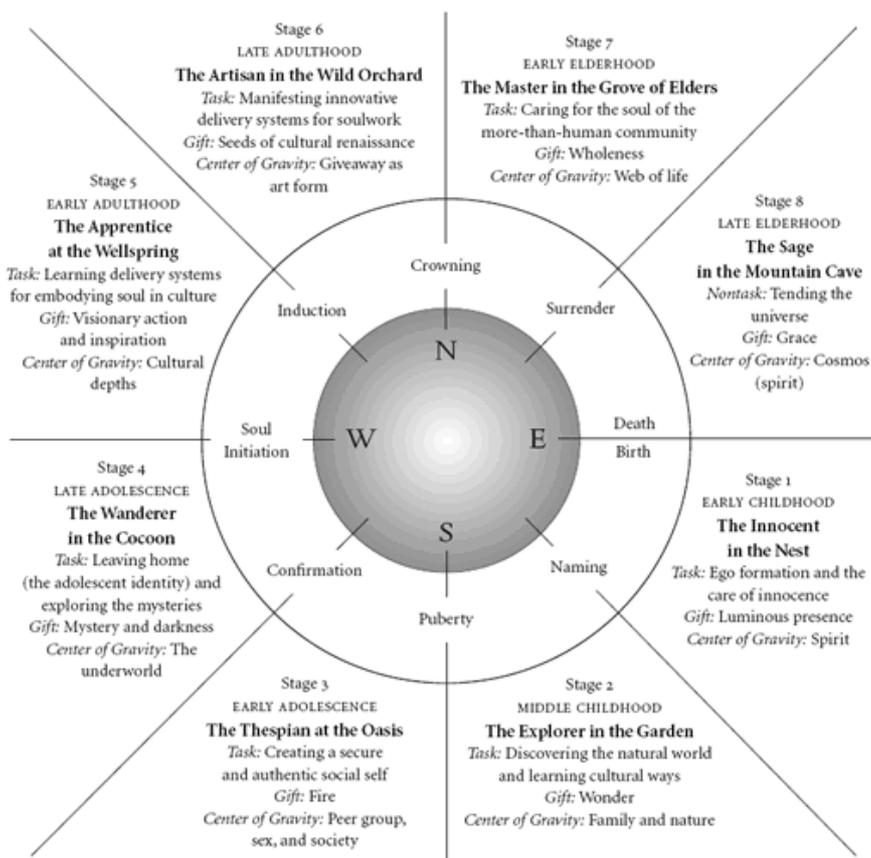


Figure 10: The Eight Soulcentric or Eocentric Stages of Human Development (2008, p.153)

Unlike models discussed above, Plotkin further splits each development stage into two separate stages. Plotkin believes we live in what he calls a largely immature

patho-adolescent society due to neglecting developmental focus within the first four development stages. For Plotkin this “inevitably spawns a variety of cultural pathologies, resulting in contemporary societies that are materialistic, greed-based, hostilely competitive, violent, racist, sexist, ageist, and ultimately self-destructive” (p.7). He argues that these neglected developmental tasks lead to a state of immaturity within modern society, disconnected to nature and spirit.

“In current Western and Westernized societies, in addition to the scarcity of true maturity, many people of adult age suffer from a variety of adolescent psychopathologies — incapacitating social insecurity, identity confusion, extremely low self-esteem, few or no social skills, narcissism, relentless greed, arrested moral development, recurrent physical violence, materialistic obsessions, little or no capacity for intimacy or empathy, substance addictions, and emotional numbness.” (2008, p.9)

In particular, Plotkin argues many adolescents and young adults do not pass through his stage four to arrive at stage five. Plotkin describes that at this Late Adolescence (*The Wanderer in the Cocoon*) stage the desired developmental task is leaving home to find one’s adolescent identity and exploring the mysteries of nature and the psyche through dark descent into the underworld. Due to remaining at these development stages many are unable to enter the following early adulthood stage (*Apprentice at the Wellspring*) with its developmental tasks of learning the mechanisms for embodying soul in their culture. As a result, he contends that an increasing proportion of young adolescents “feel lost and confused and cannot find someone trustworthy and wise to whom they can turn” (p.10).

Plotkin’s approach to youth development may also provide interesting insights to my own episodes. For example, Plotkin (2009) succinctly describes these adolescent stages where the first half of early adolescence “is to fashion a personality—a way of belonging to the human community—one that is both authentic and socially acceptable” (p.19). He adds that becoming aware of who we really are and to act authentically is important at this early stage.

“to know where we stand, what we value, what we desire, what we tolerate and what we don’t—and to be able and willing to act accordingly, most of the time, despite the social risks.” (p.19)

He continues that the second half of the task in this early adolescent stage is attaining social acceptability. To be a healthy adolescent, we must “belong to a real community. So the way in which we express our authenticity means everything. We must learn how to be true to ourselves in a way that at least some of our peers embrace” (p.19).

Reflecting upon this stage, I reflect upon my desire to develop a personality that I could feel was authentic while also accepted by others. To achieve this, I hungered for opportunities to develop and come to know myself and sought opportunities for leaving the comforts and safety of ‘home’ to enable me to transition and *become* this authentic self. In my educational experiences these opportunities were not provided, and I therefore felt lost. Searching out alternative practices was perhaps my way to find opportunities, groups, and guides, to belong to and develop my adolescent self.

Plotkin (2009) continues to discuss the development requirement within the late adolescence stage. He adds that if we achieve a personality that is authentic and acceptable enough, “then the enigma called by such names as life, the world, Mystery, spirit, or soul shifts our center of gravity from peer group to the mysteries of nature and psyche” (p.19). This stage (*The Cocoon*) is the stage when “we begin to ask the big, existential and spiritual questions of life” (p.19). Only after walking along this long path do we finally come to understand our true place in the world. We are then left with the decision whether we wish to follow this path of service to its conclusion or remain in the entrapments of adolescence.

“If and when we make the unequivocal commitment to embody our vision in our world for the benefit of all beings, then and only then do we traverse through the passage of Soul Initiation (with or without a rite) and into true adulthood (the Wellspring).” (p.19)

I am led here to question whether *all* of the practices I undertook were in the hope that I could find purpose and meaning in my life and could craft ways of becoming the person I desired to be: one of maturity, acceptance and belonging, and service. These opportunities were scarce through my existing educational experiences, and so I searched for opportunities to fulfil my craving for holistic development and initiations into a meaningful life that I could feel good about.

Overall Reflections

Culminating the above models, three further reflections emerged as I heuristically indwelled and diffracted insights from the previous chapters: ***holistic development***, the need to ***be supported through these developmental stages***; and undergoing ***rites of initiation and transition***.

All these Medicine Wheel based models discuss the importance of balanced holistic exploration and development. In particular, balancing mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects is promoted throughout these Indigenous worldviews. As I reflect, such a perspective is useful in understanding my own belief that I desired to be a balanced, mature, developed, individual. In this light, I could reframe the practices I undertook as ways to nourish these aspects of myself that I perceived were neglected in my current educational passageway. Through this perspective, martial arts, for example, could have acted as mechanisms for my physical and spiritual nourishment while becoming involved in peace might have nourished emotional and mental aspects that were undernourished.

A further reflection of *being supported* fits within this drive for balanced development within myself as I was perhaps looking for groups, mentors, guides, or even Elders to provide belonging, direction, and acknowledgement that I was on the right track. Looking for support also concerned apprenticing towards becoming the adult I hoped I could become. It was ultimately about *becoming*. I was perhaps looking for someone to guide me into the ways where I could accept who I was and feel that I was the competent adult in the world I wished to be.

