

Teacher's work and Dads



Teachers and Professionalism Cluster Seminar - 25th April 2012

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

A photograph of several students walking in a modern building with large glass windows. The students are dressed in casual attire, including jackets and scarves. The image is partially obscured by a pink overlay at the top.

Jim Reid
School of education and
Professional Development

- Critical Policy Ethnography in a small urban primary school during the 2010 / 2011 academic year
- School subject to a 'Notice to Improve'
- Period in the field included inspection visit
- Access negotiated: 'off site / off topic'

Carspecken (1996)



Critical Policy Ethnography / Critical Qualitative Research

- compiling the primary record through qualitative collection of data;
- preliminary reconstructive analysis;
- discovering dialogical data generation;
- Describing system relations;
- Using system relations to explain the findings

Conceptual Models

- Single parenting
- Solo parenting
- Father absence
- Contact fathers
- Resident mothers
- Biological and social fathers
- Father-absence affects about 27 million children in US, and it's spreading. It's linked to higher rates of poverty, failure in school, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, violent crime, depression, and ultimately a loss of hope.

POLICY and LEGISLATION explicitly requiring engagement with fathers !



e.g.

- 1. The Children Act (1989, 2004)**
- 2. Every Child Matters (2003)**
- 2. Aiming High for Children (2007)**
- 3. Aiming High for Disabled Children (2007)**
- 4. The Children's Plan (2007)**
- 5. Every Parent Matters (2007)**
- 6. 21st Century Schools (2008)**
- 7. Your Child, Your Schools, Your Future: Building a 21st Century Schools System (2009)**
- 8. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)**
- 9. The Equality Act (2010)**
- 10. UNCRC Article 7 (1)**

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2010/policy-legislative-frameworks-requiring-engagement-with-fathers/

The Coalition has committed to:



- encouraging shared parenting from the earliest stages of pregnancy
 - reducing gender inequalities at work
 - achieving a better gender balance in the early years workforce,
 - ensuring that both men and women use couple relationship support services
- (The Coalition - our Programme for Government: Freedom, Fairness, Responsibility - May, 2010)*
- reviewing the Family Justice System (June, 2010).

The context

Ofsted (2000):

there is a disturbing absence of men involved in family learning

***Every Child Matters* (2003):-**

- family learning programmes...engaging parents in their children's development
- programmes for fathers as well as mothers...better communication between parents and school...and especially fathers

Why involve fathers?

Fathers' involvement with children's learning/ in schools associated with (for children):

- **Better exam results / literacy**
- **Better school behaviour**
- **Less criminal behaviour later on**
- **Better relationships in adult life**

Independent associations to those between mothers' involvement and same outcomes

Involvement in informal out-of-school learning



Resident fathers less likely than resident mothers to be involved in most aspects of children's out-of-school learning

More involved than mothers in:

building and repairing activities

practical activities and hobbies

ICT, maths and science

recreation, sports, outdoor activities, family trips

Focus on play and fun together

Substantial proportions of fathers also **read with their children, help with homework, and give praise and support** to their children for their schoolwork.

Involvement in schools



Resident fathers less likely than resident mothers to be involved in children's schools

But: significant proportions of resident fathers **attend parents evenings and general school meetings, and drop off and pick their children up at school**

Non-resident fathers are especially unlikely to be involved in their children's schools.

Fathers' **educational expectations and interest in child's education generally same** as mothers' educational expectations and interest

More involved in child's learning/ education

- Resident fathers
- Single parent fathers - as involved as single parent mothers in schools
- Mother involved in child's learning
- Early father involvement
- Good relations between parents
- Positive school environment - welcomes parents
- More egalitarian roles in household/ childcare

Less involved in child's learning and education



- Non-resident fathers
- Older (secondary age) children
- Father has lower qualification level
- Manual workers
- Works in evenings/ Works long hours
- Large families
- Mother has lower qualification level
- Child has behavioural problems/doing badly at school

Barriers

- **Traditional gender roles**
- **Attitudes** of fathers, mothers, children and practitioners
- **Work and time-** and the gender pay gap
- **Fathers' circumstances** (e.g. geographic proximity to child; literacy level) and **confidence**
- **“Feminised environments”** (schools and family learning) with **few male practitioners**
- **Lack of information** about fathers
- **Inappropriate recruitment and practice** with fathers

Dad's experiences:



"I've been to a Friday morning music assembly and been the only dad. Once you're there it's fine, but when you walk in it feels a bit intimidating to be honest."

