Social Care and Social Policy in Ireland: Seeking Social Justice in the Era of Austerity & Beyond

Masculinities, Care & Social Justice: Critical Studies of Men & Masculinities and Professional Care Work

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The Critical Study of Men & Masculinities [CSMM]

- **CSMM** - sub-field of gender, feminist & sexualities studies

- **Social Justice** - understanding / explaining men’s relation with gender inequalities

- *How* are CSMM relevant to the theory, practice and pedagogy of the caring professions?

- **Objective** - 6 insights for caring professions & social justice
Insight 1 - Men’s Institutional Privilege

- **Patriarchal dividend** - politically, economically, culturally, sexually

- **Gender regimes** - institutionalised (e.g. tradition, law, religion, morality, rules/ regulations, norms)

- **Entitlement** – invisible, normalised and expected, defensiveness

- **Differently privileged** – multiple differences / inequalities among men (ethnicity/race, class, disability, sexuality, age etc.)
Insight 2 – Relational Social Construction

• **Gender binary** – differences exaggerated, similarity / variation denied, intersectionality (ethnicity/race, class, disability, sexuality, age etc.)

• **Dialogical** - interactional construction amid institutional constraints, complex psychosocial process

• **Active ‘doing’** – performance, self-presentation/ impression management, emotional display, negotiation of meaning, accomplishment

• **Bodily reflective practices** - active body-work, embodiment

• **Lifestyle ‘choices’** – interests, sports, jobs, popular culture, style & fashion, food, education etc.
Insight 3 – Competitive Hierarchical Relations

- **Hegemonic** - highly prized ideal of men in power, with power, of power - normalises male dominant position

- **Complicit** - conformity, complicity, unwillingness to challenge

- **Marginalised** - stereotypically masculine yet marginalised

- **Subordinated** – most despised, vilified, deemed least masculine, lowest status, feminised

- **Alternative** - caring, inclusive, exit masculinity
Insight 3 – Competitive Hierarchical Relations

- Hegemonic
- Complicit
- Marginalised
- Subordinated
- Alternative
Insight 4 – Performing Hegemonic Masculinities

- **Status/Power** – losses / gains in claiming hegemonic masculinity

- **Masculine cultural capital** - (authority, assuredness, control, confidence, autonomy, toughness, resilience, valour, physicality, invulnerability)

- **Proving masculinity** – (to self/ others), performing rigid/restrictive script, diversity suppressed, repressed, denigrated, recklessness / risk-taking

- **Denial of femininity**– feminine qualities written out of performance (e.g. nurturing)

- **Restrictive sexuality** - heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia
Insight 5 - Costs of hegemonic masculinity

- **Physical health** - (e.g. diet, alcohol)

- **Mental health** - depression, suicide, self-esteem, acceptance/rejection, desirability/ attractiveness, shame, inferiority, competitiveness, anxiety

- **Self care & help-seeking** behaviours – safety, inexpressiveness (e.g. stoicism)

- **Interpersonal relationships** - fulfilment

- **Violence & aggression** – e.g. hyper masculinity (IPV, gender-based violence, sexual violence,
Insight 6 – Working with Men/Boys/Masculinities
(adapted from Messner, 2000)

Male privileges

Balanced approach

Costs of masculinity
Hierarchical masculinities
Conclusion - Lessons for Caring Professions

- **Social justice** - values & objectives of caring professions (challenging oppression, discrimination etc.)

- **Gender relations** - shaping experiences of boys/men/girls/women

- **Gendered experiences** – complex experiences of social care users

- **Gendered context of caregiving** - caring professionals are also doing/undoing gender

- **CSMM** - Critical approach to policy, practice & pedagogy -