Similarly, the practices I sought provided opportunities to challenge me, prove myself, and progress to newer stages of development. For example, the grading system in martial arts provided clear points where I would transition from one stage to another and provided celebrations when achieved. I reflect whether this need for acknowledged progression connects to the above description of *rites of passage* or *initiation* to transition between stages. Within our current educational systems such transitions are not marked and may result in some of the difficulties experienced by the interviewees regarding anxieties around transitions. Little and Foster (1998) note the importance of rites of initiation at the adolescent phase to internalize one's mother and father towards adapting a greater mother and father. Plotkin (2008) notes that these developmental tasks are important as they directly relate to one's ability to

be ready to transition to more mature states of being. He adds that when one is prepared, the adolescent “must undergo an initiation process that requires letting go of the familiar and comfortable. She must submit to a journey of descent into the mysteries of nature and the human soul” (p.11). Culminating these three reflections of self-development, support, and initiations, Plotkin concludes,

“the world today needs mature mentors and initiators to support young people to grow into visionary artisans of cultural change, the new leaders of the twenty-first century who will guide humanity through the transformation that the greater Earth community wholly depends upon.” (2008, p.19)

This was perhaps what I too was hoping for, and what I perhaps required to feel like I was ready, ‘man enough’, and one that was initiated into a world with belonging and purpose. Focusing on the benefits of incorporating rites of passage might provide interesting focus for further educational research.⁹⁹

Education

For this next section I wish to turn briefly towards how the above discussion might add to perspectives on education. This section shall discuss the importance of supporting individuals in their personal journey to come into holistic and developed harmony: within themselves and in relationships with others and nature. This focus could be seen as a positive health-based approach that seeks to build on the individual’s strengths and explicitly nurture internal and relational peace. In particular these approaches to education encourages the individual to explore and develop at their own speed. They also promote apprenticeships and rites of passage when they are required, all supported by the guidance of Elders.

As discussed, an Indigenous worldview promotes different aspirations compared to Western ideals. It would therefore be likely that an Indigenous educational perspective would envisage different priorities. As Duncan (2018) contends,

⁹⁹ For example also see: https://youthpassageways.org/resources/?fbclid=IwAR00G2drugorEGdGTuqMcPXqyIGDt0MrEsRS0_dA-PyuLMnVsS504kgYGAM or John Davis, Ph.D: <http://www.schooloflostborders.org/content/wilderness-rites-passage-healing-growth-and-initiation-john-davis-phd> and Steven Foster, Ph.D: <http://www.schooloflostborders.org/content/toward-adequate-rite-passage-manhood-steven-foster-phd>

“[w]hereas WEIRD¹⁰⁰ ideas on education and human development are usually based on perceived cultural needs and are altered by changes in government and political direction, Indigenous nature-based models are informed by imaginal qualities in nature, as a source of metaphor to scaffold thinking about the process of human development” (p.55). Regnier (1995) specifically looks at incorporating First Nations’ developmental philosophies into educational systems. He argues that the purpose of Indigenous education is to support students to find harmony and balance within themselves and their lives. Education in this manner would be “for balanced human development in which students learn to be a “conduit of sustenance for all components of creation” and learn to dedicate their “efforts towards maintaining harmony and balance within all creation”” (p.402). In particular this model of education would encourage learning the teachings found on the Medicine Wheel, such as supporting the healthy development of individuals at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels so they become balanced. This education would also focus on finding and developing the gifts within each of the individuals so that they find meaning in their lives. The goal of this supportive model of education would lead to balanced existence, meaning “living responsibly in spiritual relationships with self, others, and the world” (Regnier 1995, p.389). Such a model of education would therefore focus predominantly on health and well-being of the individual and the communities in which they are an inseparable part.

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990) specifically develop a pedagogical tool called the *Circle of Courage* that “grew from an anthropological comparison of child rearing of Western and Native American cultures” (Brokenleg & Van Bockern 2003, p.22). In this circle, key values for healthy positive youth development are positioned on the four cardinal directions similar to the Medicine Wheel. These values include, belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, and correspond to what they call the 4A’s of survival needs: Attachment, Achievement, Autonomy, Altruism (Brokenleg & Van Bockern 2003). Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2005) add that when these needs are met, “children grow and thrive”, but all too often in today’s “go-it-alone societies” these needs become frustrated and many youths have “broken circles” where multiple problems follow (p.130-131). Personally, these values resonate and could correspond to my own desires to become competent, accepted, confident, and authentic in who I was and my place in the world.

¹⁰⁰ Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic.

Plotkin (2008) believes that Western models of education have an incongruent focus for the development of youth and “don’t seem to have a clue about how to prepare a young person for sexual flowering, social independence, authentic personal expression, soul discovery, or a lifetime of interdependent relationships in the more-than-human world of nature” (p.10). Instead, he believes that educational models that draw from Indigenous perspectives are more useful for youth development. As noted above, Plotkin (2008) discusses the benefits of initiatory passages that are missing in today’s Western educational approaches but still used in Indigenous approaches. He describes the transformational potential of such initiatory passages for youth but adds that these initiatory passages are insufficient if they lack the support preparing youth to be able to transition fruitfully to the next phase in their lives. In particular, Plotkin feels adolescents need the greatest support for transitioning to adulthood, yet it is adolescents that in the current Western education systems receive least developmental support. Plotkin (2013) discusses a need to ‘re-wild psychology’ and develops a ‘3-D Ego Model’ for cultivating the self based upon the seven directions from Indigenous worldviews: North, South, East, West, up, down, and centre. He argues this approach emphasizes “promoting health and wholeness rather than on (merely) suppressing pathology and fragmentedness” (p.5). Plotkin calls this process “wholing” where healing ones woundings and subpersonalities are necessary towards optimal human development alongside the development of what he believes are shared innate human facets or archetypes. He concludes,

“With a healthy, mature 3-D Ego, we are fully anchored in the fourfold Self, and we more often than not experience ourselves as being in service to Soul and, consequently, to Spirit, too.” (2013, p.15)

As a result of these approaches, peace, both an inner peace of well-being and equanimous temperament, and a relational peace between *all* relations (Mitakuye Oyasin), is foregrounded as an explicit focus. Drawing upon Chief Teononwithon (Jacob Thomas), Rice (2005) discusses how the philosophies of life of the First Nations promote peace from the understanding we are all related. Speaking specifically of the Rotinonshonni people, Rice (2005) adds, “these teachings offer a rationale for existence and a method to achieve peace, power, and righteousness through appreciation, love, respect and generosity” (p.51). The values that are taught therefore concern ways of being in the world and concern following a path that offers

peace and meaning for one's existence (p.52).¹⁰¹

Conclusion

Using perspectives from First Nations' worldviews has provided nuanced insights that *diffract* my previous reflections. These perspectives create ripples that both correspond and diffract the themes from my previous analysis. This could lead towards new reflections upon what occurred in my own journey through masculinity, and perhaps what I could incorporate into peace education. These final reflections shall be further discussed in the final conclusion chapter.

In particular these insights from First Nations' traditions could correspond to the themes of competence, authenticity, support, space and anxiety discussed in the previous chapter. However, through engaging philosophies embedded in the Medicine Wheel, nuanced interpretations that speak of an individual's needs to build *holistic* competencies emerges. Developing these holistic competencies fosters individuals to craft authentic identities. Through developing one's authenticity, their place in the world is found. Individuals who feel a sense of place in the world embody self-esteem and convey belonging in their communities. These reflections could be added to the insights already garnered in this thesis. A heightened focus on supporting and guiding youth to explore their holistic self is encouraged in these traditions towards finding purpose and meaning and (re)connecting to the larger world. Similarly, providing spaces to explore ones-self and creating opportunities through rites of passage and initiation to demarcate transitions also generates new thoughts onto the research. These perspectives indicate that if such approaches are neglected and not supported, anxieties and trauma can ensue and lead to "immature" individuals and communities. This might further correspond to the anxieties discussed by the participants around transitions and feeling pressures in their lives.

¹⁰¹ These ideas on education are further explored and developed in a chapter on incorporating such practices into peace education (Cremin & Archer 2018).