(BBC News Online, 07/05/08).

Gatekeepers

MOTHERS

- **Ambivalence** amongst some mothers to father involvement (much literature)

PRACTITIONERS

- Say they **interact more and feel more comfortable with mothers**; Believe that fathers see school involvement as **mother's role**; Expect fathers to be little involved
- **Some fear of child abuse and aggression**
(UK and Australian small-scale studies in schools)

CHILDREN

- May want to **keep home and school separate**

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Practitioner gatekeepers



Say they **interact more and feel more comfortable with mothers:**

- *The males in school aren't as reliable as the female helpers. They're not always sure what day they can come in they're just there when they're there. It's the commitment week after week after week.*
- *the dads who come in are the ones we can rely on most, we don't make an effort with others*
- *Dads, I don't meet many. [Pause]. Except the ones who want to confront you.*

Practitioner gatekeepers



Believe that fathers see school involvement as **mother's role:**

- *I think dads are a bit frightened of coming in. We are an all female staff and they think education is a female role. The other thing is we tend to come across a bit scary. We are assertive.*
- *My main contact with parents? Not a lot.*

Practitioner gatekeepers



Expect fathers to be little involved:

- *They're not as interested in how they (their child/ren) are doing. Dad tends to be at the home visit (prior to entry to school) particularly if behaviour is a bit of an issue.*
- *Well, they're at work!*

Practitioner gatekeepers

Fathers as problematic:

- Unreliable
- *Dads almost like to intimidate you and harass you. They want to stand over you. [pause] To intimidate you.*
- *We could have more positive relationships with men not confrontational.*
- *When children have gone to stay with their father over the weekend the behaviour can be difficult on the Monday. It can take a whole day and a half to settle down.*
- *(Child) is frightened of his dad.*
- *Dad can indulge them (his children) for two days.*

Practitioner gatekeepers

Other issues:

Sexuality - ...when dads come in they like the attention they get. I put the kettle on and make them a cup of tea.

- *You do like the men coming into your room!*
- *Cultural relativity - I am amazed we ask the kids to make mothers day cards and not fathers day cards. I guess it is because lots of them don't have a dad.*
- *It's so PC. We think "what about kids who don't have a dad but (child) doesn't have a mum.*
- *Availability heuristic (Tversky and Kahneman 1974) - the tendency of people to take into account over other potentially relevant issues, those matters which are called to mind most readily within a situation*

Yes... but:

Critical policy:

National Curriculum vs Every Child Matters
(neo-liberalism vs social democracy [or is it?])

- Confusing and contradictory curricula based on competing ideologies (Robertson 2009)
- Politicalisation of professionalism (Osgood 2009)
- Disjointed policy leading to a lack of emphasis for father engagement (Page et al 2008)
- Normal chaos of [education] law (Dewar 1998)
- Discourse of dichotomy and discourse of derision (Alexander 2010)