Section 2: The Vision Quest

“I have been a seeker, and I still am, but I stopped asking the books and stars. I started listening to the teaching of my soul.” (attributed to Rumi)

Introduction

This next section shall attempt to explain the experience of the Vision Quest undertaken to fully embrace an alternative epistemology to research and move beyond Western epistemologies. As previously mentioned, representing these experiences is difficult as I do not wish to commit the very “epistemological damage” (Bozelak & Zembylas 2017) this approach sought to mitigate by regressing into exalted analytical ‘academic’ explanations.

This section shall therefore be split into four parts: firstly, the chapter shall recount the experience leading up to the Quest. The purpose here will be to evocatively describe incidences, thoughts, and feelings before the Quest. Secondly, a poem shall attempt to express feelings that emanated during the Quest. Particularly I wished to avoid describing the Quest itself as this seemed incongruent with the intention of maintaining respect for such traditions. Poems and other artistic expressions carry abilities to communicate in different and more affective ways (Cahnmann 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Givens 2008; McCulliss 2013; Faulkner 2019; Fitzpatrick & Fitzpatrick 2021). Therefore, the use of a poem to represent the Quest will hopefully move beyond descriptive and analytical expressions. Thirdly, four personal reflections that arose from the Quest shall be discussed. The purpose here will be to attempt to elucidate meaning that emerged from this experience. A final conclusion shall then relate these reflections to my research. These sections therefore loosely represent the before, during, and after of the Quest.

1. Narrative of the Vision Quest

Crossing the Threshold: Rebirth.

"You are to cross the threshold into new life. It's a dangerous adventure, because you are moving out of the sphere of the knowledge of you and your community."

(Campbell 1991, p.77)

The journey to the site is long. Nine hours flying and now driving for 13. I want to get started. Tired and hazy, a mix of trepidation and excitement courses through my body feeling like fire in my veins. Getting closer, it begins to snow. "Snowing in May? Typical". Questions of doubt and questions of fear surface as we take the long drive through the prairies and mountains. "what am I doing?", "am I doing the right thing?" "What if I fail?"

We arrive at the sacred site. The tee-pee has already been erected and the Elder walks around in her beaded dress and wellington boots. She cuts a strange figure in her traditional attire fashioned with her brown "gum boots". She comes to meet us with a smile. Heart to heart we embrace. I offer her tobacco as an offering to be accepted onto the fast and ask if I should give my offering of food for our feast tonight. She accepts the tobacco without comment replying, "you should find yourself a spot". We walk together through the sacred land to find my home for the next four days. She tells me to choose where feels right, but nonchalantly reminds me that to go too far means a longer walk back to the sacred fire. By day four, this means every step becomes a journey in itself.

I need open spaces and a view. I've never been good closed in and I joke that perhaps I was a bird in a past life. As we walk down the hill a spot emerges with an open space and three trees together for shelter. I stop and the Elder asks if this is where I want to be. My inner dialogue begins as I double guess whether this is the *right* spot. "Should I keep going?" "Is there a better spot?" I look to the Elder for approval, yet she pays no attention and starts to nimbly gather twigs she sees on the ground. "If it's right, remember to offer tobacco and ask permission", she reminds me, giving nothing away. I remind myself to "Get out of head and into spirit!" and decide to settle here asking the trees if they would mind me accompanying them for the next four nights. A cold wind blows and I am full of anxiety. "Someone will come

for you later for the sweat” says the Elder. I thank her but am pre-occupied, nervous in my mind, launching into getting everything set up as quickly as possible.

I offer tobacco and make my camp. I smudge to all seven directions and ask for safety and health for the days to come. Smudging always calms me and acts as a small interlude to the frenzied motions of getting prepared. I unpack my medicine bag filled with the trinkets and emblems I brought as companions for my time alone. “You’re rushing. There’s no need to rush. That’s exactly *not* the point!” I remind myself as I seem to be racing to get completed as if only then can I relax. A jade owl and my grandfather’s ring will be my friends for these days. I smudge them and place them on my alter, facing South in the direction of the ancestors.

I sit and reflect upon where I am and what is to come, yet preparing myself in such uncertainty is difficult. I finally feel relaxed in my body, but my heart is yet to catch up. As I contemplate the next four days I ask for a “good” four days. Meaningful. Transformational. However, the voice in the shadows of my head reemerges, “be careful what you wish for”, as my inner-selves clash. My mind wanders to a future time soon to come when this will be completed and I will know the outcomes of the fast and recall this time I am presently in. I cannot wait but try not to rush to an ending without appreciating the journey. I hear trickster crow call in the trees and he brings me out of my head and back into the present.

“All set up? It’s time for ceremony. Please bring what you need” says a strange voice behind my camp. I had already prepared and reprepared everything several times, yet these words seem to act as a reset button as doubt envelops me and I rush to check and double check once again. I check the gifts I have for the other fasters and helpers, I check I have my prayer flags for the sweat lodge, I put on my fasting blanket covering my head and shoulders as expected. I am the furthest faster from the sacred fire. I arrive and everyone is settled, yet all in their own world dealing with their own inner voices.

First we feast. An array of organic home prepared food. Stew, salads and fruits. This will be our “last supper” the Elder calls, our last food for the next four days. We all eat heartily realising no more sustenance for four days. After eating we sit in circle and a helper gifts us bags from the Elder. Inside contains our sacred pipe, sacred tobacco, smudge blend and a small gift. If this was your first fast there was an eagle feather to join you on your journey. We sit in silence as the Elder starts the pipe ceremony. The

room becomes enveloped in a warm blanket of smoke as each take their turn with the pipe in their own way. After the pipes are put away respectfully the Elder welcomes us with song. She thanks the territory on which we sit before passing the talking piece around for introductions. I look around at all the faces in the circle, quiet, expressionless faces full of thoughts gazing into the warmth of the sacred fire. We are a mixed group, all here for our own reasons. Some share, some do not. The Elder speaks little, but much is in her words. I feel supported yet trusted to find my own way.

The time for fasting is almost upon us, but we must first prepare ourselves in the sweat lodge: a re-entry into the womb of mother earth. The sweat lodge is a cocoon made of blankets and weaved branches. Inside a pit for the hot rocks currently burning on the great fire. In shorts or robes we smudge ourselves with our fasting blankets and enter through the small entrance on our hands and knees. We move around the pit sun-wise before finding a spot. I sit, waiting for the rest to enter. In the darkness I am left in my thoughts as I begin to retreat inward. In the pitch black my senses become heightened and I hear our breaths align into a unique dance. In come the rocks and I feel their emanating heat take away the cold I had not realised I was feeling. The rocks are piled into place with a deer antler and the Elder sprinkles pungent medicine onto the rocks, making popping noises like popping candy on the tongue. Finally, the Elder takes a spruce and cedar bow and plunges it into a bucket of water. She shakes the bow onto the rocks releasing a sizzle and plume of humid steam. She utters some words in a foreign tongue I know not. The heat is intense and my nostrils begin to burn. I sit struggling to catch my breath. My heart begins to thump and the drums start to pound.

We stay in the cocoon sometimes singing, sometimes silent. We offer prayers and ask Great Spirit to guide our Quests. Finally, just as I cannot stay in any longer the door is flung back allowing a gust of air to course in and a collective breath ensues around the circle. We exit the cocoon and a wall of cold hits me. The sweat on my body chills me to the bone as I now lament the warm embrace of the cocoon. I catch my breath but my heart still beats intensely when the Elder calls us back for the second round. We re-enter as before. New rocks are added. This time hotter, the stream is suffocating. My eyes appear to play tricks on me as I see flashes in the dark space. We again sing, again we stay silent. I am consumed by myself as my attention draws further inward. This time we offer our prayer flags that are our intentions for the fast. The Elder says a prayer and once again we are jettisoned into

the cold. Emerging reborn. We stand around the fire, not a word is spoken. Innocent and anticipating in trepidation of what is to come. I am lost in time, but the full moon is high. We take our water and offer it to Mother Earth. Pouring it to ground we give thanks to grandmother moon. We pay respect to the directions and take one last sip. As I drink I am conscious this is the last liquid to pass my lips for four days. I drink trying to absorb every drop into my whole being, trying to capture it and hold it before it becomes a forgotten memory.

It is time. I tie my prayer flags around the tree and with one last look we meet each other's gaze as one by one we slowly disappear into the night and into the darkness of our souls. I walk back slowly, mindfully, fully present in this moment. The moon brightly guides my way. I feel purged and clean. I enter my camp and sit in the silence. I finally feel at peace. Ready. I smile and smudge to cleanse myself, then fall asleep.¹⁰²

2. Complementary Contradictions

I'm sitting on a grassy verge in the foothills of the mountains.
My body is cold, but my heart and soul feel warm wrapped in the blanket of nature.
Mother Earth and Father Sky.
The air permeates through me revitalising my soul as I breathe in the world.
Unplugged yet plugged in. Disconnected, yet connected. Alone, yet with great company.

Listening to the silence I hear a cacophony of noise.
Finally listening not only hearing.
I listen to the birds, the breeze, and the trees, and they talk with me.
There are no words, but we understand one another.
My long-lost senses are in dialogue, sensations, smells, sounds I had forgotten.

I am a stranger here yet feel as long-lost kin.
Welcome and at home in these stranger lands.
The land calls me home to take my place and give service.

¹⁰² It is with gratitude to Elder Doreen "Bald Eagle Who Leads" Spence O.C. of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Alberta, Canada, for her permission to write and share these words.

Stress and anxiety dissolves as I melt into the environment.

I walk with heart.

Slowing down I become aware of space and time.

I have time, yet there is no time.

My inner rhythms sync with the rhythm of the world.

There is no separation. My breath, heart, spirit.

I enter conversation with my-selves.

I finally let go and become present as “I”.

I do not know but feel.

I feel whole, integrated. Reset.

The boundaries of my-self are beyond my container.

An overwhelming sense of gratitude washes over me.

I have learnt what I came to learn, to unlearn what I needed to unlearn.

Nourished.

Peace-full masculinity.

3. Relating to the Research Questions

While acknowledging my concerns with trying to represent my Quest through analytical means, this final section shall try to present four reflections that emerged relating to my research. I have decided to acknowledge these emergent reflections as I believe they keep with the methodology’s indwelling and focussing process (Moustakas 1990). This is not, however, to act as an analysis, but I hope it assists a deeper understanding about what such experiences elucidated for my research journey on peace and masculinity. These reflections revolve around a main reflection that emerged during the Quest: ‘*being*’. Three initial reflections shall firstly be discussed: *being* with oneself; *being* oneself; and *be*-coming oneself. After these three reflections, a final reflection on *being* an Elder shall be explored. These will then briefly be related to the research questions regarding masculinity, peace, and peace education praxis.

Being with oneself:

While on the Quest, I recall feeling a great sense of calm arise from being on my own. After an initial discomfort of what I assume was unfamiliarity with sitting in silence and 'being' with myself, I seemed to return to a feeling as if I was returning to something natural. In this space and silence I slowed down and started to breathe and listen differently. Over the four days I began to listen with more than just my ears (which go into the head) and listen to what I call the heart. It was a different type of listening that I cannot describe other than say it was a warmth and a compassion that seemed to connect me with the outer world. While I was on my own, I was not alone. This feeling remained with me beyond the fast for some time before perhaps busy noisy life began to re-consume me.

I believe this might suggest a value of habitually doing such types of experiences of making space (materially and temporally) to spend quiet time being with myself to reflect. The time spent in nature acted as a type of reset and provided time to reassess, reconnect, and recuperate from the pace of modern life. I feel this might represent a shift towards an ethic of self-care and well-being where I *walk my talk* around being a carer and peace worker. I must firstly mirror such work and consistently do the work on myself if I hope those with whom I work will reciprocate. If a respite for the soul to recharge and reflect assists me to continue the work I am passionate about in congruent ways with peace, then it is perhaps required periodically.

Being Oneself:

While on the Quest I noticed that I was being different. As hard as it is to explain, my whole *being* was different. At first I constantly tried to 'grasp' things, but I soon realised that this was an over-reliance on the head like a well-worn ravine. I struggled to turn this off as to do so itself required cognitive processes. However, over time it just began to dissipate. I began to *let go* more and just allow things to affect me in ethereal ways. Usually not being able to grasp things causes me anxiety, but I experienced calm in this state. "It will do to me what it needs to. I do not need to 'get it'" emerged, and with it an understanding of things distinct from intellect arose. This different way of being felt present and I felt connected and *with* everything around me. My mind felt at rest. *Felt* perhaps being key to this *being* as everything was felt rather than thought.

During this time I didn't need to try to be anything other than myself. This felt quite alien to be honest. I noted that in much of my life I wore a mask. That I was often trying to prove myself, and that I was consumed with a lot of frustration and anger at the world. Here, now, this disappeared. What emerged was a different sense of agency. I felt I was in control of my agency, while elsewhere control was somehow relinquished to fitting in and being accepted. I felt a type of authenticity I had not felt in a long while and with it came feelings of contentment. "Authenticity is a heart space" was one such revelation I recall.

In the Quest I recall feeling a sense of wholeness, where all parts of myself felt permissible and not contradictory. Again, this was not simply a philosophical understanding but a felt embodied experience. I felt only when I am able to let go, only then can I begin to *be*. This was not something I could explain or 'capture', and whenever I tried to put words to it, the frustration and anxiety returned. They were not supposed to be explained but felt. Language was incompatible to these feelings. Finally, there was a deep sense of humility and gratitude emanated from within my whole being.

Be-coming Oneself:

By being oneself through being *with* oneself, I reflected on where I wanted to go, what I wanted to do, and even more, *who* I wanted to become. This was again less of a mental picture and more of a feeling. The decoction of this feeling was about letting go, trust, and believing in myself. It was about self-acceptance and my journey of on-going self-mastery. This idea did not feel ego driven but concerned continuing to do the work on myself as a way of then giving back to community. It was about a sense of self as providing service to others (human and nonhuman). About being a curious explorer who is trying to find ways to his own becoming, and through the act of doing so enters communion with those I meet. I felt this service, for me at least, was through my own journey of self-exploration. This journey is on-going and reaches out with humility to engage others in its quest towards my own becoming. I believe that this way of being is the direction for me to do the work I hope to do. That by exploring life as a man seeking peace is the way to reach out to others, and through so doing we all become changed through the encounters. This feeling was about finally giving myself the permission to become that person that I never allowed myself to be. I reflected whether the Quest concerned transitioning to come into myself. It required a

trail, a passage, and this passage opened space to provide me the courage and permission I needed to move forward.

Being an Elder:

It is possible I was influenced by the sheer presence of certain Elders on the fast, but I recall being drawn to the concept of Eldership and their role. There were two examples of Eldership on my fast that focused my thoughts. Firstly, the Elder herself: she was comfortable in her skin and seamlessly embodied contradictory qualities of being humble yet confident, direct yet gentle. She gave care by trusting everyone's own abilities to find their way. The way she held space was something to behold and is something I will continue to reflect upon. It was not about what she did, but how she was in the space and how she was in her being. The second example came from one of the helpers. He was a man in his 50's with something about his presence. He was not trying to be anything, but simply was. He emanated a gravitas though his authenticity. He was lightly spoken and gentle yet veiled an impenetrable masculine strength underneath. Both carried a deep unspoken wisdom that showed their life's journey lived. While observing these two elders, I reflected about the lack of appreciation to Elders in our communities and this has remained with me since the fast.