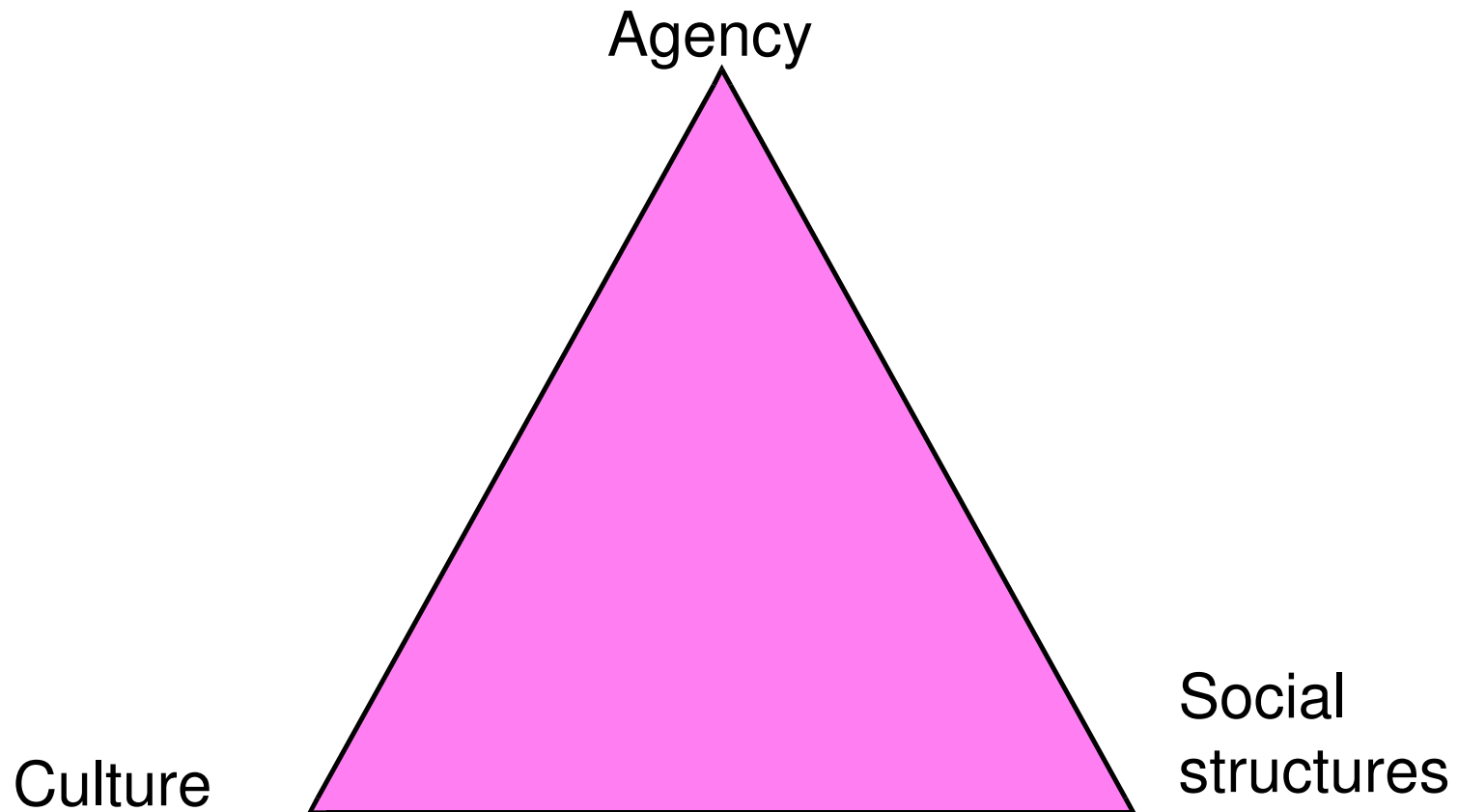
Criticising policy

Concern

- Erosion of Social capital (Bagley 2011)
- Neo-liberalism, Cultural homogeneity (Hill 2009)
- Performativity (Ball 2003)
- Knowledge and knowledge relations de-socialised (Lyotard 1984)

Theoretical possibilities

- Liberal progressive - Putnam (1995, 2000) (Trust, Civic engagement, tolerance)
- Marxist - Bourdieu (1977, 1986) (Cultural reproduction, habitus)
- Foucault (1980, 1988, 2002) (Governmentality, Transmitting authority, Normalisation)
- Critical pedagogy – Freire (1972, 1998)



Agency

- [T]his concept of agency highlights that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment ... the achievement of agency will always result in the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, 137)
- a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects with the contingencies of the moment)(Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 963)

Agency

- PAST:

I don't celebrate father's day. When you've lost a father like I have (pause). It's selfish I know.

- PRESENT:

I have a few dads who work in the classroom. Well... a granddad.

When dads come in they like the attention they get. I put the kettle on and make them a cup of tea

- FUTURE:

We could try to make some events non academic based, there's the Spring Fair and the bar-be-cue. It's when it's not

about the child's work or behaviour

Criticisms of approach

- Agency seen as an independent variable in the structure-culture-agency debate (Hollis 1994)
- *One does certainly feel the affect and is shaken and tormented by it, yet at the same time one is aware of a higher consciousness looking on which prevents one from becoming identical with the affect... which regards the affect as an object.* (Carl Jung)
- Spatialities of Feeling (Thrift 2008)

Thoughts and Feelings / Affect



- Fear
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Euphoria
- Resignation
- Tired
- Dejected
- Confused...