I began to wonder about role models and how I had searched for many in my life. I began to reflect about potential vital needs for Elders and needs for diverse types of role models throughout our lives. I reflected upon the difference between wisdom and intelligence and feelings I had throughout the Quest. Maybe what I desired was to transition into my own Eldership, to have the opportunity to be initiated into the path of Eldership. Without this rite to mark the transition, perhaps I was stuck in limbo in my place in the world. Eldership for me is a state of being, it concerns how one walks on the earth and how one is in space with others, mirroring ways of being in the world. Eldership is an intentional way of being, comfortable with the world around you. But this state must come from inside, it must be felt. Perhaps I simply needed something to allow me to believe I could move into this being, to give myself the permission and courage. The fast acted as an initiative progression towards that goal¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ Not that this means I feel I have attained such a space. This acted as the realization and acceptance of this journey, not it's destination.

Conclusion

The following chapter will draw *all* the pieces of the research together. However, the Quest and subsequent reflection instilled ideas about masculinity in concert with peace that diffracted my own. Again, this was less a mental revelation describable through words, and more of a feeling in the body and heart. This idea of masculinity in concert with peace was about *being*: being with oneself as one walks on the earth. It was about letting go and being oneself instead of trying to prove oneself as a particular image. It was a feeling of peace from an integrated masculinity that was able to explore and balance seeming contradictions often positioned as antithesis of masculinity. There was a calm resiliency to this masculinity, a strength and *authenticity* that was comfortable in one's own being. It was quiet and mindful with a deep conviction of care for all things. This masculinity was about becoming; becoming at peace with my masculinity through accepting who I am in the world. It was an image of masculinity that reaches out in brave non-judgemental, curious, mutual engagements with others, as an expression of masculinity. Whether this image is sustainable in the modern technocratic world that I returned to will remain a question. However, the Quest provided the felt sensation of this masculinity that I can aspire towards. It will likely require practice and periods for recuperation, but it has provided a direction that feels right.

The question of peace education praxis is inseparable from this idea of masculinity. By being in the world, one who is reaching out and trying to become, one is an incidental educator. In this way we are all educators for each other. Peace education is about being oneself with others and holding space with others. It is also about curiously exploring our own being and through that act we engage and relate compassionately to others. Grateful for the opportunities for momentarily being together we exhibit a genuine authentic care for all our relations on their own journeys.¹⁰⁴ What this means for peace education praxis is about *how we are* and *who we are* in the spaces we inhabit; leading by example as we reach out to engage with others who share this space with us. This is a path of Eldership and is the way I now choose to see peace education.

¹⁰⁴ By all my relations I refer to the phrase *Mitakuye Oyasín* to mean all that have, are, and will, breath between mother earth and father sky.

Conclusion

“The analyst must go on learning endlessly... for only what he can put right in himself can he hope to put right in the patient...it is his own hurt that gives the measure of his power to heal. This, and nothing else, is the meaning of the Greek myth of the wounded physician.”
(Carl Jung Collected Works Vol. 16. 1970, p.116)

As I draw this research to a close, I acknowledge the transformative journey I have been on. I hope you the reader have also been on that journey with me and that maybe you have been draw into your own reflections. If so, this thesis succeeds in whatever small amount to accomplishing the peace pedagogy I hoped it might be.

Limitations

There will always be limitations when undertaking research. This research is no different. Limitations could influence the process and resolutions that emerged. However, I believe that the purpose of this research was never to suggest infallibility. In fact, it tried to suggest that such infallibility will always be present, what matters is the process of going through the research in credible congruent ways. I appreciate, for example, that what the participants told me was influenced by my questions, their day, current affairs, and my very presence. As previously discussed, my aim was not to suggest these participants' words as some representation of universal Truth. I do not believe such Truths can be 'found' paradigmically or ethically. I understand we tell stories purposefully, and this might include the stories we want to believe or want others to believe. This subjectivity is important to my research as it is these stories, for whatever reason, that evoked reflections. This also goes with my limitations: in the literature I read or in my own interpretation on those stories. While I sought to incorporate as much robustness as possible, my choices could vary depending upon a variety of factors on that day. I acknowledge that we can never detach ourselves from our stories and inevitably write ourselves into our work (Denzin 2014). This, however, was the purpose of this thesis: to lean into subjectivity. I understand that if I was to do this again, possibly different resolutions might emerge. But again, this is the purpose of this thesis. To embrace this vulnerability and to allow it to affect me as it does today. To let go and trust the process. Tomorrow, it will continue to do its work on me as long as I stay open. The learning never ceases. A quote here by Jiddu Krishnamurti resonates with this sentiment,

“The more you know yourself, the more clarity there is. Self-knowledge has no end you don't come to an achievement, you don't come to a conclusion. It is an endless river.”¹⁰⁵

This thesis has provided a solid foundation that I can continuously reflect and build upon as I continue to develop my-self and my place in the world.

I do, however, have reflections that I would do differently if I was to do it again. These have been incorporated into the developing pedagogical model that has emerged through this research. For example, these could include incorporating not only focussing on verbal thoughts with participants, and my own reflections, but also explicitly focussing on what is happening in the body, heart, and intuition (e.g., Kester, Archer & Bryant 2019; Koppensteiner 2020¹⁰⁶) to diffract further. These will be discussed below when returning to the original research questions discussing a *diffractive autoethnographic* pedagogical peace model.

Regardless of the uncertainties and limitations within the research, I reflect on the instigating research purpose and feel content it has achieved what it set out to do. This purpose was to assist finding resolutions to the impasses I encountered. Firstly in the work I was doing, but secondly to the unresolved issues inside of me that were effecting my professional impasse. To these professional, personal, and pedagogical needs I commenced this journey with, I feel satisfied that I have been able to process my issues and find resolutions that allow me to re-enter the field, competent and confident in who I am and what my role can be as an ‘educator’. I feel foremostly that I can bring a sense of closure to these stagnations I felt in my work and as a person. I feel a great sense of gratitude for being afforded the time and space to be able to do this work and acknowledge that it is a privilege many do not have. I feel reinvigorated with new directions that I can embrace as a male-peace-educator that endorses my ethical stipulations and provides clear paths I wish to continue to explore with others.

¹⁰⁵ Jiddu Krishnamurti Public Talk 1 Ojai, California, USA - 16 July 1949. Source, <https://krishnamurti.org/content/does-self-knowledge-come-through-searching-0>

¹⁰⁶ In particular I am interested in exploring how Koppensteiner's 5 types of knowing (2018, p.68) could be incorporated into approaching research design, data collection, and analysis.

Initial Research Questions

So, what has this research elucidated? What resolutions am I taking forward with me on my continuing journey? As I conclude, I return to those initial research questions. I aim here to list key reflections and resolutions to showcase my (re)storying. By listing them in such a way, I hope that it evokes in you the reader reflections and feelings as a means to “keep conversation going” (Bochner & Riggs 2014).

- 1) How has peace and masculinity impacted my life?**
- 2) What can be learnt from engaging with other boys/ men about these issues?**
- 3) What can be added to existing peace education models to assist boys explore masculinity and peace?**

I will start with **2) What can be learnt from engaging with other boys/ men about these issues?**

I learnt so much from engaging other boys and men about my questions, as I hope this thesis attests. I feel honoured to have been gifted such stories. This engagement proved to be an essential aspect to finding the resolutions discussed below. I believe that engaging others should be a central addition to peace education models and is something that has become integral to the diffractive model of peace pedagogy I hope to explore.

1) How has peace and masculinity impacted my life?

1. Masculinity has greatly impacted my life and continues to influence what I value and how I believe I should be. It has also taken its toll!
2. Masculinity created feelings that I needed to constantly prove myself to be accepted and created anxieties that I would not measure up to standards placed onto me by others. I wanted to be worthy and belong.
3. I felt I required accumulating certain competencies that would bring the acceptance I sought from my peers and bring me self-esteem.
4. I was searching for ways I could regain a sense of control and agency in my life.
5. My choices regarded trying to build recognised competencies. I believed that by accumulating these competencies I would also gain confidence in myself and these would alleviate the anxieties, pressures, and transitions I was encountering.

6. I needed role-models and practices to explore¹⁰⁷ and craft an identity that provided needs such as safety, belonging, meaning, authenticity and self-esteem, but not through endorsing the stereotypes of masculinity.
7. My choices regarded crafting a *being*. To explore and come to know myself. It was existential. I wanted a practical philosophy to live by.
8. Peace was an integral part of this crafting process. Participating in peace workshops became a method for developing competencies I felt were important. I hoped they would bring skills to avoid confrontations and might bring a better sense of inner peace to counteract the anxieties.
9. On their own they were insufficient and might bring ridicule from my peers. However, doing other practices (such as martial arts) provided leverage to be able to do them.
10. Over time, being involved in peace became part of my persona I projected towards an image I was trying to imbue: an accomplished, balanced, accepted, initiated peaceful/masculine man with purpose and meaning in their life larger than just themselves. A provider and protector. It was about achieving a sense of integrity, mastery, and groundedness in who I was in the world. I hoped this would bring acknowledgement and approval by my peers. It was about making the standard on my own terms: about not only survival, but *thrival*.
11. Peace therefore became more than just the methods but also became entwined as part of how I self-identified.
12. Being a peace educator was part of that vehicle towards being the man I wished to be. However, it became a hollow 'thing' I did to prove I was this man I wanted to be.
13. Perhaps I became too focused on these outward competencies as if their collection would result in me becoming the person I hoped to be. It became more about projecting an image rather than simply *being* that person I wished to be. Embracing my vulnerability and struggles might be the way to achieve my desired self opposed to projecting accumulated competencies.
14. I reflect that a lot of what I did was about processing these unresolved traumas accumulated through trying to achieve masculinity. To come to understand/ process/ resolve them so I could move forward with authenticity in life.
15. Residual trauma was still affecting my work in peace with boys and needed resolving so I could return. This thesis was that call.

¹⁰⁷ It is important to note *explore* is not the same as *remove* as these tensions also made me who I am. I was perhaps looking for integration not removal.

16. What I really wanted was peace: inner and outer. All I did aimed to find that in my life. Psychological and emotional well-being.

3) What can be added to existing peace education models to assist boys explore masculinity and peace?

I was frustrated with peace education. This was, in part, due to a marketisation of peace education in schools as just a box to be ticked. I felt a tension between wanting to feel legitimate as a competent professional educator and so followed these expectations even though they deviated from my authenticity and ethical beliefs. To be able to return to this work, this research has reminded me,

1. Sessions must work *with* not *on* participants. They must appreciate the participants' wisdom and engage them where they are. Listen to their stories and co-create what peace could be *with* them.¹⁰⁸
2. To connect with these boys, being my vulnerable, authentic self, and sharing my stories is key to mirror the values I hope they will emulate and affect them in deep visceral ways.
3. This engagement must not stay in the didactics of head but must balance analytical *and* affective modalities to bring the whole of the participants' human experiences into the session to be explored, felt, and analysed: the head, heart, body, and spirit.
4. Peace education should provide elicitive (Lederach 1995) spaces that are informal, relational, supportive, respite, and therapeutic, to enable deep explorations to occur.
5. To achieve this acceptable entry points for the young men to feel able to explore peace in ways that do not initially risk but support their needs of masculinity need creating.¹⁰⁹ Peace education is firstly about how we connect not what we do or call it.
6. These sessions must then challenge and hold accountable the individual and the behaviours they enact. But they must also connect the individuals to the structures and cultures that often go unperceived.

¹⁰⁸ This too could include caution labelling sessions explicitly as 'peace education' but instead allowing the participants themselves to define what it is and how it needs to fit with their needs of masculinity.

¹⁰⁹ For example, this might be using outdoors or martial arts as an initial entry points (just as I needed). All depending on what *they* feel would be acceptable.

7. I believe that peace education is essentially *existential* and therefore philosophy needs to be placed as a central pillar to be explored. It is about awareness, but also action. It is about *being in the world*.
8. Using alternative epistemologies from the wealth of human knowledges should be included to open new avenues for exploration, understanding, and being. To diffract our understanding and provide new ways to walk on the Earth.
9. Peace education therefore concerns knowing yourself¹¹⁰ and placing yourself into the structures that influence us so that we might, in small ways, be able to challenge and even change those structures: where we can reconstruct the world and our places within it.
10. The role of the facilitator, of me, is to be less a teacher and instead a witness, present, a curious holder of space. As Noddings (1984) notes, “the time interval may be brief, but the encounter is total” (p.180).
11. It requires me to bring my whole *being* into sessions. To be vulnerable and honest. To let go of expectations, trust the process, and trust my *being* in that moment. It’s an authentic congruence. An integrity. A belief we are changed by the encounter.¹¹¹
12. By being so I mirror the values I wish to promote and enact synergy with the peace values I hope to talk through my walk (Cremin 2016). By doing so I hope to affect those around me through the contact boundaries of space and relationship that become formed (Koppenseiner 2020).
13. My role, I hope, is to become more of an Elder. One who does not pretend to know the answers, in fact they too are still finding their way. A researcher who is doing the work on themselves. This elder role “grows in part from having experienced the issues yourself, having known yourself as both victim and oppressor. It comes from seeing the weakness of the oppressor... Elders themselves have made the leap from one-sidedness to compassion” (Mindell 1995, p.51).¹¹²
14. I therefore seem my role as a nomad of peace. One who walks the Earth exploring their own being, trying to find their own peaceful masculinity. In so doing I engage with those I meet along the way who are also just trying to find their way. Peace in this way is not imposed or forced, but improvised, non-static, and occurs in fleeting moments of meeting on the road of life (Gur-Ze’ev 2011).

¹¹⁰ One’s whole self, including one’s stories, positionalities, intersectionalities, capabilities, and privileges through mind, heart and body of both participants *and* facilitators.

¹¹¹ These might also change a focus in trainings for peace educators to develop their *being* and presence rather than just developing skills in facilitating didactic activities.

¹¹² Arnold Mindell writes specifically about Process Oriented Psychology, however, I feel there are many correlations between this approach and peace work.

So what now...?

As mentioned above, the work is ongoing, however, this is the research result: to continue engaging with others. I believe the method developed here is one such pedagogical innovation I can endorse to engage others and spread the conversation to keep it going. I believe this method culminates the reflections above into a practical pedagogy that meets all of my professional and personal stipulations. I am interested in exploring further what I wish to call ***Diffractional Autoethnography*** as a peace pedagogy to do with participants. Using such an approach might be useful for young men to reflect on *their* lives, as it did for me, so they might come to some understanding, but also to ultimately start the conversation and exploration as we share and learn together, diffracting each other. In particular I recall how engaged many interviewees became when the interview conversation was allowed to go; when the microphone was turned off as we could just talk. Autoethnography has been used as a pedagogical tool (Hager & Mazali 2013; Alexander 2013; Barr 2019) but I feel the added diffractive element assists taking us out of ourselves, towards a deeper second order reflexivity (Kester & Cremin 2017) where new in-sights can be harvested, and new practical ways forward can be diffracted. As I reflect on this method, I believe it is *all* diffractive, and that the interviews with others of a different place and time themselves were key to my diffraction. If we were to undertake and share our own autoethnography, I feel we would become further diffracted from ourselves. I believe this method meets the recent academic critiques levied towards more traditional Western ways of research and peace education¹¹³ and therefore meets my ethical stipulations.

This new method relates to a new concept of **Post/Critical peace** that is being developed with colleagues (Archer, Hajir & McInerney, in progress; Cremin & Kester, in progress). I am excited about this work and its aims to foster practical praxes of peace for the 21st Century. Whether these strategies actually bring change to the world we live in will remain to be seen, however, I feel they provide encouraging directions for me in this endeavour. I feel Diffractional Autoethnography sits well within these Post/Critical ideas as a viable and practical method for peace.