Affect

- Broad tendencies and lines of force – emotion as motion
- A form of thinking
- Phenomenology – embodied practices. “formal evidence of what, in one’s relations with others, speech can not congeal” (Katz 2000, 323) – expressive armoury
- Psychoanalytical frames – an amplifier for drives / biologically differentiated
- Deleuzian – capacity of interaction akin to a natural force of emergence. One’s own vitality, sense of aliveness.
- Darwinian – Deep seated physiological change

The politics of affect

- Choice / Mixed-action repertoires – inaction
- Mediatization – stereotypes of dads (deadbeat)/immediacy/distant communication. The performative principle (McKenzie 2001) – messages with passion!
- Performance of emotion as an index of credibility. A key technology of governance (Smith 2002) The truth is grasped through feeling. (Carol Gilligan – In a Different Voice??)
- Minutiae – “through our emotion we reach back sensually to grasp the tacit, embodied foundations of ourselves” (Katz 2000, 7)
- Space and time – landscape engineering producing new forms of power.

REFERENCES I



- **Baker, R. and McMurray, A.** (1998) *Contact Fathers' Loss of School Involvement*. *Journal of Family Studies*, 4(2), 201-214.
- **Ballard, K, et al.** (1997) *Children with Disabilities and the Education System: the experiences of fifteen fathers*. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 44(3), 229-241.
- **Bennett et al.** (1998) *Expectations and Concerns: What Mothers and Fathers Say about Inclusion*. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*. 33(2), 108-122.
- **Brassett-Grundy, A.** (2002) *Parental Perspectives on Family Learning. Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report No. 2*. London: Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning at the Institute of Education.
- **Bright, K., Silberberg, S. and Fletcher, R.** (2002) *Men's Views of Volunteering in Schools. Engaging Fathers Project Research Report*. Australia: The Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle.
- **Brookes, S.** (2002) *Reaching Fathers*. *Literacy Today*, September 2002.
- **Bryant, D. and Henderson, A.** (2002) *Men's Family Learning Conference Report*. Bristol: Bristol Community Education Service.
- **Clough, J. et al.** (2000) *Engaging parents in a primary school setting. Children North East Research Report*. Newcastle: Children North East.

REFERENCES II



- **Fletcher, R. and Dally, K.** (2002) *Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Literacy Development*. Australia: The Family Action Centre at The University of Newcastle.
- **Fluri, E. and Buchanan, A.** (2001) *Father time*. Community Care, 4-10 October 2001.
- **Fluri, E. and Buchanan, A.** (2003). *What predicts fathers' involvement with their children? A prospective study of intact families*. British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 21, 81-98.
- **HM Govt.** (2003) *Every Child Matters*. London: TSO.
- **Karther, D.** (2002) *Fathers with low literacy and their young children*. The Reading Teacher, 56(2), 184-193.
- **Kids Club Network** (2003) *Buzz Report 2003*. London: Kids Club Network.
- **Lloyd, T.** (1999) *Reading for the future: boys' and fathers' views on reading*. London: Save The Children.
- **MacLeod, F.** (2000) *Low Attendance by Fathers at Family Literacy Events: Some Tentative Explanations*. Early Child Development and Care, 161, 107-199.
- **McGivney, V.** (1999) *Excluded Men: Men who are missing from education and training*. Leicester: NIACE.

REFERENCES III

- **Millard, E. and Hunter, R.** (2001) *It's A Man Thing!: Evaluation report of CEDC's Fathers and Reading project*. London: CEDC
- **National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education** (2003) *Evaluation of LSC Funded Family Programmes*. Leicester: NIACE.
- **Nord, C., Brimhall, D. and West, J.** (1998) *Dads' involvement in their kids' schools*. The Education Digest. 63(7), 29-35.
- **Ofsted** (2000) *Family Learning- A Survey of Current Practice*. London: Ofsted.
- **Ortiz, R.** (2001) *Pivotal Parents: Emergent Themes and Implications on Father Involvement in Children's Early Literacy Experiences*. Reading Improvement, 38(3), 132-144.
- **Shumow, L. and Miller, J.** (2001) *Parents' At-Home and At-School Academic Involvement With Young Adolescents*. The Journal of Early Adolescence, 21(1), 68-91.
- **Thrift, N (2008)** *Non-Representational Theory: Space, politics , affect*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- **West, A. et al.** (1998) *Parents' Involvement In Education In and Out of School*. British Education Research Journal 24(4), 461-484.
- **Williams, B., Williams, J. and Ullman, A.** (2002) *Parental Involvement in Education*. London: DfES Research Brief RB332.

- <http://www.fathersstoryweek.org/>