¹¹³ Such as Post-colonialism, Neo-liberalism, and Feminist New materials discussed.

Conclusion

We are the story telling species (Atkinson 2007), and this is my story. The story I tell myself, a story to heal and live by (McAdams 1993; Bochner 2014), and the story I share to reach out and connect with others (Bochner 2014; Bochner & Riggs 2014). What is *your* story? As I continue to seek congruence in who I am and how I can be on this planet I endeavour to find resonance within myself. I hope that resonance might reach out and resonate with others. This is my on-going journey of peace. Exploring by engaging with others. I hope to meet you along the way.

“Everyone has a history.

What you do with it is up to you.

Some repeat it.

Some learn from it.

The really special ones use it to help others.”

(John Mark Green)

<https://johnmarkgreenpoetry.tumblr.com/search/Everyone%20has%20a%20history>

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Semi Structured Research Questions

(Note: not all questions were always asked, as being semi-structured interviews, I wished to allow for flexibility in the interactions).

All interviews started with the sharing of my episode story and then saying “Having heard my story, what are your reflections...”

Episode 1: Peace Educators

1. What are your experiences about either learning peace education as a boy/ man, or teaching peace education to boys/ men?
2. What challenges and successes have you encountered?
3. How do you feel peace education or peace educators should teach/engage boys?
4. What should it teach boys about becoming peaceful men and why?
5. How can peace education be sure to practice what it preaches and be peaceful to boys it engages? What is important for peace education to be congruent in itself?

Episode 2: Primary School

1. Can you draw me a picture of what you would like to be when you grow up? Can you explain your picture? Why do you think this?
2. Can you draw me another picture of what you think a man should be like? Can you explain your picture? Why do you think this?
3. Who is your hero and why? *Or Who do you look up to in your life?*
4. What's the best/ worst thing about being a boy/ man?

Episode 3: Secondary School

1. What is it like for you in school?
2. What difficulties are there for boys in school?
3. What do you do about the challenges you face?
4. What is good about being a boy in school?
5. What would you change about school?
6. What do you wish you could learn in school that is not done? Why?
7. What do you think you need to learn to be able to feel ready to leave school?

Episode 4: Alternative Practices

1. What drew you to study martial arts?
2. What keeps you practicing them?
3. What's the relationship between practicing these arts and your sense of being a man?
4. How do you take what you learn/ do in martial arts into your everyday life?
5. Has martial arts offered anything to how you see yourself? What/how?

Episode 5: Peace Academics

1. What innovations do you see emerging in the field of peace education?
2. How could or should peace education engage and work with young men? Why?
3. What is important for (male) peace educators in working with young men in peace education?
4. Having heard my story about concerns re-entering peace education, what you say to me?

Appendix 2: Informed consent letters



David Tim Archer PhD Research Brief 2018 Masculinity, Peace & Education University of Cambridge

Introduction: Peace Educators

Turn to many news sources in the recent 12 months and one might notice an increased attention on issues relating to masculinity. The concept of masculinity has been placed under the spotlight with some commenters labelling it as 'toxic'. However, within this current atmosphere discussions on appropriate alternative expressions of masculinity for boys pressured to 'measure up' seem lacking. It is within this context that this particular research is set.

For the previous 12 years I have worked in educational capacities that engage youth in non-violence and peace. Over this time I have noticed many boys resist or struggle with some of the messages proposed. Upon exploration many boys suggest these messages were "too soft" and therefore impractical for their realities. These boys thus felt such approaches to peace were either insufficient, precarious to participate in, or even de-masculinizing. Many boys further expressed the weight and importance to measure up to expectations of masculinity as not a simple choice one could select, but something they had to negotiate daily. These observations lead to my own personal memories to the desires and requirements of masculinity and the dichotomy I often felt between masculinity and peace. The question therefore arose ***how peace education could better apply and be practically useful to the boys who are in need of support?*** The aspiration of this research is to inform pedagogical practice with alternative ways that engage young men in peace.

Research:

The PhD research will culminate from the synthesis of five sections. Each section entails interviews with boys and men from a variety of settings. These five sections

are based upon, and informed by, five personal episodes in my own life where I remember struggles between peace and masculinity. The five sections include:

1. Peace Education and its uses and limitations (as a participant and educator).
2. Primary School age and individual ideas of masculinity.
3. Secondary School age and the difficulties being oneself/ ones idea of masculinity.
4. The use of alternative strategies that support the integration of peace and masculinity.
5. Male peace academics on peace education in postmodern times.

For this specific episode (1), it is hoped that 5 young men (ideally 18 or above) who have participated in and taught peace education or conflict resolution workshops can be interviewed about aspirations and realities of masculinity with peace. An ideal spectrum for the 5 young men could consist of a mix of, 1) those who have recently completed the training, 2) those who completed the training several years prior, and 3) those who participated in the training and have themselves become youth trainers. The purpose of these interviews is not to evaluate the particular programmes or young men themselves but to gather reflections from them about how they see masculinity and peace intersecting outside of the training/ workshop environment.

Logistics & Timeline:

Ideally it is hoped the interviews can take place in April/ May 2018. Each interview would be a voice recorded¹¹⁴ one-to-one interview with the young man with their consent. If they prefer to have someone else present, that is also acceptable. The interviews will consist of a life experience story with the addition of questions around peace and masculinity. Each interview should not take longer than 30-40 minutes per person.

¹¹⁴ This would not be used for anything other than this research and would be deleted after completion of the research

Ethics:

A high ethical foundation is of key importance to this PhD and seeks to espouse an ethics beyond minimum standards to that of an 'ethic of care' (Kim 2016). To this end certain expectations will be assured;

- i) Confidentiality and anonymity for all involved, including the participants and organization. Recordings and transcripts will be deleted after completion of the research.
- ii) Informed consent will be gathered prior to the research for all participants, explaining the purpose of the research and the right to withdraw at any time. A discussion on the nature of the questions as well as safeguarding measures (see iii) will also be discussed. If the youth is under 19, parent's consent will also need to be obtained.
- iii) Counsellor involvement. While it is not anticipated that the interview questions will lead to any discomfort or traumatic relapses, it is within the ethical consideration for the research that options for youth to seek assistance be attainable, if required. Within these aspirations discussions with the organization concerning counselling facilities will be sort prior to the interviews.
- iv) Fact checking. Prior to any research being completed the findings and interpretations gained from the interviews will be checked with the participants to makes sure consent and fair representation is given.

Finally, as a means to uphold these ethical and methodological underpinnings this research hopes to endorse a reciprocal relationship¹¹⁵. This means that as a way for mutual benefit, I am happy to work with the organization/ individual to provide any recompense in the way of time, dialogue, or training about masculinity and peace to interested parties¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁵ This changes many existing forms of research where information is simply taken from participants for the researchers means.

¹¹⁶ Unfortunately there is no possibility of financial recompense due to the nature of the research.

Conclusion:

It is hoped that this briefing acts as means for basic introduction to the research only and as means to start communication. It is hoped that forthwith, open communication between the organization/ individual and myself can be created so as to answer specific questions as well as build an on-going relationship of cooperation. This too is in keeping with the ethical aspirations desired for the research.

I truly hope you can consider the project and I would be very happy to hear from you with your further questions.

Best Wishes,

Tim Archer

dta30@cam.ac.uk

Phone: XXXXX XXXXXX

David Tim Archer PhD Research Brief 2018
Masculinity, Peace & Education
University of Cambridge

Introduction: School Brief

Turn to many news sources in the recent 12 months and one might notice an increased attention on issues relating to masculinity, patriarchy, violence and abuses of power. The concept of masculinity has been placed under the spotlight with some commenters labelling masculinity formations as ‘toxic’. However, within this current atmosphere discussions on appropriate alternative expressions of masculinity for boys pressured to ‘measure up’ seem lacking. It is within this context that this particular research is set.

For the previous 12 years I have worked in an education capacity that seeks to engage students in non-violence and peace. Over this time I have noticed many boys resist or struggle with some of the messages proposed. Upon exploration many boys suggest these messages were “too soft” and therefore insufficient and impractical for the realities they experienced. Many boys further expressed the weight and importance to measure up to expectations of masculinity as not a simple choice one could select but something they had to negotiate daily. These observations lead to my own personal memories to the desires and requirements of masculinity, and the dichotomy I often felt between masculinity and being peaceful. The question therefore arose ***how peace education could better apply and be practically useful to the boys who are seeking guidance while also destabilizing patriarchy?*** The aspiration of this research would be to inform pedagogical practice with alternative ways to engage youth who might be hesitate from peace education due to feeling it is insufficient, precarious to participate in, or even de-masculinizing.

Research:

As part of this PhD research, it is hoped that a small number of youth can be invited to be interviewed about aspirations and realities of masculinity. It is hoped that **5 primary school boys (age 8-9), and 5 secondary school boys (age 11-12) could be interviewed**. The primary school children will be asked about their ideas of manhood and the heroes they admire, while the secondary school children will be asked about the realities they experience around masculinity in school.

Logistics & Timeline:

1. It is intended that the interviewing will be as un-intrusive as possible to the schools and youth, with the expectation of 1 voice recorded¹¹⁷ interview per child undertaken by myself¹¹⁸, lasting 30-40 minutes max.
2. Ideally it is hoped the interviews can take place in January 2018, but it is also understood that with consent required from parents and full briefing for the schools, the actual interviews might take place in February. It would also be potentially

¹¹⁷ This would not be used for anything other than this research and would be deleted after completion of the research

¹¹⁸ If the schools prefer a member of staff/ school counsellor can also be present.

beneficial to build some familiarity with the youth before interviewing, if the schools prefer.

Ethics:

A high ethical foundation is of key importance to this PhD and seeks to espouse an ethics beyond minimum standards to that of an 'ethic of care' (Kim 2016). To this end certain expectations will be assured;

- i) Confidentiality for all involved, including schools, location, and the youth themselves.
- ii) Parent informed consent will be gathered prior to the research for all youth participants explaining the purpose of the research and the right to withdraw at any time. A discussion on the nature of the questions, as well as safeguarding measures (see iii), will also be discussed. The youths' own consent to participate will also be of central importance.
- iii) School counsellor involvement. While it is not anticipated that the interview questions will lead to any discomfort or traumatic relapses, it is within the ethical consideration for the research that options for youth to seek assistance if they require be attainable. Within these aspirations discussions with the schools concerning counselling facilities will be sort prior to the interviews.
- iv) Fact checking. Prior to any research being completed the findings and interpretations gained from the interviews will be checked with the participants to makes sure consent and fair representation is given.

Also, as a means to uphold these ethical and methodological underpinnings this research hopes to endorse a reciprocal relationship¹¹⁹. This means that as a way for mutual benefit, I am happy to work with the schools and provide any recompense in the way of dialogue or training about masculinity and peace to teachers and/or students.

Conclusion:

It is hoped that this briefing acts as means for basic introduction to the research only and as means to start communication. It is hoped that forthwith, open communication between the school and myself can be created so as to answer specific questions as well as making sure the research is satisfactory for all involved. This too is in keeping with the ethical aspirations desired for the research.

I truly hope you can consider the project at your school and I would be very happy to hear from you with you further questions.

Best Wishes,

Tim Archer
dta30@cam.ac.uk
Phone: XXXXX XXXXXX

¹¹⁹ This changes many existing forms of research where information is simply taken from participants for the researchers means.

CONSENT FORM:

I, _____, have read and understand the above information regarding the PhD research. I understand both the intention for the interview and the subsequent use of our discussion for the research. I am happy to give my consent to proceeding and being interviewed as one of the participants.

Signed:

Date:

School Research Parent Information & Consent Form

Dear Parent / Guardian,

This letter is to inform you that I will be carrying out research for my PhD in your child's school. This research will look at the ways that boys think about peace. This research is being done to help support boys to be more peaceful.

My name is Tim Archer, and for the previous 12 years I have worked in various education settings throughout the world looking into ways of reducing violence and promoting peace. As part of this research I am hoping to interview 10 boys between the ages of 9-12 from 3 UK schools. These interviews will involve me recording an interview with participating children for 20-40 minutes using a tape-recorder, and will be supervised by _____.

The protection and wellbeing of the children is of primary importance at all times in this research, and therefore I will be;

- 1) Guided by the schools in relation to which children will be suggested for interview. These children's parents will then be asked if they are willing for their child to take part in the interview as well as the child themselves to whether they are willing to take part.
- 2) Working within the norms and protocols of the school.
- 3) Working in partnership with school counsellors.
- 4) Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (the identity of the children and school will be hidden throughout the research and writing up of my findings).
- 5) Checking with the children that I have correctly understood what they say.
- 6) Ensuring that any tapes of notes based on participating children's words are password protected and shared only with my supervisor and a transcriber. On completion of my PhD, the tapes and notes will all be destroyed. No pictures of the children will be taken.

I would also like to state that at any time the child and / or parent / guardian of the child have the right to withdraw their consent and change their mind for any reason.

I am therefore asking you to kindly consider allowing your child to participate, and to sign the consent form below if you are happy for your child to be a possible participant. As a thank you to the school, I have offered to provide feedback and training on these topics. This training will talk about all of my research in general and will not be specific to the school or children.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone.

I sincerely thank you for consideration with assisting this research. It is of great personal importance to me so I thank you for taking the time to read the form.

Best Wishes,

Tim Archer PhD (Candidate).

dta30@cam.ac.uk

XXXXX XXXXXX

CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the above information regarding the research to be carried out at my child's school, and am happy for my child to be involved.

I, _____, the parent/guardian of _____
give consent for the interview of my child for the purposes of this PhD research.

Signed:

Date:

School Research Student Information & Consent Form
READ OUT

Dear Student,

My name is Tim Archer and I am really happy to be meeting you today. I am very grateful you are here and helping me.

I am not sure how much you have been told about why you are here so I wanted to tell you a little about today. What do you know about research?

Most importantly, know you do not have to be here. If you do not feel comfortable and do not want to speak with me I will totally understand and will be happy to stop the conversation at any time.

You are really helping me with my research by being here, but I want you to be here to help by your choice rather than feeling you have to be. You do not have to be.

I am here as I am trying to understand what it is like being a young boy at school so that I might be able to understand more about how to work with youth. So I'm talking with lots of children and adults around England and America to try and find answers.

Today I will share with you a little about what it was like for me at your age and will ask you to share a story about yourself too.

This story is up to you. What you tell me is up to you. But whatever you do tell me will not be shared with others in full (unless harm), and your name will always be hidden (explain). You will not be judged on what you tell me. There are no right or wrong answers so don't tell me what you think I want to hear. There are no marks, and it is not a test at all. I just hope you will tell me what you really think. I will always check with you if I have understood what you tell me so that I do not misunderstand you, but do tell me if I have said something that you do not agree with or are unsure about. It's really relaxed.

I will be using this voice recorder, but this is only so I can listen to your story later otherwise it will be hard for me to write it down while I listen. After I have listened to it a few times, it will be deleted. I may also make some notes, but these are just my own thoughts and not about you.

I do not intend to ask any difficult questions or questions that will make you feel uncomfortable. But if you do feel uncomfortable, if you can tell me, please do. There is also _____ here if you wish to talk to them at any time.

Mostly I want to say again that I thank you for being here right now. But if you change your mind, even afterwards, I will respect your choice and not use what we discuss.

Do you have any questions for me? How do you feel about what we are doing today? If you are ok to continue for now, you can sign your name below.

CONSENT FORM:

I understand the information about our chat and am happy to be involved.

I, _____ have understood what Tim has told me and am happy to continue

Yes

No

Signed:

Date:
