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Renegotiating Family Practices Post Separation; An Irish Case Study

Elena Moore, BA,MSc.

**Thesis submitted to the
University of Dublin, Trinity College
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Social Work and Social Policy
Trinity College Dublin

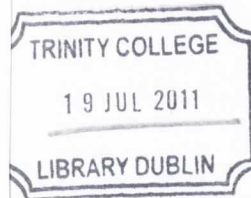
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Summary

This study explores changing personal relationships in the aftermath of separation and divorce. Post separation family lives in an Irish context can enlighten us about family life and parenting generally in the 21st century. The research set out to examine the role that gender plays in the renegotiation of family practices post separation, to examine the factors that impact on separating parents' ability to renegotiate family practices and to locate these changes within the wider social and theoretical context of changing personal relationships.

A qualitative, interpretative, naturalistic approach was adopted to explore and make sense of the meanings that changing personal relationships have for individuals and the process of how they understand and interpret their world. An in-depth interview study was designed and conducted with a sample of thirty nine separating/divorcing individuals of whom ten were former marital sets. The interviews allowed separating and divorcing parents to describe their marriage, the breakdown of the marriage, and post-separated life in great detail. These interviews also allowed them to discuss their motivations, concerns, constraints and perceptions in ways that captured the complexity of the transition of separation.

Under the influence of certain social theorists, notably Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck Gernsheim (1995), the contemporary sociological understanding of changing personal relationships is characterised by democratisation and the individualisation theses. In essence, these grand theorists argue that the radical shifts in personal relations represent a transformation and decisive break away from traditional family relationships. In contrast, their critics believe that structural (gender, employment, income, legal context) conditions in which choices are made profoundly affect the changes in personal relationships (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart and Neale, 1999). While accepting that there has been a change in personal relationships, empirical studies from largely feminist scholars tend to suggest a slower shift, by portraying the diversity as well as the continuity of changing personal relationships.

After receiving ethical approval from the School of Social Work and Social Policy ethics committee, thirty-nine participants were recruited from a mixture of a family law practice and a family therapist to take part in the in-depth interviews. A small number of interviews were undertaken with family law solicitors to examine their role in assisting the renegotiation process. All interviews were transcribed and analysed to identify themes and concepts.

The findings are divided into five chapters based on typologies of post-separated roles which identified parents' experience of renegotiating family practices upon separation: (1) Egalitarians (2) Involved but Constrained Parents (3) Involved but Stressed Couples (4) Aggrieved Parents and (5) Excluded Fathers. Each chapter profiles one group of parents and presents three full accounts of the respondents' stories from that group. The chapter then moves on to explore the disintegration of the marital relationship, how they negotiated the move out of the family home, a financial and parenting arrangement, and how they have experienced renegotiated responsibilities and caring patterns post separation. The findings outline how decisions relating to the renegotiation of post-separation family practices are made in the context of a complex range of situational and personal factors, including employment history, educational level, income, legislation and the quality of the co-parental relationship.

The main argument of the thesis is that dominant grand sociological theories of intimacy and changing personal relationships are inadequate as they fail to conceptualise the complexity and plurality of individuals' experience of changing intimate relationships and over-emphasise people's freedom to choose without recognising the structural constraints that exist. The findings of this thesis suggest that the renegotiation of family practices post separation is heavily influenced by the gender roles practiced during the marriage. Therefore the evidence presented suggests that changing family practices are better understood by the continuity in the experience of intimacy and family life.

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been a long journey for me and I did not travel this road alone. I have many people who I would like to dearly thank and although I know that my words are destined to fall short, I would like to express my gratitude to the following people.

To start at the beginning, I would like first of all to thank the parents and solicitors who participated in this research and gave their time and contributed their experiences, knowledge and stories to this thesis. I would also like to thank the staff at the family law firms, family therapist, and the community law centres, which assisted in the data collection process and provided material and answered questions.

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- Children Act, 2001.
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- Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act 1961.
- European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003.
- Family Law Act 1995.
- Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996.
- Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act 2006.
- Guardianship of Infants Act 1964.
- Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act 1989.
- Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 (section 40(3) Regulations 2005, SI No. 337 of 2005.

International Conventions

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, UN Doc. A/44/25

CASE LAW

CO'R v M O'R 19 September 2000 High Court (unreported)
DT v CT [2003] 1 ILRM 321
E.P. v C.P. 27 November 1998 High Court (unreported)
J.C. v M.C., 22 January 2007, High Court (unreported)]
T v O [2007] IEHC 326

Chapter 1: Introduction

My life at the moment is actually not good. I am fifty-five years of age and my son as I've explained is twenty-one...I find myself more and more isolated and at this point in my life I look around at other women in and around my age group and I'm seeing all the choices that they have, choices that I don't have

Sally, 55 years old, separated 6 years

Introduction

The structure of families has changed substantially across Western societies over the last three decades. Families are widely discussed as breaking down or changing, with policy makers and parents generally struggling to make sense of these shifts. Just over ten years ago The Commission on the Family (1998) recommended that, in cases of family break-up, 'joint parenting should be encouraged with a view to ensuring that, as far as possible, children have the opportunity of developing close relationships with both parents' (Commission on the Family, 1998: 180). More recently, Fahy and Russell (2001) noted that 'there is a major gap in information on the non-resident parent in lone parent families' in particular 'on the nature of their relationship with the children and resident parents.' This thesis seeks to make a contribution to this dearth of information on separated families. It presents the findings of a four-year study exploring the experience of divorce and separation amongst parents in Ireland.

In particular, the thesis sets out to explore changing personal relationships in the context of separation and divorce. Looking at post-separated families in an Irish context can enlighten us about family life and parenting generally at the beginning of the 21st century. Separating families not only represent the changes that are occurring in family structure, but they also show more specifically the changes (discontinuities and continuities) that are taking place in family practices. While many parents in the post-separated family draw on meanings of the traditional or patriarchal household and 'normal' family practices to understand their post-separated family practice, other parents demonstrated most convincingly how they discontinued their pre-divorce parenting practices and moved beyond hegemonic notions of gender and family practices post separation.

Given the changes in families that are taking place in many European countries including Ireland, and the increasing number of separated families, there is a compelling case for research into the experiences and needs of separated/divorced parents in order to develop appropriate policies. Researchers and policy advisers have recognised the need for research on issues relating to separating and divorcing parents in Ireland for several reasons, including: 1) the rising rate of marital breakdown 2) the growing number of children in Ireland growing up in non-nuclear families 3) a perception that there is an exclusion of fathers in separated families 4) legal support for the continuation of personal relationships with both parents after marital breakdown. Despite the extensive need in social policy for such research, there has been very little empirical research on separating families in Ireland to date.

The thesis also attempts to provide a theoretically nuanced and empirically rich account of the various ways that separation and divorce impact on the changing nature of personal relationships. In doing so, it contributes to the existing body of research on changing personal relationships and intimacy. Under the influence of certain social theorists, notably Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck Gernsheim (1995), the contemporary sociological understanding of changing personal relationships is characterised by democratisation and the individualisation theses. Giddens makes the claim that ‘there is only one story to tell about the family today, and that is of democracy’ (1998:93). This gives rise to the conception of ‘the pure relationship’ and ‘confluent love’ (see Giddens, 1992, 1994). Democratic post-separated family life would, under these conditions, centralise the importance of open debate, negotiation and have a shared understanding of the wishes of all parties.

Their work on the ‘democratisation’ and ‘individualisation’ of personal relationships has generated much debate (see Giddens, 1992, 1994; Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart, 1999). The debate centres around the way in which personal relationships and intimacy are conceptualised; it asks to what degree personal relationships are determined by ‘mutual knowledge and understanding’, and to what degree are they shaped by external factors such as gender relations, social norms, ties of obligation and legislation. Giddens for example argues that

the *democratisation* of (macro) society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within (micro) intimate relationships. He argues that individuals are constant active agents, who have brought and continue to seek change from a position of self-awareness (p.75). Although he acknowledges that male power in the traditional family has not changed as quickly (p. 131), he privileges the notion of ‘individualisation and democratisation in personal relationships.

In contrast, their critics, who are largely feminists argue that the notion of ‘autonomy and individualisation’ have been over exaggerated in his thesis. They believe that structural (gender, employment, income, legal context) conditions in which choices are made profoundly affect the changes in personal relationships (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart and Neale, 1999). While they do not deny the idea of changes in the patterning of personal relationships, they argue that it is impossible to efficiently address notions of the self and agency if ‘bits of the social are parcelled up and put aside’ (Smart and Neale, 1999:7). In essence, the grand theorists argue that the radical shifts in personal relations represent a transformation and decisive break away from traditional family relationships. While accepting that there has been a change in personal relationships, empirical studies from largely feminist scholars tend to suggest a slower shift, by portraying the diversity as well as the continuity of changing personal relationships.

The task of this thesis is to examine the validity of alternative concepts of changing personal relationships by analysing the accounts that divorcing parents themselves present. In order to explore these accounts a qualitative approach was used in this research as the study sought to understand how parenting and intimate relationships were experienced both before and after separation from the perspectives of the divorcing parents involved in the study. The methodological approach is informed by the principle that in order to understand people’s evolution of their relationships (spousal and parent-child) and renegotiation of post-separation parental roles, it is imperative to identify and incorporate their own interpretations of the reality of their experience.

In choosing my sample, I chose to focus on parents who had interacted with the legal system and legal actors, since this was pivotal to understanding the impact of the law in changing personal relationships. It was necessary to focus only on separating parents who had instructed solicitors and had gone through the courts to terminate their marriage. Accordingly, access was sought from several family law solicitors, who worked with private and legal aid clients.¹ Focusing on divorcing parents, who had recently been through the family law courts, offers particularly rich opportunities to explore the changing nature of personal relationships both with an ex-spouse and a child. Unlike divorcees, divorcing parents have had to renegotiate their relationship with both their children and ex-spouse. A complex and nuanced understanding of the changing intimate relationships of parents in the areas of marital breakdown and renegotiation of personal relationships should ultimately improve our understanding of the changing patterns of family practices.

Research on Separating Families in Ireland

The number of separated and divorced persons in the state has rapidly and demonstrably increased, particularly from the mid-1990s onwards. Census figures indicate that the number of people experiencing marital breakdown between 1986 and 2006 increased from 40,000 to 199,000 over this twenty-year period, making it the fastest growing marital status category in the period since 1996. The rise in the number of divorced persons in the state is partly due to the removal of the constitutional ban on divorce in 1996. With a successful outcome in the second referendum, the constitutional ban on divorce was removed in November 1995 and The Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996 came into operation on the 27 February 1997. The increasing numbers of separated persons in the state depicts the changing nature of the family. According to Punch (2007) the 45-54 year age group had the highest proportion of separated or divorced males and females in the last three censuses, i.e. from 1996–2006. Two thirds of all separated females are in

¹ The term legal aid client is being used to refer to individuals, who are on lower incomes and are financially assessed for eligibility for free legal aid and are assisted by public funds. In order to be eligible for legal aid you must satisfy a means test and your annual disposable income must be less than €18,000. If this is not the case, you are required to pay for a solicitor from your own financial resources.

the labour force while just over half of married females are in the labour force. According to my estimation approximately 55,123 children were living with divorced or separated parents in 2006.² It is in relation to these children and in this context that the present study was initiated.

Almost fifteen years after the enactment of divorce, the relative extent of marital breakdown has increased from 7.5 per cent in 2002 to 8.7 per cent in 2006. However there has been very little in-depth sociological research conducted to date on the experiences of divorcees in Ireland.³ Research on divorce in Ireland began by focusing on the political and legal campaign of the introduction of divorce, in particular the two referenda. From the late 70s to the early 90s research documented the reasons for the constitutional establishment of the prohibition of divorce (Burley and Regan, 2002; Duncan, 1979; Duncan, 1986; Fitzpatrick, 1987; James, 1997; O'Higgins, 1986), it depicted the history of the struggle for pro-divorce legislation, (D'Arcy & Laver, 1990; Dillon, 1993; James, 1997; Mahon, 1987; O'Higgins, 1986) it captured the circumstances surrounding the November 1995 referendum (Burley and Regan, 2002; Coulter, 1997; James, 1995; Ward, 1995) and it began to outline family law changes over the subsequent period (Power, 2004; Shannon, 1999, 2008; Ward, 1995). This literature highlighted how Ireland was being slowly transformed socially through a long-term liberalisation of family law (Fitzpatrick, 1987).

Yet, during this time, there was very little sociological research of any kind into the experiences of parents who experienced separation (albeit through the various ways one could contract out of marriage, including desertion, annulment⁴, and *divorce a mensa et*

² This estimation was calculated by applying the known percentage of lone parent families due to separation or divorce to the known number of children living in lone parent families. This figure does not represent precisely the number of children who experience marital breakdown. Many children who have experienced marital breakdown will go on to see their parents re-marrying or re-partnering. Such situations are not included as part of this calculation.

³ For a review of research on Families in Ireland commissioned by the Family Support Agency, see Cousins (2006).

⁴ The termination of marriage was allowed through the granting of an annulment. The law of nullity is concerned with the legal validity of a marriage at its inception. When a marriage is declared null and void, a court is declaring that the couple were never legally married to one another and they are legally free to remarry. For more information on annulments see Shannon, G. (2008) *Family Law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

*thoro*⁵). The government responded in 1985, by establishing a Parliamentary Committee to examine the extent of marital breakdown in Ireland.⁶ The findings from the report suggested the experience of separation was increasing and the Committee recommended that a referendum be held to remove the ban on divorce (Joint Committee On Marriage Breakdown, 1985).

Following on from this period, Irish statistical reports were beginning to outline the changing structure of the family (Fahy & Russell, 2001). A comprehensive review of the changes was documented more recently by Fahy and Field (2008) in an attempt to examine where the family was at and inform family policy. At the same time interest grew in exploring how children and women were being affected. Ward (1993) looked at the financial costs of marital breakdown while Hogan et al (2002) conducted a study on children's experiences of parental separation. More recently, there has been substantial legal scrutiny of how family law practices in Ireland are inadequate for addressing the needs of the child, in particular, in hearing the voice of the child (Clissman & Hutchinson, 2006a, 2006b; Kilkelly, 1998, 2006, 2008; Shannon, 2000; Ryan, 2006; Walsh, 1997). However, there has been little in-depth investigation on how separation and divorce in Ireland impact on family practices.

In more recent years, with the reform of the *in camera* rule, research in the family law Circuit Courts has got underway.⁷ The provision of reports from the quarterly family law report, *Family Law Matters*, has given us some insight into the types of cases and outcomes going through the family law courts.⁸ A more in-depth analytical sociological study, based on the attendance of over 100 family law cases was recently completed by Mahon and Moore (2011). The report identifies the kind of post separation child-

⁵ A divorce *a mensa et thoro*, is rather a separation of the parties by act of law, than a dissolution of the marriage. It may be granted for the causes of extreme cruelty or desertion of the wife by the husband.

⁶ Joint Committee on Marriage Breakdown, *Marital Breakdown: A Review of Proposed Changes*, PI 3074 (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1985). The report contains a wide variety of proposals for reform in family law

⁷ To date the dearth of research on family law cases in Ireland can be explained by the long-standing *in camera* rule which prohibited researcher access to family law Courts. However, reform to Section 40(3) of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 improved access to the courts for researchers.

⁸ The Family Law Reporting Project was set up in late 2006 and sought to provide reports, judgments, trends and other statistical information from the District, Circuit and High Courts. As part of the project, the reporter published a series of reports entitled *Family Law Matters*. For an example of the type of information gleaned from these reports please see Appendix II.

parent-contact arrangements that follow legal separation and divorce agreements related to child custody and parental access to children. That report has helped to shape the context for the current study which goes deeper into examining how families experience and renegotiate responsibilities and caring patterns at a time of separation.

The increasing policy interest in separating families is reflected in the number of policy-driven research reports that have been conducted into supporting the role of different family members in caring for children at a time of separation. In particular, the studies have focused on the role of fathers (Corcoran, 2005; Mc Keown, 1999, 2001; 2005) and grandparents (Lundstroem, 2007; Timonen et al., 2009) at a time of separation. Recent policy-driven research has examined the need for contact centres which would support families who experience separation where there is a danger posed by a family member (Murphy and Caffrey, 2009).

The changing nature of intimacy and couple relationships has been under-researched in Irish society. O'Connor (2001) provided an interesting overview of distressed couples who seek counselling as part of a wider marital counselling research project commissioned by The Department of Social Community & Family Affairs. The study gives us an insight into some of the problems and concerns that individuals present at counselling about their dissatisfaction with their marriage. However, there is little analysis of the wider implications of these complaints for our understanding of changes in intimacy and personal relationships. In that respect, O'Connor (1995) provided a sociological investigation of the continuities and changes in marriage by looking at the changing role of women in society. Although O'Connor's paper adds to our understanding, it was written before divorce legislation was introduced and was not based on empirical data. The most comprehensive in-depth study of Irish family life, conducted by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball (1968), explored rural farm community life in Ireland and found that extended family structure was founded on patriarchal, ascribed status, constituting a community with no recognisable distinction between familial, social and economic functions.

The Irish studies cited above provide some data on legal, statistical, policy and child welfare aspects of separation and divorce against which the findings of the current study may be compared. However, there is clearly a lack of in-depth qualitative sociological research into the actual experiences of individuals who separate and divorce in Ireland. This thesis aims to help fill this gap, and it gives an insight into the experiences, attitudes and intentions of divorcees in relation to how they experience marital breakdown and renegotiated family practices post separation, and into the influences on their ability to do so. A qualitative in-depth study of separating parents enables rich analysis because it can examine the stories and experiences of both resident and non-resident parents' experiences as well as the socio-economic environment on an individual's autonomy; it also enables comparisons by gender in the renegotiation of family practices post separation. Thus it contributes towards building an empirical portrait of parents' experiences of renegotiating family practices post separation in Ireland. It also represents an advance on previous empirical research on personal relationships in Ireland because it theorises the findings and locates the analysis in terms of existing theoretical debates on intimacy and personal relationships in the wider sociological debate.

Research Questions

This study takes a micro approach to the macro realities of changing personal relationships at a time of social change. It focuses on the division of labour within the family, which continues to be characterised by gender, and explores the subjective experiences of families who are in a process of renegotiating responsibilities and caring practices upon separation. In seeking to explore how individuals renegotiate family practices post separation, this research focuses on the following specific research questions:

1. How is marital breakdown and separation experienced in families in contemporary Ireland?
2. How do households in transition reorganise responsibilities and caring patterns upon separation and how does this change over time?

3. What factors or issues lead to positive or negative experiences when reorganising family practices upon separation?
4. What are the main factors these separating parents perceive as affecting the following changing personal relationships?
 - a. Marital/Spousal Relationship
 - b. Parent Child Relationship
 - c. Co-parental Relationship

The findings from the respondents in relation to the above questions are used to address the wider theoretical question:

5. What are the implications of the findings for sociological theories of understanding changing family relationships and intimacy at the time of separation?

In answering these questions, the research aims to firstly shift the debate in the sociology of families back from grand theorising to more micro approaches towards an understanding of how families operate in diverse and complex ways. Although it is acknowledged that this study cannot prove or disprove ideas of democratisation or individualisation, it can provide a unique national context in which it challenges the credibility of such grand theorising. Secondly, the thesis aims to demonstrate the value of grounded, inductive, qualitative studies which influence the sociological thinking of family life with the aim of influencing policy decisions and everyday understandings of family life. Thirdly the thesis aims to build upon the work of Trinder (2008) in an attempt to move beyond the practices of maternal gatekeeping generally associated with post separation parenting and towards an understanding of the role of *paternal banking* as the bi-directional influence that accompanies maternal gatekeeping. And lastly the thesis aims to contribute substantially at a national level by providing an account of how families experience separation and renegotiate family practices post separation.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis begins with an overview of the national setting. Chapter 2 maps out the extensive demographic, structural and normative changes that have occurred in the family in Ireland over the last three decades and reviews how Irish policy and legislation have approached these changes in the family. Irish society after completing the first decade of the 21st century has ideologically moved on from the society of the 1980s, a time when most respondents entered marriage. The chapter presents cultural, gender and market related inequalities that existed twenty years ago and those that remain in today's society. The national context, in particular the legislative context, sharpens the focus of the thesis on separating couples as a way of assessing how divorce legislation, particularly the no-fault non-conflict approach adopted by the legislators is having an impact on separating couples and parent-child relationships post separation.

Chapter 3 outlines the relevant theoretical debates in changing family relationships. This theoretical context outlines Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's influential theses and the way in which they argue that the radical shifts in personal relations represent a transformation and decisive break away from traditional family relationships. This outline is followed by a critique of the democratisation and individualisation theses. From a dominant feminist perspective it is argued that empirical studies show that intimacy and inequality (gender and class) continue to coexist in many personal lives. They argue that personal relationships remain highly gendered (Bott, 1971; Edgwell, 1980; Hertz, 1986; Jamieson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999). These social commentators believe that changes in personal relationships are best explained by a 'continuity and diversity approach.'

The review follows on, at a more meso-theoretical level, by outlining the models of family and change that have been discussed in the sociology of the family over the last forty years. These studies investigated the degree of egalitarianism (conjugal role jointness) or 'symmetry' that has been reached within marriages. They also investigated the extent to which family practices were based on principles of sharing and negotiations. However, research evidence in the UK throughout the 80s highlighted the economic significance of women's unpaid work and the problems associated with the traditional

breadwinner mode (Edgwell, 1980; Pahl, 1989). Following on from these studies in the 80s, the critics who rejected claims of democratisation or individualisation, argued that the optimistic account of egalitarianism continued to conceal the relationship between structural inequality and interpersonal processes, but most importantly it neglected the significance of gender (Gillies, 2003). The review follows on to highlight the interplay between the institution of marriage and gender within personal relationships.

Moving on from the macro and meso theoretical context to a micro theoretical context, the review provides evidence from the literature on the type of factors that can affect personal relationships (parent-child or co-parental) at a time of separation – these include determinants of contact (Bradshaw et al, 1999, Fox and Kelly, 1995; Juby et al, 2005; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Simpson et al, 1995;) and relational determinants (Allen and Hawkins, 1999; Fagan and Barnett, 2003; McBride et al, 2005; Trinder, 2008). As we shall see, in Chapters 6-9 of this thesis there is strong evidence to suggest that these factors can act as constraints on the freedom of separating parents to pursue personal relationships post separation. The issue of maternal gatekeeping as a strong relational determinant for contact is also considered, with the recognition that gatekeeping is a bi-directional reciprocal influence, i.e. resident and contact parents (and children) have an influence over each other and their respective roles (Trinder, 2008). It is stated that there is ‘a major gap in our knowledge concerning the role of fathers and how gatekeeping is embedded in wider family process’ (Trinder, 2008:1304). This research seeks to contribute to this gap in knowledge by examining not only parental involvement in terms of childcare (contact) but also parental involvement in terms of (income and redistribution of income) within the reciprocal arrangement. The reciprocal ‘care for income’ exchange model which occurs during the marriage may rupture at the point of separation and this thesis examines how it affects the renegotiated post-separated role of each respondent.

The fourth chapter explains my methodological approach and the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying it. A qualitative, interpretative, naturalistic approach was adopted to explore and ‘make sense of’ the meanings that changing personal relationships has for individuals, and the process of how they understand and interpret

their world. An in-depth interview based study was designed and conducted with a sample of 39 separating/divorcing individuals, of which five were former marital sets. The interviews allowed separating and divorcing parents to describe their marriage, the breakdown of the marriage, and post-separated life in great detail, and each interview allowed them to discuss their motivations, concerns, constraints and perceptions in ways that captured the complexity of the transition of separation.

The findings are presented in Chapters 5–9. For each of the empirical findings chapters, findings are presented by firstly introducing and profiling the group of parents. Secondly the chapter presents a detailed account of three of the respondents from each group. The three stories highlight different issues which allow the research to draw out several analytical points about the way in which each group experiences the disintegration of the marital relationships, the move out of the family home, the negotiation process and the renegotiation of their parenting roles post separation. From this, the separating parents are assigned to various typologies which describe their renegotiated role post separation (egalitarians, involved but constrained, involved but stressed couples, aggrieved and excluded fathers). The chapters are structured around the five typologies of renegotiated parenting roles. A brief outline of each participant's biography is can be found in Appendix I. Chapter 7 focuses on the stories of the former marital couples who were interviewed while still involved in legal proceedings for their separation. At the end of each chapter, I analyse how the data presented in the chapter supports or rejects the democratisation/individualisation thesis.

Chapter 5 explores the experiences of the 'egalitarians' who share equally their parenting and their time with the children after the separation. The egalitarians operated, to varying degrees, joint conjugal roles and are dual career couples. When faced with the renegotiation of their roles and behaviours at a time of separation, these parents adopt a non-gendered, egalitarian approach to this reconstruction which moves away from traditional gender roles. The dual-income couples pose an important contrast to other family forms in the sample set and allow us to examine the effect that the couples' working lives have on gender roles both during and after the marriage. Secondly it allows us to examine whether the attainment of equal economic status by husbands and wives

leads to egalitarian division of labour and authority both during and after marriage. Broadly speaking the analysis suggests that the egalitarians' access to employment, income, levels of education and understanding of the welfare principle has profound influences on their ability to discontinue gendered practices of parenting and produce new ways of organising gender post separation.

Chapter 6 explores the experiences of the 'involved but constrained' parents, who maintained a high level of parent-child contact with varying degrees of ongoing conflict. This group of eight fathers and three mothers represents the most dominant pattern in the sample (and across US and UK literature; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Hoggett, 1994; Smart and Neale, 1999) of mother-residence and father-contact. The women in these cases worked part time and were the primary carers both before and after the separation. The men in this group had been minimally engaged in childcare responsibilities before the separation. In such one-and-a-half income households, there was an unequal division of paid and unpaid work which created a power imbalance between the mother and father at the point of separation. Post separation, the former couple continued to embark on the exchange of care for income and income for care, however, regular flare ups arose if women kept the children or if men were holding back the money. The chapter draws attention to some of the consequences of leaving out discussions of the structural aspects of societies and people's lives, for the application of democratisation and individualisation thesis and its ability to understand the connection between autonomy and choice.

Chapter 7 explores the experiences of the 'involved but stressed' couples who maintained a high level of parent-child contact with a high level of ongoing conflict. These couples were interviewed shortly after (one to two years) they had physically separated and the majority were still involved in legal proceedings. The inclusion of triangulated accounts from former couples allows us to gain more insight not just into what the respondents say they do but how that corresponds with the perceptions of the other parent. In all situations, women continued to be the primary carer (similar to the pre-separation primary carer status) and were able to control the father's access to the children. Some of the women's attitudes to the gender roles reinforced traditional images of the

breadwinner family and prevented the father from being more involved post separation. The chapter draws attention to some of the consequences of leaving out discussions of the contextual aspects (including the incidence of conflict and the co-parental relationship) of societies and people's lives, for the application of the individualisation thesis and its ability to understand the connection between autonomy and choice.

Chapter 8 focuses on the fourth group of separated parents, the 'aggrieved parents'. The majority of aggrieved parents were female primary carers. These women had been dependent spouses during the marriage and had largely segregated conjugal roles. The aggrieved mothers, who had a patriarchal, traditional division of paid and unpaid work relationship (segregated conjugal role) during the marriage, and who had no income upon separation, were left to carry the entire childcare burden after the separation. At the time of the separation the fathers in these cases did not choose to reconstruct their parental role and continued to be largely absent from their children's lives. Additionally the breadwinner income was no longer shared and the mothers experienced an impoverished state. The mother after the separation had no money, all of the childcare responsibility and the husband was no longer providing for them. This chapter allows us to analyse the experience of dependent spouses at the time of the separation and how they renegotiate their role upon separation. Interestingly, this chapter also allows us to examine the changing socioeconomic context on women's experience of changing family practices.

The final empirical findings chapter, Chapter 9 explores the experiences of excluded fathers who have almost no contact with their children. The excluded fathers, who had segregated conjugal roles during the marriage and were largely career focused, experienced a fall out of contact with their child upon separation. Upon separation, these parents were unable to/or did not seek to renegotiate their roles away from traditional gender roles. Fathers who had dedicated their lives to their careers had had little involvement in their children's lives during the marriage and the children gave little thought to the parent they never knew. Some of the fathers argued that they had been marginalised by the resident mother's gateclosing behaviour. This chapter investigates the challenges that exist for some fathers in creating a relationship with their children post separation.

In general, the findings lead us to ask crucial questions about the appropriateness of the concepts of democracy and individualisation as a way of understanding what is going on in separating families in Ireland. The following themes emerged as important constraining influences on changing personal relationships. Firstly, gender and gender roles appeared to have a significant impact on the renegotiation of family practices post separation: this includes the gendered practices in marriage which continued into the post separation relationship including 1) parenting 2) sexual division of labour 3) unequal distribution of income and 4) intimate violence. An expectation of equality was far from realised in the actual division of family work. Ongoing gendered complaints highlighted the non-democratic nature of these intimate relationships.

Secondly, employment and educational attainment had a major impact on the freedom to change personal relationships post separation. It appeared that women who had less education spent little time in the labour force during the marriage and incurred difficulties in obtaining well paid positions when the marriage ended. As such, these women remained financially dependent on their former spouses and did not achieve economic independence post separation. The change in educational qualifications of the adult female population in Ireland increased the ability of younger separating mothers to regain employment and created employment opportunities which, historically, had simply been less available to some of the older female divorcees. This created the opportunity for some of the younger women in the sample to gain a better education and achieve economic independence post separation.

Related to this is the impact of income, as decisions that were made by separating husbands and wives in their effort to separate and establish two homes from one home was guided by income. Total household income was a key factor in setting up two households after the separation. For parents in higher income families (dual income families) access to economic resources eased the transition to parenting across two households. In contrast respondents from single-income households had access to fewer economic resources and their transition to parenting post separation was made more difficult and produced uneven effects for mothers and fathers.

One of the most serious measures of gender inequality was demonstrated by the unequal appropriation of financial resources by one partner (usually former husbands). The organisation of money, including the system of pooling and management before the separation highlighted the gender inequalities that existed in the dominant male breadwinner model both before and after the separation. The research found that most male breadwinners, as earners, were more in control of the money. This situation left women in a relatively weak bargaining position when things started to go wrong and a power imbalance becomes more prevalent at the point of separation.

Many fathers experienced the resistance of an obdurate maternal parent, who prevented them from pursuing intimate relationships with their children. The work of Trinder (2008), Fagan and Barnett (2003) and Seery and Crowley (2000) seems to offer a helpful explanatory framework for the experience of maternal gatework for many fathers in this group.

Following on from these empirical chapters, Chapter 10 draws all five groups together and provides an analysis of their renegotiation of family practices post separation by developing a typology. The typology enables comparison across the groups on the question of the sexual division of labour pre and post separation. The findings appear to confirm continuity in the experience of intimacy and family life rather than for Giddens's (1992) or Beck and Beck –Gernsheim's (1995) theses of shifts to completely new forms of individualised intimate relationships (Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999).

The second part of Chapter 10 provides a concluding discussion which summarises and highlights the most important findings between the groups. The chapter sets out the factors influencing the renegotiation of family practices post separation. Additionally this chapter reiterates support for the feminist arguments that grand theorising about the impact of social change on intimacy is overstated and fails to understand the complexities, diversity and plurality of individuals' experiences of changing personal relationships. The chapter concludes by indicating possible directions for future research in this area.

Chapter 2: National Context

The family today is constantly changing, especially in regard to its formation, family-related roles and relationships among family members (Fahy and Field, 2008). This chapter maps out the extensive structural and normative changes that have occurred in the family in Ireland over the last three decades and reviews how Irish policy and legislation have approached these changes in the family. The main focus of analysis in this study covers the past two decades, the period 1986-2006. This time period reflects significant changes in the Irish demographic, normative, legislative and policy environment and corresponds with the time the respondents of this research entered marriage and then separated and/or divorced.⁹ Some of the main changes that occurred during this time have been the evolving gender and familial societal norms, which allow women in particular greater choices and possibilities at both the public and private level. Having outlined the changing face of the family and societal norms at national level, the chapter goes on to focus on the policy context of families, highlighting the key changes and developments for supporting the changing family. Finally the legal context outlines how the respondents' rights and obligations towards their children and their former spouses have been regulated and governed by family law legislation.

Changing Families in Ireland

Most of the respondents married during the mid 1980s and early 1990s. Although marriage retained a central role in family life, its meaning during this time had changed considerably (Fahey and Field, 2008). The period witnessed a decline in marriage rates during the depressed 1980s and early 1990s. According to Punch (2007: 195) the female first marriage rate had decreased from 0.83 in 1980 to 0.6 in 2005. While some argued that low marriage rates constituted an avoidance of marriage, others believed it was merely a sign of its deferral. The average age of marriage in Ireland had increased to 33.1

⁹ Although there were two respondents who got married in the late 1970s, the majority of the respondents got married between the mid 1980s and mid 1990s. The majority of the respondents separated and/or divorced during the first decade of this century. Therefore the national context is set around the time period between the 1980s and the last census recordings in 2006.

years for men and 31 years for women in 2005 (Fahey and Field, 2008). This is a dramatic jump from the figures presented in 1974 where the average age was just over 26 years for men and 24 years for women.

It is possible to see these age and marriage patterns simply as a response to a changing understanding of women's role. O'Connor (1995) argued that changes and continuities in marriage and family life can be understood by focusing on women. The deferral of marriage suggests that individuals (more increasingly women) were prioritising their own well-being and financial stability over the idea of having their own families. In addition to the decline and/or deferral of marriages, instability in marriage became steadily common since the early 1980s. The incidence of separation and divorce has grown since family law legislation came into effect in 1989 for a judicial separation and 1997 for divorce. This fluidity of family practices demonstrates the changing nature of the family at a time when the respondents were entering and leaving their marriages. In order to understand the prevalence and frequency with which people, like the respondents, were separating and divorcing, the following marital breakdown trends will be discussed for this period.

Empirical Data on Divorce

The Central Statistics Office is the main source of national data regarding vital statistics in Ireland. It was only from 1986 that the census started recording information on persons according to a more detailed account of their marital status. Statistical divorce records were not introduced prior to 1986. What we know of the numbers of people separating and divorcing prior to 1986 was collated by researchers from a variety of sources, including the Labour Force Surveys (up to 1997), Quarterly National Household Survey, court records and The Department of Family and Social Affairs records. Duncan (1979) attempted to assess the level of marital breakdown by collating statistics through the various ways one could contract out of marriage, including desertion, annulment, and *divorce a mensa et thoro*. The statistics obtained from the official Labour Force Survey in 1975 indicated that there were 8,000 separated wives in Ireland (Duncan, 1979). Duncan (1986) argued that the figures indicating the level of marital breakdown (approx 2,439

court applications and church annulments received in 1977 and 3,110 Deserted Wife's Allowance recipients in 1976) indicated a serious and growing problem.

There are, however, various methods of measuring the incidence of marital breakdown. Researchers assessing the level of marital breakdown in Ireland have argued that the divorce rate is an imperfect measure of marital breakdown (Fahey and Lyons, 1995; Fahey and Field, 2008; Fahey and Russell, 2001; McKeown, 2005). It is argued firstly that many Irish couples whose marriages break down do not get divorced but simply remain separated. Many couples resolve their problems arising from the breakdown of their marriage without recourse to the law and may go undetected for the purposes of statistical record-keeping. In order to assess the correct level of marital breakdown, the numbers of separations need to be included in the calculation. Secondly it is argued that due to the minimum period of separation required to obtain a divorce (four years), when a divorce is obtained, the marriage breakdown it relates to occurred at least four years previously or even prior to that. As discussed in their review of family changes in Ireland, Fahy and Field argue that 'divorces issued today are an indicator of marital breakdown at some time in the past rather than in the present' (Fahey and Field, 2008:21). This argument also holds for those that apply for a judicial separation. A judicial separation can take up to three years to obtain (if it is contested), so when it is obtained the marriage breakdown it relates to occurred at least two or three years previously. For that reason, figures presented in statistical records may depict the situation of marital breakdown for some time in the past. However, these figures give us an indication of the prevalence of marriage breakdown and the changes that were occurring in Irish families and enable comparison with other countries.

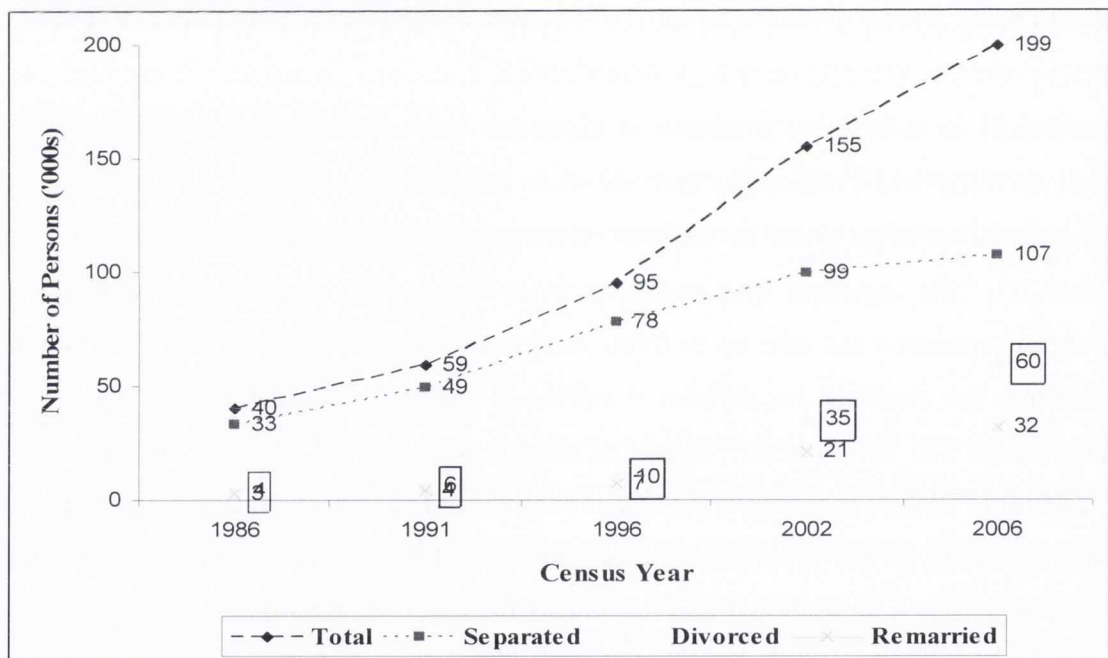
Trends in Marital Breakdown

The figures presented in the following sections give a statistical overview of the nature and changes that were occurring in family life at the time the respondents were marrying and/or separating. The trends depict accounts of changing family structures which provide a more informed understanding of how the very idea of family and the centrality of marriage to families are changing. In 2006, in the year that many of the respondents

separated, there were 107, 263 separated persons and 59,534 divorcees recorded in the Census data in 2006.

By 2008, at the time of the research interviews, marital breakdown had increased. Figure 1 below demonstrates the trends in the numbers of people who experience marital breakdown. The figure indicates that the number of people experiencing marital breakdown between 1986 and 2006 increased from 40,000 to 199,000 over this twenty-year period.¹⁰ The earliest experience of marital breakdown in the sample was in 1991, whilst the majority of the sample separated between 2002 and 2007.

Figure 1: Number of Ever-Separated and Divorced Persons 1986-2006



Source: Fahy and Field, 2008:21

Punch (2007) stated that by 2006, 8.1 per cent of ever-married males were either separated or divorced whilst this figure was slightly higher for females at 9.2 per cent. The growing frequency of marital dissolution has to be considered a symptom of social change and of the changes in the attitudes toward the institution of marriage. The

¹⁰ It is important to note that the upward trend approaching the census in 2002 accumulated over six years rather than five years. The census scheduled for 2001 was postponed until 2002 due to an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Ireland.

European Values study, for example, asked respondents if they thought that marriage was an outdated institution. In 1981, 12 per cent of respondent believed that marriage was an outdated institution. The percentage of respondents agreeing with this statement increased to 21 per cent by 2000 (Fahy and Field, 2008:13). In analysing the latest data from the European Values Study, I found that that this percentage increased to 23 per cent in 2008.

The trends for marital breakdown, regardless of the method used to measure it, demonstrate how divorce became much more common and social attitudes toward divorce began to change over the last two decades. In addition to the deferral or rejection of marriage as a means of creating a family, the frequency at which people were leaving marriages suggest a significant change in family life in Ireland. The respondents in this study decided to leave their marriage at a time when a diversity of family forms was developing in Irish society. It is in this context of the growing diversity of family forms (particularly through the advent of divorce) that the present study was initiated.

Divorcees in Ireland

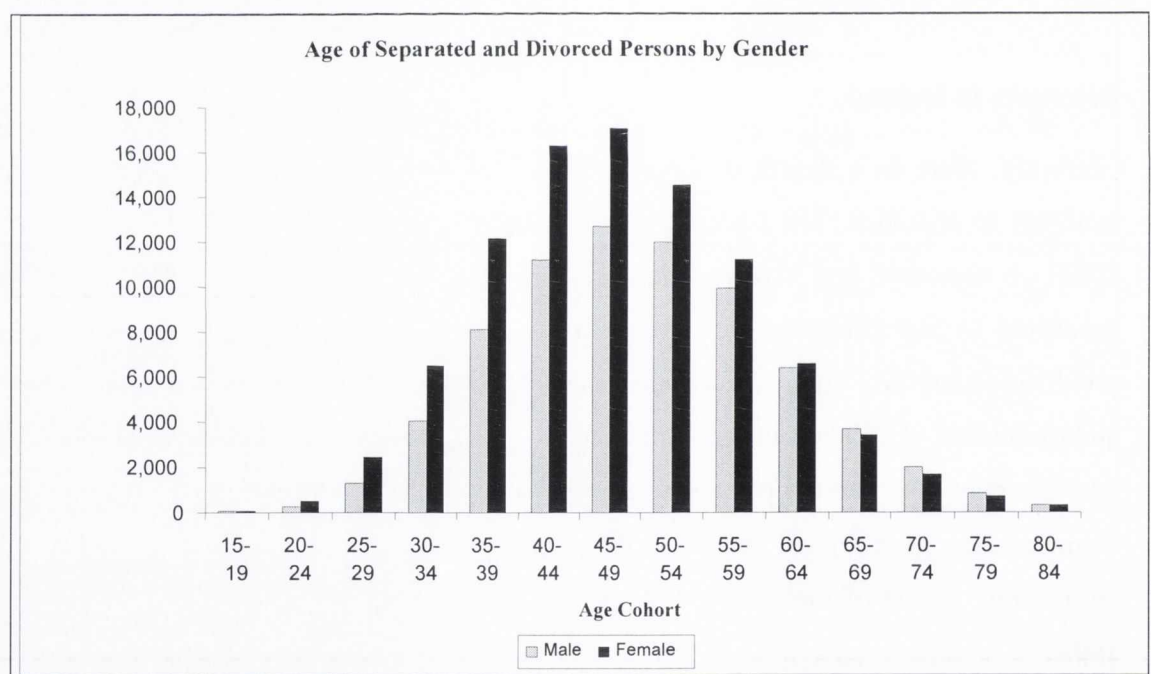
Currently, there is a dearth of knowledge on divorce and divorcees in Ireland. It is confined to statistics. The nationally representative statistics (Central Statistics Office, 2006) on separated and divorced persons tells us about their existence in Irish society according to the following characteristics: a) gender b) age c) length of marriage d) province/county/city area, e) economic status f) number of separating/divorcing parents and g) number of children in separating and divorcing households. Females accounted for 57.3 per cent of separated persons and 54.3 per cent of divorced persons in 2006. Many commentators have argued that the figures suggest that women are more likely to provide an accurate report of their marital status than men (Fahey and Field, 2008; O'Connor, 1998).

Age, Gender and Regional Breakdown

The age of separated and divorced persons is presented in Figure 2. This figure indicates that the majority of people who are experiencing marital breakdown are aged between 35-59 years. Those aged between 40 and 59 are considerably more likely than average to

divorce or separate and the numbers of divorces or separated people peaks at the ages between 45-49 years old. Punch (2007) stated that the 45-54 year age group had the highest proportion of separated or divorced males and females in the last three censuses, i.e. 1996–2006. According to Punch (2007) the lower incidence amongst younger people reflects the lower number of people who are marrying. As mentioned above, the mean age of a first marriage in 2006 for a woman was 30.4 years and for a man was 32.1 years (Central Statistics Office, 2007).¹¹ It is therefore less likely for the younger cohorts to provide marital breakdown data than older groups as they represent a smaller group. Equally those aged 65 and over are less likely to divorce. This thesis will explore whether women from different age cohorts experience separation and divorce differently. Are there generational variations in the experience of changing personal relationships?

Figure 2: Age of Separated and Divorced Persons by Gender (2006)



The age of separated and divorce persons, together with the mean age of first marriage can provide us with a rough estimate of the average length of marriage for divorcees, given the absence of this figure from statistical data. If we take the mean age of a first

¹¹ This compares to an average age of just over 26 years for men and 24 years for women in 1974

marriage in 1990 for a woman was 28.7 years and for a man was 30.1 years and the numbers of divorces peak at the ages between 45 and 49, then we can calculate that the average length of marriage for divorcees in Ireland is roughly between 15 and 18 years. This estimate is borne out by this research as three-quarters of the respondents were married between ten and twenty years (twenty two out of twenty nine respondents), while just under one fifth of marriages lasted less than ten years.

Statistical data also presents the regional breakdown of the population by marital status. Overall the distribution of the population by marital status reflects the division of the population in each province. The only slight deviation arose in Leinster which has 54.1 per cent of the total population and 58 per cent of the total separated population and 55.8 per cent of the divorced population. A closer look at the divorce frequencies in some of Ireland's largest cities tells us that Limerick City (12.9%) had the highest rate of marital breakdown in the country followed by Dublin City (11.6%). At the opposite end of the scale Galway County (6.3%) and Cavan (6.4%) had the lowest rates in 2006. These figures show us that there is regional variation in the occurrence of divorce, with urban areas tending to experience higher rates than rural areas.

Labour Force Participation Rate

Table 1 below identifies the labour participation rates by marital status, age and gender in 2006. The growth in female employment has been documented extensively in Irish studies (Fahey *et al.*, 2000; O'Connor, 1998; Russell *et al.*, 2009; Walsh, 1992). Over the period 1998 to 2007 female employment grew by 55 per cent. The striking finding that Table 2 reveals is the difference in the economic status of separated females and married females. Two thirds of all separated females are in the labour force while just over half of married females are in the labour force. Fahy and Russell (2001) have commentated that lone mothers (which include separated and divorced mothers) have a higher level of labour market participation than married mothers of similar age and educational level. These findings reveal that the majority of post-separated mothers are in employment and may face different issues than married mothers when it comes to reconciling work and family life as a post-separated mother.

Table 1: Labour Participation Rates by Marital Status, Age and Gender in 2006

	SINGLE		MARRIED		SEPARATED		WIDOW		TOTAL	
	%		%		%		%		%	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
15-19	25.4	15.8	64.1	48.6	50	48	30.6	35.7	25.6	16
20-24	73.8	64	87.5	64	86.3	66.6	56.9	50.9	74.1	64
25-34	93	85.6	96.9	73.9	94.9	72.5	89.7	57	94.1	81
35-44	89.4	80.8	96.4	64.8	92.4	73.4	86.7	64.5	94.2	69.2
45-54	79.7	76	93	62.5	86	73.1	83.1	64.7	89.9	65.6
55-64	61	53.7	73.3	38.7	66.7	53.7	62.2	40.2	70.6	41.6
65 and over	13.9	4.8	12.7	4	13.1	8.4	5.9	2.2	12	3.5
TOTAL	69.4	59.6	77.1	53	77	65.1	26.5	12.8	72.3	52.8

Source: Census 2007

The other striking finding in Table 1 above is that it appears that, in particular, older married women have the lowest labour participation rates. Whereas single and separated women aged 55-64 have a labour participation rate of 53.7 per cent, married women aged 55-64 have a participation rate of 38.7 per cent. This would suggest a significant proportion of women return to work after separation. This thesis will explore how women relate to work post-separation. What influence does previous work history and educational attainment have on women's labour force participation post separation?

Children of Divorcees in Ireland

Information on the situation of children in divorcing or separating families in Ireland is particularly poor¹². Data relating to lone parents incorporates some key information on separated and/or divorced parents, from which we can obtain information on the numbers

¹² The on-going National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, entitled Growing Up in Ireland, offers an opportunity to investigate the effects of separation and divorce on children's lives.

of children who experience separation. Table 2 below outlines the number of households enumerated as lone parent households by gender and marital status of the reference person in 2006. The importance of the different pathways into lone parenthood has changed over the years and separations and non-marital births have increased in significance. Figures from the Census 2006 as shown in Table 2 below suggest that lone parents comprise of about 40 per cent single parents, 29 per cent separated (including divorced) parents and 27 per cent widowed parents. These figures show how lone parenthood most commonly arises out of ex-marital birth and marital breakdown and not widowhood.

Table 2: Number of Households by Gender and Marital Status in 2006

MARITAL STATUS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Single	3,313	64,332	67,645
Married	2,932	6,680	9,612
Separated	8,742	47,544	56,286
Widowed	11,7002	43,995	88,697
Total	26,689	162,551	189,240

Source: Central Statistics Office, 2006

Researchers have argued that lone parenthood does not correctly define parents who separate and parent. It is argued that these parents are parenting (to varying degrees) apart as opposed to alone (Fahey and Russell, 2001). The nature of the ongoing relationship between the resident and non-resident parent makes this family a key focus for policy and lawmakers and emphasises the importance of this study in understanding parenting practices post separation. In some cases where parents are categorised as lone parents, the second parent may have little to do with the children on a day-to-day basis but may provide for the child financially or conversely the parent may be very involved with the child.

The proportion of all dependent children living with just one parent increased in Ireland from around 5% in 1983 to 12% in 1998 and eventually to 17.8% in 2006 (Central Statistics Office, 2007). In 2006, 183,744 children under 18 years of age lived with a lone

parent or guardian (Central Statistics Office, 2006). Additionally, separated or divorced parents accounted for a further 30 per cent of lone parent families. By applying the known percentage of lone parent families due to separation or divorce to the known number of children living in lone parent families, it can be estimated that approximately 55,123 children are living with divorced or separated parents.¹³ It is in relation to these children and in this context that the present study was initiated. This study deepens our understanding on how children from separated families, which are a sizeable and growing group, grow up in Ireland.

Legal Resolution of Marital Breakdown

Having presented the level of marital breakdown, the demographic profile of separating/divorcing parents and the number of children it is affecting, this research will now examine data on family law applications. Such data indicates the degree with which couples use the courts and legal avenues as a means to deal with the legal consequences of their relationship breakdown. These figures tell us something about the interaction between law and the family in Irish society and indicate the extent to which couples, who end their relationship, go through with divorce as a means of dealing with the legal aspects of their break-up.

The Annual Report Statistics, published by the Court Services, outlines the number of Circuit and High Court divorce and judicial separation applications granted since 2000 and are summarised in Table 3 below. As is evident from Table 3, the majority of cases coming to the family law courts for divorce and separation are heard and dealt with in the Family Law Circuit Court. The majority of family law applications to the Circuit Court are for either divorce (54 per cent) or judicial separation (24 per cent) while the rest deal with matters concerning guardianship, custody, domestic violence, maintenance and other related family law matters. Overall the numbers seeking a divorce and/or separation has increased slowly over the period 2001-2008.

¹³ This figure does not represent precisely the number of children who experience marital breakdown. Many children who have experienced marital breakdown will go on to see their parents re-marrying or re-partnering. Such situations are not included as part of this calculation.

Table 3: Number of Divorce and Separation Orders Granted per Year since 2001

	DIVORCE			JUDICIAL SEPARATION		
	HIGH	CIRCUIT	TOTAL	HIGH	CIRCUIT	TOTAL
2008	42	3,588	3,630	45	1,180	1,225
2007	26	3,658	3,684	18	1,167	1,185
2006	47	3,420	3,467	27	1,072	1,099
2005	20	3,391	3,411	23	950	973
2004	42	3,305	3,347	42	1,216	1,258
2003	41	2,929	2,970	26	1,206	1,232
2002	20	2,571	2,591	28	940	968
2001	20	2,817	2,837	27	1,018	1,045
TOTAL	258	25,679	25,937	236	8,749	8,985

Source: *The Court Services Annual Report 2008, p. 77*

Although most respondents had eventually obtained a judicial separation and/or divorce decree at the time of the interview, many of them, as will be presented in the following chapters, complained about the long waiting lists and lengthy delays in being heard in court. The provision of reports from the quarterly family law report, Family Law Matters, has given us some insight to the decision-making behind the rulings and cases. The family law reporting project estimated that from all decisions that were analysed in one month in the Dublin Circuit Family Court, almost three-quarters (72%) were consent divorces and judicial separations.¹⁴ Caution should be exercised when reading this figure as some settlements were finally agreed after years of negotiations and protracted dispute. Certain cases had gone through several hearings before eventually ending with a settlement. Findings from the family law reports in relation to access arrangements also showed that access was generally ‘as agreed’, though this did not necessarily mean it had

¹⁴ The findings from an analysis of forty-eight of the cases in the Dublin Circuit Family Court in October had consents filed in court, i.e. the parties agreed the terms of the separation in relation to matters concerning the children and finances. Agreements relating to children were made in twenty-one cases, with custody and access referred to in eighteen. In sixteen cases, joint custody was agreed with the child residing primarily with the mother in eleven cases and sharing time equally in five. In two cases, the wife had sole custody, with access for the husband. In cases where there is a clear child dispute, orders will be made as to the residential arrangements for the child (Court Service, 2007a)

been agreed in advance of the judicial separation or divorce (The Court Services, 2007b:49).

In cases where there is a clear child dispute, orders will be made as to the residential arrangements for the child. Research conducted within the Irish family law courts found that in high conflict cases, the judiciary assessed and often set out the details of the parenting arrangement (joint custody order) in order to ensure that both parents continued their relationship with the child (Mahon and Moore, 2011). These types of cases are referred to as court rulings. It was found that only 10 per cent of family law cases were contested to the end and therefore 'ruled' by the court. Of the cases that were contested to the end (The Court Services 2007a:24) it was also found that the main problems concerned children and maintenance (The Court Services 2007a:24).¹⁵ The thesis attempts to examine the ways in which money and children are used in contested divorce cases. What does the study tell us about the gendered nature of divorce battles?

Research carried out from a study of parent-child contact agreements and arrangements based on attending and observing family law circuit cases, described the ways in which legal separations and divorce decrees are shaping new forms of parenting patterns in Ireland (Mahon and Moore, 2011). The findings revealed that joint custody is now the norm in the Circuit Family Law Courts orders and according to Mahon and Moore (2011) the dominance of joint custody orders has facilitated the development of shared parenting practices. However, the frequency of contact between each parent and child is dependent on several factors including: the socio-economic positions of the parents, their housing resources and their approach to shared childcare (Mahon and Moore, 2011). The empirical chapters that follow explore how these factors impact on parent-child relationships both before and after the separation.

¹⁵ The findings from the family law reporting project revealed that eleven of the sixteen fully contested cases involved children. In six of the eleven cases, joint custody was ordered, usually with the child living with the mother and access as agreed between the parties or as laid down by the court. In three cases the mother was awarded sole custody while in two cases there were no orders made.

Conclusion

Statistical data concerning divorce and families in Ireland signals deep and basic changes in the concept of marital and family life. The figures presented above indicate that the number of people experiencing marital breakdown between 1986 and 2006 increased from 40,000 to 199,000. The figures from the Annual Court Reports show us the number of people seeking recourse to the law to regulate their marital breakdown. A summary of the statistical analysis suggests that 1) more women 'experience' marital breakdown (or record their marital status more accurately) 2) those aged between 40 and 59 are more likely to divorce or separate 3) there is regional variation in the occurrence of divorce with urban areas showing a higher divorce rate than rural areas 4) separated women are more likely to participate in the labour force as compared with married women and 5) separated parents make up an ever-increasing proportion of lone parents in Ireland. These findings identify some of the key themes for the context of the study.

Divorce and separation indicate family and social change in Ireland. The age of divorcees and the duration of their marriage points towards the life stage at which divorce on average occurs. Separated women's high labour force participation rate indicates the changing role of mothers' paid and unpaid contribution to the family and children. The involvement of fathers in post-separation parenting signifies the role fathers play in caring for their children outside of the marriage. And finally the increase in the percentage of children living with one parent indicates a need to understand and protect the rights of the child. The key demographic trends provide a national context within which to locate this in-depth study. But demographic trends alone do not provide enough background into the experiences of separation or divorce in Ireland. In the following sections, the study provides an overview of the social context and some of the normative changes that have been taking place in Ireland during the period the respondents were entering and leaving their marriages.

Gender Equality in Irish Society

Introduction

Over the last three decades there have been fundamental changes to the form, ideal and role expectations that have defined family life. Changes in the structure of the family have raised questions about the relationships between men and women, particularly in the context of marriage (O'Connor, 1995). One of the factors that have been found to shape marital roles and the division of labour is the type of gender regime that exists in a country. During the 1970s and 1980s in most families in Ireland, the man was the breadwinner and the woman stayed at home and looked after the children (Mahon, 1987). However, over the last three decades substantial cultural and structural changes have taken place.

Changes in legislation have brought about greater equality for women and resulted in more women entering the labour market. The increase in the number of women entering the workforce during the 1990s influenced the type of family household that was appearing. The growth in dual income or one-and-a-half-income families during the 1990s paved the way for a possibility of role change and flexibility in terms of domestic labour and emotional work. As will be discussed below, Ireland's welfare regime was not completely overhauled into a more democratic regime and several remnants of a male-breadwinner state remain.

The structural and cultural factors that have influenced a changing understanding of family and marital roles have also affected women's and men's understanding of marriage. Women in particular have gained more power in their relationships with men. These changes suggest that women are increasingly becoming autonomous actors who are shaping their own biographies and making pragmatic decisions in relation to work and family life. The development of different societal norms may have led to a shift from traditional forms of marriage to the emergence of forms such as 'individualised' marriage. These developments raise the question of whether we have reached a more

democratic society, one in which women and men are equal and autonomous both at a macro (societal) and micro (intimate relationship) level.

Changing Gender Norms

Changes in Welfare State

Ireland had typically been a male breadwinner state up until the 1990s as policies, legislation and cultural attitudes removed women from the public sphere (Mahon, 1987). The removal of the marriage bar¹⁶ and the introduction of various pieces of parental legislation began the shift in creating a more democratic society. Over the past two decades there have been a number of key policy areas, including the extension to maternity leave, the introduction of parental leave and the establishment of a national minimum wage, which have helped make the labour market appear more inviting for women (Russell et al., 2009). The study will explore the role of such policies in assisting separating parents with the reconciliation of work and family life. How do both separated men and women reconcile work and family responsibilities post separation? Are there gendered differences in their ability to reconcile these two worlds? Have they been assisted by state policies or services?

Change in Family Household Type

As it became more common for married women to be employed in the labour market, the proportion of male breadwinner families decreased from 53 per cent in 1986 to 39 per cent in 1996. There was also a rise of dual income families of 16 per cent during the same period, increasing from 16 per cent to 32 per cent over the same ten-year period (O'Connor, 1998: 110). These shifts in changing family household types are reflected in the sample. The majority of the women in the sample (14 out of 19) got married during the mid-80s and eight of these fourteen women became homemakers. Only one of the five women in the sample, who got married during the mid-90s, became a homemaker. Over the last ten years, the male breadwinner system no longer acts as the distinct

¹⁶ The marriage bar was a piece of legislation introduced in 1929 and not removed until 1973 which stated that if and when a woman working in the public service (and banks) got married she had to leave her employment.

behaviour for a significant proportion of families (O'Connor, 1998). . The study examines how women from different age cohorts and in different family household types experience separation. How do the women from different age cohorts relate to work as women, mothers and wives?

Change in Family Size

However, academics argue that data on marital status is less relevant to an understanding of changes in employment activity rates than is the presence of children (Fahy et al., 2000; Mahon, 1998). The changes in family status (i.e. number and age of children) are also a serious factor which has been shaping Irish women's participation in the labour force (Russell, et al., 2009). According to Punch (2007) the total fertility rate in Ireland fell from a value of 4.06 in 1964 to a level of 1.88 in 2006. Since 1991 the total fertility rate has been below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. This period coincides with the timing in which the respondents were beginning to have children. According to Mahon (1998: 171) the average fertility rate in 1994 was 1.87. The lower levels of fertility among the women in the sample reflect the tendency for smaller family sizes in Ireland at that time. The decline in family size meant that women were freer to participate in the workforce.

Growth in Education

Another significant factor which is shifting the Irish welfare regime towards a more democratic model is the change in educational qualifications of the adult female population in Ireland. In 1998, 29 per cent of the female labour force had third level qualifications but by 2007 the figure had risen to 43 per cent (Russell et al, 2009:20). The women in this study had reached various levels of educational attainment. Seven of the nine participants who had secondary level qualifications were in their mid-fifties, while eight of the ten women who had tertiary qualifications were in their early forties. Research evidence indicates that more highly educated women have higher labour force participation rates, reflecting the higher wages which can be earned with higher levels of educational attainment (Callan and Farrell, 1991). Are there women in this study who are

economically independent both before and after separation? How does an independent income at the time of separation influence women's experience of separation? Does their employment status and access to resources challenge our understanding of traditional marriage in Ireland?

Gender Role Attitudes

Given the degree of structural change that has taken place over the last three decades in Irish society, it is important to track whether general attitudes towards 'gender roles' have shifted (liberalised) over the same period. Comparable studies examining gender role attitudes in Irish society are presented in The European Values Study (Fahey, et al., 2005) and the International Social Survey Programme (O'Sullivan, 2007). The findings from both studies suggest that overall, less traditional gender attitudes were prevalent in Ireland in the early 2000s as compared to the early 80s, the time in which the majority of the respondents were deciding how they would reconcile work and family life.

The studies show that Irish society has now become more accepting of women combining employment with family life. Although support for the homemaker role did decline over the period, a high value still remains on the place of the housewife, with the majority seeing it as just as fulfilling as working for pay. Eleven of the thirty-nine respondents lived in a single income household, in which the female was a stay-at-home mother. The majority (nine of the eleven) of these eleven dependent spouses were in their mid-fifties and married in the late 70s and early 80s. Questions have arisen regarding the impact on children of women's increased labour force participation. Research from O'Sullivan suggests that 41 per cent of Irish respondents agree that a pre-school child suffers if his or her mother works outside the home (O'Sullivan, 2007). Although these results show that the attitudes of Irish society are becoming less traditional overall, there still remains a more traditional attitude towards maternal employment (Russell et al, 2009:70). Consequently, a key research question for this study asks how we can understand mothers in the context of their connections to the wider social structures and their embeddedness in relationships with people and wider social and cultural institutions.

Remnants of Male Breadwinner State

At the time the respondents were entering marriage and starting families and careers (early 80s-mid 90s), the traditional male breadwinner norm was shifting in Irish society, but there were still substantial barriers to achieving a more democratic regime in Irish society. The lack of adequate childcare provision, the gendered nature of employment, and the division of household labour are some of the obstacles that remain in de-institutionalising gender inequality in Irish society.

Families Status and Childcare Provision

Although women's labour force participation rate was increasing, it was highly dependent and controlled by the age and number of their children. Those women with children under 5 years old (pre-school) had the lowest level of maternal employment in 1998 (Russell et al, 2009:17). Participation was also closely linked to the number of children as well as their ages. Russell et al. (2009:27) argues that the financial cost of formal childcare becomes prohibitive when there are two or more children in the family. The provision of public childcare remained low during the period (mid 1980s-early 2000s) the respondents were rearing their young children. According to an OECD (2004) report, childcare provision in Ireland for pre-school children is and has been uncoordinated, variable in quality and in short supply. This finding begs us to ask the question of how separating parents draw upon both formal and informal support in order to reconcile their work and family life.

The National Childcare Strategy went some way in attempting to improve the provision of childcare but the findings from a subsequent OECD report on reconciling work and family life showed despite the improvements, Ireland still had the highest net childcare costs as a proportion of average earnings in the OECD (OECD, 2007: 156). Women in Irish society are still considered by themselves and others to be the primary carers for the young and other dependent members of the family (O'Sullivan, 2007) and there is evidence that this affected the division of labour in the respondents' households both before and after the separation.

Type of Employment

In addition to the overall gender difference in labour force participation, there is also a significant difference in the nature of participation in terms of hours worked and earning capacity. In 1998, at a time when over two thirds of the women in the sample were working, the average number of hours worked per week by women in paid employment was 33 hours compared to 42.9 hours among men (Russell et al., 2009:28). Twelve of the twenty-nine households included in the sample were one-and-a-half-income households. Many of the women in this study engaged in part-time work, which is strongly associated with low hourly rates of pay. In such situations, the contribution of a significantly lesser amount to the family income can be seen as supplemental rather than an essential contribution and can weaken the women's 'voice' to negotiate power relations within families (Morris, 1987 as cited in Hobson, 1990:238).

Change in Domestic Roles

Women's growing employment in paid labour did not necessarily bring about a renegotiation of domestic roles and the organisation of domestic labour in Ireland. The reality is still far from a fully individualised, autonomous self-sufficient family. Hobson (1990) outlined that nearly every study of the division of paid and unpaid labour confirms that women, no matter what level of earnings, still take the responsibility for unwaged household work. According to research undertaken within Irish families, these findings were supported as women were still performing the bulk of unpaid work during the 1990s (Kiely, 1996). Kiely's research into how responsibility for household tasks are distributed demonstrated that men participate in less than 6 per cent of hovering, ironing, dishes and shopping, but more than three-quarters of Irish men are responsible for household repairs (1996:147). It appears that the pattern of unpaid work has not changed as quickly as the pattern of paid work. This study will examine how men are involved in childcare and domestic tasks both before and after separation. Is there any evidence of greater gender symmetry in domestic tasks?

Changing Role of Women

As discussed in the section above, Irish families have witnessed significant changes in the patterns of working and family lives over the past few decades. O'Connor (1995) argued that these changes in the family and marriage can best be understood through focusing on women in society. In the decade 1996-2006, the employment rate for women aged 15-64 increased from 43.2 per cent to 58.8 per cent (Central Statistics Office, 2006). There are wider social implications of changes in women's labour market participation, namely 1) ability to reconcile work and family life 2) less financial dependence on men and 3) greater autonomy.

Increasingly, families are more likely to be joint income earners/breadwinners, who share parenting or/and pay childcare for their children. The roles of wives and mothers are shifting from the 'dependent homemaker' to the 'dual earner' and post-separation parents continue to reconcile the demands of both mothers' public and private life. Some of the challenges for families outlined by Daly (2004) concerned the ability of custodial parents to reconciling work and family life. The study showed that more custodial and non-custodial parents are working, which results in less time being available for family responsibilities. In particular, this study looks at how women manage to reconcile the growing pressure to spend long hours in paid work and their caring role in the home.

The entry of women into the workforce has also lessened their financial dependence on men. Separated women are less reliant on an ex-spouse for income and it is relatively rare for wives to be paid spousal maintenance (The Court Services, 2007a:28). This research will examine which factors constrain women from re-entering the workforce post separation and how this affects wider work and social integration. .

The research will examine whether labour force participation shapes women's autonomy upon separation. How are intimate relationships being shaped by women's increased labour force participation?. Hobson's (1990: 236) perspective is that an independent income gives women a 'voice' to negotiate power relations within families, and an 'exit' to opt out of unsatisfactory relationships. Overall women are less dependent on men as they are able to pursue their own careers, have fewer children and spend less time in

marriages when they become unhappy. These changes point to the development of women as an individual with a life of her own – not a life of a dependent housewife and mother.

Changing Nature of Marriage

There have been wide discussions about how the emergence of new gender roles outside the domestic sphere has impacted on the position of the roles inside the domestic sphere (Giddens, 1992; Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 1995). It is argued that the shift towards more egalitarian ideologies at a macro level has altered the way males and females interact within relationships too, i.e. at the micro level (Giddens, 1992). Limited Irish research evidence on intimacy and relationships outlined how individuals have moved from a concept of marriage as an ‘economic relationship’ to a ‘feminised concept of love’, i.e. a stress on intimacy and emotional closeness (O’Connor, 1995). Although Fahy and Fields (2008) acknowledge that little is understood about the transformation of intimacy and Irish families, they state that emotional closeness, mutual understanding and reciprocity are widely held values within families. Implicit in this new form of romantic love are the supremacy of relationship aspects and the devaluation of financial support and practical help. Thus the ideal of permanence (‘till death do us part’) is no longer seen as good in itself and individuals may feel justified in terminating an inadequate relationship. This study will examine how the marital relationship is understood by the respondents and the meanings this has in identifying new forms of intimacy.

Comparable studies attempting to understand the key elements of a marriage in Irish society are presented in a study which examined the characteristics of those who sought the services of AIM¹⁷ (O’ Riagain, 1995). The findings from both studies suggest that relational aspects of the relationship are the most vital for Irish marriages, i.e. a certain level of intimacy, communication and shared interest is expected in the relationship. The

¹⁷ AIM is a marriage and mediation advice and counselling service in Ireland. On foot of the establishment of the Joint Oireachtas Committee to look at marital breakdown in Ireland, the Family Mediation Service was set up in 1986. In 2003 the Family Support Agency Act came into operation establishing the Family Support Agency and the Family Mediation Service came under the umbrella of the Agency. The out of court, independent mediation model that the Service offers facilitates collaborative negotiation and encourages disputants to work together to solve their problems.

research will examine what meaning separating parents give to marriage and their marital relationship. Does their understanding of personal relationships challenge contemporary understandings of marriages in Ireland?

O'Connor's (2001) qualitative analysis of distressed marriages in Ireland provided some key insight into the central themes, issues and dynamics that are presented by couples at marriage counselling. In an Irish context, it represents one of the only examinations of distressed marriages, and examines what is 'at stake' for couples in distress. Some of the key themes included: independence and freedom, affiliation and belonging, power and control, respect and equality, safety and commitment and emotional distance. O'Connor (2001) claims that issues concerning values, ethics and justice are what couples are seeking in marriage today. Consequently, marriage is being viewed as a personal relationship where intimacy is achieved and sustained rather than simply ascribed through marital status.

One of the most notable changes in society that was found in recent statistical releases on marriages is the extent to which couples are marrying at older ages. As outlined in the previous section, the average age of marriage in Ireland had increased to 33.1 years for men and 31 years for women in 2005 (Fahey and Field, 2008) from 30.1 and 28.7 respectively in 1990. This deferral of marriage suggests that individuals are prioritising their own well-being and financial stability over the notion of marrying and starting a family. Cherlin (2004) described how individuals assure that they develop a fulfilling, independent self before marrying, instead of sacrificing oneself to one's partner.

O'Connor (1995:141) points to negotiation within marriage as one of a number of factors which make sense of changes/continuities in marriage and family life in Ireland during the mid-nineties. In her research, O'Connor argued that much of the negotiation that is occurring within marriages is a reflection of the rise of individualism, i.e. individuals construct a social order based on agreement rather than on the basis of traditional patterns of patriarchy. Traditionally roles within marriage were prescribed through gender. Given the increase in gender equality in Irish society and the rise in female autonomy, roles

within marriage and families are now being negotiated rather than dictated. Individual autonomy allows each individual to possess equal rights and for each individual to have the freedom to make their own decisions. However, O'Connor is also quick to highlight that the assumption that negotiation between spouses takes place between equals ignores the fact that male power, rooted in economic control inside and outside the family remains an important reality. It is difficult to know to what extent negotiations are actually occurring, and this research goes some way in exploring this aspect.

Conclusion

These developments raise the question of whether we have reached at both the macro and micro levels a more gender equal society. As outlined above, there is evidence that we have reached a greater level of equality in our society through legislative, cultural and behavioural changes. Ireland has made a modest ideological shift towards gender equality in the labour market and public responsibility for children. The relationship between motherhood and employment has had a significant impact on changing behaviours and attitudes to gender roles. However, it appears as if there is still much more to be done in order to reach a more democratic society. Despite changes in the understanding and meaning of intimate relationships, marriage is still hampered by patriarchal power relations. The structural and attitudinal shifts from male breadwinning to a more egalitarian regime are slow to trickle down into all areas of society. Childcare provision and men's engagement in household labour are two key areas which could assist in providing greater equality between men and women. Given the changes that are needed it is still questionable whether the democratisation of Irish society has actually occurred. As depicted in Jane Lewis's (1992) article on distinguishing welfare regimes by the extent to which they can be described as 'male-breadwinner, it appears as if Ireland has shifted to a 'modified male-breadwinner regime' rather than a social democratic state.

Family Policy and Marital Breakdown

Introduction

This section examines how the state has addressed problems that families experience due to marital breakdown. Many of the respondents in this study expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of policies, services and state support for parents and children at a time of separation. The development of Irish family policy has been driven largely by the decline of patriarchal familism (family equals the primary social institution) which took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Fahy, 1998). At that stage, coinciding with the wider social movement of women's rights internationally, there was an upsurge in egalitarian individualism which promoted a greater awareness in equality and gender issues in policies (Fahy, 1998). The Irish State (and policies) no longer held the same assumptions as general societal perceptions of family relationships and obligations: e.g. the presumption that only a nuclear family constituted a family.¹⁸ Other factors which provided an impetus to improve policy were demands to support families in distressed marriages, improve protection for children living in separated families, encourage parent-child relationships and support fathers as a means of strengthening families.

Several key developments took place in the late 1980s and 1990s which altered the way the state was supporting families. Firstly, state policies attempted to reduce conflict and support families by setting up the Family Mediation Service in 1986. The services facilitated collaborative negotiation and encouraged separating parents to work together to solve problems. Secondly, the Irish government prioritised children with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thirdly, maintaining parent-child relationship was encouraged with the introduction of the Children's Act (new piece of legislation in 2001). Fourthly, The Final Report of the

¹⁸ The support for the nuclear family was constitutionally protected as the state guaranteed to 'protect the family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State' (1937, Article 41). In the years following the enactment of the Constitution, the 'policy paradigm' that existed followed the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic social teachings influenced the assumptions, ideals and images about the family and the state-family relationship (Fahey, 1998). The tradition of non-involvement by the state in the family was defined by the principle of subsidiarity which acted as one of the primary influences on the implementation of family policy in Ireland (Kiely and Richardson, 1995).

Commission on the Family: Strengthening Families for Life (Commission on the Family, 1998) reviewed existing provisions to make recommendations on how policy could help to strengthen families by focusing explicitly on fathers. The Commission emphasised the importance of support for family and for marriage, but also recognised increasing heterogeneity of family forms and lifestyle. Policies began to focus on relationships rather than solely on family structures.

Reduce Conflict and Support Families

On foot of the establishment of the Joint Oireachtas Committee to look at marital breakdown in Ireland, the Family Mediation Service was set up in 1986. In 2003 the Family Support Agency Act came into operation establishing the Family Support Agency and the Family Mediation Service came under the umbrella of the Agency. The out-of-court, independent mediation model that the Service offers facilitates collaborative negotiation and encourages disputants to work together to solve their problems. The goal of mediation is to reach an agreement and avoid lengthy adversarial court battles.

Alternative methods for resolving family disputes and supporting families were adopted by the State at a time when international research evidence indicated that divorce per se was not the cause of children's distress when parents separated but high levels of conflict between the parents caused more distress (Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, 1978, 1982). Irish research evidence supported these findings, Hogan et al (2002) recommended that family policy focused on the promotion of co-operation between parents in decision-making about the reorganisation of family life after separation and encouraged parents to develop collaborative parenting relationships. McKeown and Sweeney (2001:64) found that the well-being of parents and children is shaped primarily by family processes, particularly processes involving the ability to resolve conflicts and arguments. They urged that future family policy focus on programmes which can demonstrate effectiveness in minimising or resolving conflict and instability between parents.

Family policies began to be re-modelled in ways that they could support parents and families and reduce the risk of potentially damaging events for children. Alternative

dispute resolution services were one means of facilitating negotiations for parenting arrangements. These measures found that some of the reasons for the persistently low levels of attendance at mediation were that the mediated agreement has no legal status and the agreement needs to be taken to a solicitor and drawn up into a legal Deed of Separation or a legally binding contract before it can be relied upon. The study will explore the factors that impact on separating parents' choice of negotiation process and service.

Prioritisation of Children

A move towards children's rights is an identifiable trend in the current policy in Ireland, in particular the introduction of political rights for children (with a special emphasis on their right to participate in decisions which directly affect them). Family policy, as with legislation, is now recognising that it is the right of the child and not the adult to have contact. Expressed in a legislative form from the perspective of the child and not the adult, it is the right of each child 'to know and be cared for by his or her parents' (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 7 paragraph 1) and to maintain personal relationship and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 9, paragraph 3).¹⁹ The parental relationship with the child is expressed clearly in policy and law even when relationships between parents are legally terminated. The questions which therefore arise are: how do parents negotiate over their children in this new context? How are lawyers and the courts implementing the legislation? Are mothers or fathers consequently disadvantaged in particular ways?

The lack of a constitutional protection for children has been noted in a number of reports and submissions (Barnardos, 2007; Treoir, 2005). In order to secure the rights of children, there have been calls for a Constitutional Amendment on children's rights from several lobby groups representing the interests of children²⁰. The National Children's Strategy,

¹⁹ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by Ireland in 1992.

²⁰ The Tenth Progress Report on the Family provides a focus on the place and relevance of the Constitution and the areas where the Constitutional change may be necessary. The All Party reviewed all the submissions made by the various lobby groups which were seeking a change in the constitutional protection of families, children, women, fathers, lone parents, cohabiting and homosexual couples.

which was launched in 2000, set out a broad-ranging framework of children's rights and services. One of the objectives of the National Children's Strategy, launched by the Government in November 2000 is that children will have a voice in matters which affect them. Hogan et al. (2002) called for the definition and protection of the rights of children under Irish law, through legislation (Hogan et al. 2002:116). They also called for family policy relating to marital breakdown to be child-centred and focused on the development needs and rights of the individual child (Hogan et al. 2002:116). This study therefore explores whether from the parents' perspective, the voice of the child is being heard, how it is being heard and how the parents evaluate this process.

Maintaining Parent-Child Relationships

The Children's Act (2001) encouraged families to maintain relationships post-separation. As time elapsed and more families were experiencing marital breakdown, research evidence grew that parent-child relationships (particularly father-child relationships) were not being maintained. Kiely (2001) suggested that policies need to be developed that offer greater support to fathers after separation in helping to mediate an ongoing parenting role after the termination of a partner relationship. McKeown (2001) outlined the need for both proactive and preventative policy measures to ensure the relational well-being of families.

At this stage the aim of policies shifted to focus on children of divorce and their right to maintain close contact with both parents. One of the core principles set out in the Commission on the Family stated that 'joint parenting should be encouraged with a view to ensuring as far as possible that children have the opportunity of developing close relationships with both parents which is in the interests both of children and their parents'(1996:14). There is a closer focus for family support on parenthood and parenting (as against marriage). Parental responsibilities are more emphasised today with the financial obligations of fathers being especially reinforced.

Murphy and Caffrey (2010) research identified the need for state support for families in the way of child contact centres for parents and children experiencing contact difficulties

following marriage and relationship breakdown. Although the study was based on the experiences of a small sample comprising mainly of non-marital relationships, the findings highlight how some parents need state support (neutral venue) to facilitate contact with their children. Murphy and Caffrey (2009) demonstrated the need for such services which would provide handover, supported and supervised services. This study will explore the types of families and situations that require such support. In the absence of such services, the study will also examine how families are experiencing hostile handovers.

Strengthening Families through Fathers

The Final Report of the Commission on the Family; *Strengthening Families for Life* (Commission on the Family, 1998) depicted a social concern about the changing status of fatherhood. It argued that father involvement has been excluded across all sectors of society, including birthing practices, in work, in the legal sphere and in the area of statutory services (1998:406). These arguments were supported with research evidence at the time that encouraged public debate on fathering. McKeown et al. (1998) found that the association of parenting with mothering rather than fathering meant that most support services for families (particularly lone parent families) tended to avoid fathers. Additionally some fathers also reported particular difficulties in relation to how they were viewed by service providers, by their own families and by neighbours. (Russell and Corcoran, 2000: 29). In a comprehensive overview of the policy developments needed to support fathers with parenting, Ferguson and Hogan (2004) outlined that all agencies who work with children and families develop explicit father-inclusive policies and practices. Research evidence in the area of marital breakdown showed that most men found post-separating fathering a very challenging experience (Corcoran, 2005, Kiely, 2001; McKeown, Ferguson and Rooney, 1998). One study showed that the majority of post-separated fathers reported that they had experienced negative feeling states as a result of their current situations, including susceptibility to depressive disorders, repressed feelings of anger or suicidal tendencies (Corcoran, 2005:150). Corcoran's research findings demonstrated the father's willingness to commit to their children and to embody a fathering role, even in the face of institutional, social and economic barriers.

The agenda for change, stipulated in the Commission on the Family, included a constitutional declaration enshrining ‘the equal rights of the father and mother to the guardianship of their child where the child is conceived through consent, irrespective of whether both parents live together’ (1998: 434). The legislative focus on children’s welfare, which seeks to maintain children’s relationships with both parents, necessitates policy to assist and support the father’s continued involvement in the child’s life. Court statistics show that fathers are looking to become more involved with their children as the courts are now receiving a greater number of custody and access applications. In 2008, the courts dealt with 5,027 custody and access applications. These figures lead me to ask questions about how the significant changes in the field of family law are being experienced by, in particular, separated fathers.

The men’s and fathers’ rights movement is actively seeking justice for themselves in respect to contact with their children.²¹ The fathers’ group in Ireland have some normative assumptions in common: that fathers are excluded and discriminated against; that children need fathers; that the legal system is biased against fathers and favours mothers; and that non-resident fathers have no voice. Activists in the fathers’ rights movement advocated that fathers and mothers should have roles in child rearing that were as equivalent as possible. Although the meaning and importance of fatherhood has shifted in family policy, the legal understanding of fatherhood, at times, remains unchanged and reflects the resonant breadwinner model of paternal responsibility. The implication for biological non-resident fatherhood is obligatory financial support for their children. The principal aim of the father’s rights activism campaign is around the area of law reform, particularly in relation to post-separation contact. It appears that there is a disjuncture between law, gender and social change in which men feel they are the victims of family law cases. This study will examine these claims and explore how fathers’ rights and responsibilities are matched with new practices of pre and post-separation fatherhood.

²¹ On foot of the highly controversial G case, (T v O and the Attorney General, Supreme Court, 22 November 2007) the Family Lawyers Association called on the Irish Government to copy the British government and “follow the example of the legislation that would improve the situation of unmarried fathers of children to allow them custody rights” (The Irish Times, Roche, B (2007) ‘Call for new legislation to help unmarried fathers’, 30 November 2007)

Conclusion

Ireland has made a modest ideological shift towards gender equality in the labour market and public responsibility from children. The current study takes place at a time where there does appear to be a relatively recent cultural change in terms of supporting family practices rather than the nuclear family specifically (Fahy, 1998). However, many of the men and women in the study talked about how services and structures are not addressing their specific needs – the mediation service is underutilised, parents felt that the needs of the child weren't being met and many fathers felt that they were prevented (by the courts and mothers) from developing ongoing relationship with their children. The implications of this for separating/divorcing parents are discussed in this thesis.

Legal Context of Separation and Divorce

Family law and legal change are other important aspects of the context for understanding parents' experiences of separation and divorce. The legal framework surrounding marriage breakdown affects parents' experiences of how they manage to live apart, parent apart, divorce and remarry. In this section the study maps out the legislative context for Irish family law, covering firstly the key objectives of divorce legislation, secondly the development of parental rights and thirdly the welfare principle.

Divorce and Separation Legislation

Almost all of the research participants in this study cite legislation in relation to separation and divorce as one of the key factors for influencing their experience of separation. The empirical chapters which follow explore how certain elements of family law legislation in Ireland affected parents' ability to move on with their lives after the breakdown of their marriage. In order to understand these experiences, it is necessary to assess the bases on which a divorce and separation can be granted. A detailed history of divorce, including the two referenda, is outlined by the author in other studies (see Burley and Regan, 2007; Moore, 2009; Mahon and Moore, 2011). It is sufficient to state that in 1995 the government published the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution Bill which proposed the deletion of the prohibition on divorce from Article 41.3.2. The 1996 Act

came into operation on 27 February 1997. The grounds for divorce under the 1996 Act are as follows:

- (i) at the date of the institution of the proceedings, the spouses have lived apart from one another for a period of, or periods amounting to, at least four years during the previous five years,*
- (ii) there is no reasonable prospect of a reconciliation between the spouses ,*
- (iii) such provision as the court considers proper having regard to the circumstances exists or will be made for the spouses, any children or either or both of them and any other person prescribed by law, and*
- (iv) any further conditions prescribed by law are complied with.*

One of the main requirements of the legislation that was relevant for the respondents and frequently cited by the respondents is that a divorce is only permitted after an extensive period of living apart. This provision in the legislation was an attempt to allay fears about the effect of divorce on children and what happens to children in the context of marriage breakdown. Ward (1995:1) argued that this particular condition, the time needed before their divorce case can proceed, is 'extremely restrictive.' It was clear that this objective attempted to give couples time to think about the divorce, in an attempt by the state to reduce the incidence of divorce. There was a belief that what was required to stabilise marriage was to impose restrictions through the law on divorce that could actually prevent (prolong the timing of) unhappy marriages ending.

The second requirement under Section 5 of the 1996 Act provides that before embarking on proceedings, the spouses must be made aware of the possibility of reconciliation and the alternatives to divorce. Section 8 (1) of the 1996 Act is designed to ensure that only those marriages that have *irretrievably* broken down may obtain a divorce as there is no prospect of reconciliation.²² The extent to which this condition is fulfilled is further secured and governed under Section 6 and 7 of the 1996 Act, whereby lawyers are

²² Mc Guinness J in *E.P. v C.P.* expressed herself to be satisfied that the breakdown of the marriage was irretrievable and stated 'Both parties accept that there is no reasonable prospect of reconciliation.' [*E.P. v C.P.* 27 November 1998 High Court (unreported)]

obliged to discuss with both the applicant and respondent the prospect of reconciliation and mediation. These provisions suggest that the legislature's objective was to ensure that individuals were given information on the various options for the resolution of difficulties, including the availability of marriage support services and mediation. The growing emphasis on mediation encouraged parents to resolve the difficulties themselves and to avoid using the courts as a means of obtaining a settlement. This point raises the following research questions: has the emphasis on alternative dispute resolution shifted the momentum in favour of amicable settlements? How do parents negotiate over their children in this new context; how has the process of dejuridification affected the respondents in the sample? .

The 1996 Act, by virtue of section 5(1) (c), projects the message that divorced spouses, as stated by Murray J, 'continue to respect and fulfil certain obligations deriving from their dissolved marriage for their mutual protection and welfare, usually of a financial nature'.²³ This provision attempted to revive fears that women and children would be impoverished following a separation or divorce. Given the constitutional directive to uphold the woman's place in the home in Article 41, the question which arises is therefore what are the consequences of this legislation for separated women? How has the legislation protected dependent homemakers financially upon separation? And what are the intended or unintended consequences of this legislative protection for the dependent spouse and the breadwinner? One of the clear features of the 1996 Act is that there is no provision for a 'clean break' in the legislation.²⁴ If there are changes in the circumstances of either party after the date of the decree, either party can seek variations to orders at any time after the divorce.²⁵ This lifelong commitment to a spouse and child re-emphasised the significance and primacy of marriage.

²³ DT v CT [2003] 1 ILRM 321

²⁴ This concept related more significantly to the period between the separation and divorce. In many situations, spouses revisited previous separation agreements four years later when applying for a divorce. Although some of the separation agreements were, at the time deemed as full and final, all conditions and factors were reviewed at the time of divorce.

²⁵ Abbott J stated in J.C. v M.C. that the variation of a maintenance order was possible after a divorce [In J.C. v M.C., 22 January 2007, High Court (unreported)]

Finally the fourth objective attempts to decrease the hostility between the parties. The Irish legislators opted for a ‘no fault’ divorce system, based on the experience in other jurisdictions, where an adversarial system was seen to increase acrimony and have negative effects on the parent-child relationships (Mahon and Moore, 2011). As a result, the behaviour of the parents does not influence the award of custody (unless in extreme cases of violence, sexual abuse). As Shatter (1997:13.44) described ‘an award of custody is not a prize for good matrimonial behaviour.’ The ‘no fault’ divorce legislation facilitated the application of the best interests of the children in decision making for parenting arrangements (Shatter, 1997: 547). However, as will be discussed in this thesis, the respondents still used fault as a means of discrediting their spouse’s character and suitability as a carer.

Guardianship, Custody and Access

In order to gain an insight into the respondents’ specific experience of family break-up it is important to understand how the law regulates their relationship with their children once they are separated. Custody orders in matrimonial proceedings in Ireland are now governed under Section 9 of the Children Act 1997 (hereafter referred to as the 1997 Act), (Shannon 2005). This section makes it clear that it is possible to award custody to both the mother and the fathers jointly (‘joint custody’).

In order to fully understand what these legal terms mean for the respondents in the sample, it is essential to explicate and understand the distinction between guardianship, custody and access. Guardianship relates to the duties of a person as to the welfare, care and upbringing of a child.²⁶ It is not dependent on custody. Custody relates to the day-to-day care and control of a child. As Shatter (1997) highlighted, the right to custody of a child is one of the rights that arises under the guardianship relationship. A custody order does not have the effect of re-allocating guardianship between the parents. Upon divorce both parents retain guardianship which means that both parents retain the right to be involved in issues relating to the welfare of the child, e.g. schooling, religious or medical issues. Given that there is legislative protection for parental involvement post separation,

²⁶ Section 11 of the 1964 Act permits any person being a guardian of an infant to apply to the court for its direction on any question affecting the welfare of the infant.

a key question posed by this study is how both mothers and fathers experience parental involvement post separation.

Upon separation, custody vests in the parent with whom the child primarily resides. In many cases parents share the custody of the children. Research evidence on common parent-child arrangements post separation demonstrated that there are a variety of arrangements that exist which can be arranged either formally (through the courts) or informally, i.e. between the parents themselves without a court order (Mahon and Moore, 2011: 62). In situations where one parent is refused custody, he/she may apply for access to a child. Access essentially permits a parent/person who has acted in loco parentis (e.g. grandparent) to meet and/or communicate with a child.²⁷ It is essential to remember that access is a right of the child and that it should only be denied if it is not in the best interests of the child.

Nowadays there is an increased number of joint custody orders following separation, which is seen as giving effect to maintaining parent-child relationships (Mahon and Moore, 2011). Shannon and Power (1998:1) suggested that an award of joint custody is a means to engage more paternal involvement post-breakdown. However, he argued that it is most applicable in cases where there is 1) a high degree of contact between the child and both parents, 2) where the pre-breakdown relationship with both parents is of high quality and 3) where the level of acrimony between the parents is not unduly high. This is only achieved in reality if there is full cooperation between the parents (Mahon and Moore, 2011:62).

Welfare Principle

Applications relating to guardianship, custody and/or access are assessed according to the welfare principle. This principle is defined in the legislation under Section 2 of the 1964 Act and incorporates the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social welfare of the child. Section 3 of the 1964 Act states ‘Where in any proceedings before any court the custody, guardianship or upbringing of an infant, or the administration of any property

²⁷ Section 11(2) The court may by an order under this section— (a) give such directions as it thinks proper regarding the custody of the infant and the right of access to the infant of his father or mother.

belonging to or held on trust for an infant, or the application of the income thereof, is in question, the court, in deciding that question, shall regard the welfare of the infant as the first and paramount consideration.’ While the principle is defined and provides the basis for making arrangements for the child, there are difficulties in assessing how these factors should be viewed.

Most of the terms in the legislation, such as joint guardianship, custody and access, refer to the parental right to the child. However, the welfare principle endorses the idea that the child’s best interests are paramount. This shift in focus away from parental rights to the rights of the child was needed. The shift focused attention away from the issues of marital breakdown and attempted to encourage the relationship (contact) between both parents and the child. The degree to which this was successful and parents’ experience of ongoing contact post separation will be explored in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the demographic, normative, policy and legislative context in which the respondents in this sample were entering and leaving their marriages and provided a necessary background to the empirical chapters which follow in Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Irish society in 2008 (time when respondents separated) has ideologically moved on from the society of the 1980s, a time when most respondents entered marriage. The chapter presented cultural, gender and market-related inequalities that existed twenty years ago and those that remain in today’s society. It described how family policy has attempted to support relationships within families (parent-child) rather than families per se. Finally the chapter described changes in the legal context which were no-fault based, more child-centred and encouraged joint parenting.

These key changes in the legislative context shape the focus of the next chapter, the literature review. The literature review will focus on separating and divorcing couples as a way of assessing how divorce legislation and possibly the no-fault conflict approach is having an impact on separating couples and in particular on their relationship with children post divorce. The no-fault based divorce system introduced in Ireland creates an

environment in which parents are not penalised for poor behaviour during the marriage. This system is designed to decrease hostility at the point of separation so that parents could, despite the termination of their spousal relationship, maintain a cordial co-parental relationship for joint parenting. Secondly Irish family law legislation adopted a non-interventionist stance, particularly in relation to decisions about the care of the children. Separating couples are encouraged to arrange their own parenting arrangement as much as possible with a growing emphasis on mediation and alternative forms of dispute resolution. Therefore the research questions relating to post separation focus more on the separating and divorcing couples themselves rather than any strong influence that the legislation may have. Irish family law legislation prioritises joint custody and joint guardianship as a way of encouraging co-parenting and keeping fathers involved. As such, both parents are permitted to engage in parenting post separation. In light of this, the research will examine the extent to which such encouragement is impacting on separating couples and in particular on the parent-children relationship post separation.

Chapter 3: Family and Intimate Relationships

Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical context for the analysis of changing family and intimate relationships (particularly at a time of separation). The phrase ‘intimate relationship’ is a broad and fluid term, and can include any number of associations between family, kin, sexual partners etc. This review focuses on how sociological constructions of family and intimate relationships have evolved over the years, exploring how different sociological perspectives (at a macro and micro level) explain changes in family and personal relationships.

This thesis takes, as a starting point, two of the most influential and controversial of the current grand theories used by sociologists in this area – that is, the ‘democratisation’ and the ‘individualisation’ theses. The democratisation thesis argues that the dramatic shifts in social life signalled by developments such as globalisation, late modernity, and post-industrialisation, have led to greater equality in social life. This theory, especially as articulated in the work of Giddens (1992) in *The Transformation of Intimacy*, gives rise to the conception of ‘the pure relationship’ and ‘confluent love’ (see Giddens, 1992, 1994). Giddens (1992:184) argues that the democratisation of (macro) society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within (micro) intimate relationships. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s individualisation thesis purports an image that the new age of modernity has replaced the old structures of industrial society, bringing new risks and opportunities (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002). The individualisation thesis claims that, in reflexive modernity and the risk society individuals are left to shape their own destinies, what is referred to as ‘a choice biography’ which people create for themselves. In essence, these grand theorists argue that the radical shifts in personal relations represent a transformation and decisive break away from traditional family relationships.

After outlining Giddens's and Beck and Beck Gernsheim's arguments I examine some aspects of the critique of these theses from mainly feminist perspectives (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart, 1999) including a discussion on how empirical studies show that intimacy and inequality (gender and class) continue to coexist in many personal lives. They argue that personal relationships remain highly gendered (Bott, 1971; Edgwell, 1980; Hertz, 1986; Jamieson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999). These social commentators believe that changes in personal relationships are best explained by a 'continuity and diversity approach'. While accepting that there has been a change in personal relationships, these empirical studies tend to suggest a slower shift, by portraying the diversity as well as the continuity of changing personal relationships.

Democratisation / Individualisation Thesis

One of the most contentious theoretical approaches in explaining the momentous significance of the change to personal relationships over the last twenty years has been Antony Giddens's 'democratisation thesis' which is set out in "*The Transformation of Intimacy*" (Giddens, 1992). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995, 2002) have, amongst others, added the idea of the emergence of a new social order of 'reflexive modernity' which they claim has led to the transformation in personal relationships. This thesis will focus on both of their theses.

According to Giddens, people are seeking intimate connections with others that are maintained on the basis of mutual knowledge and understanding. This 'pure relationship', which is embodied by confluent love, is dependent on partners opening up to each other. He claims that such relationships are in the ascendancy and are transforming intimacy and the nature of self-identity (Giddens, 1992). This type of love and relationship is not built around traditional ties of obligation and permanence but continue so far as both parties feel that the relationship 'delivers':

A pure relationship is one in which external criteria have become dissolved: the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship can deliver. In the

context of the pure relationship, trust can be mobilised only by a process of mutual disclosure. (Giddens, 1991:6)

This explanation of 'the pure relationship' moves on from the romantic notion of 'till death do us part' love. The 'romantic love complex' placed an emphasis on finding the right partner and a permanent love. However the idea of permanence is no longer enough and an individual may feel the need to terminate a marriage. One of the most important features of this new form of intimacy is that it is negotiated between individuals, so that they themselves decide on how they want to live out their lives, communicate and work together.

Giddens argues that the transformation of intimacy reflects a 'wholesale democratisation of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere' (1992:3). With this, he maintains that changes which occur within society as a whole (globalisation, industrialisation, liberalisation) lead to simultaneous changes within the more intimate relationships. The democratisation of (macro) society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within (micro) intimate relationships. This point raises the question of the extent to which gender equality amongst couples is more evident in today's society. Are women becoming more autonomous within intimate relationships and are they suitably empowered to make decisions which affect their well-being?

Giddens maintains that the rise of confluent relationships is undermining the traditional heterosexual marriage which was subject to patriarchal power relations. In a confluent relationship both women and men have an equal footing but he acknowledges that male power in the traditional family has not changed as quickly (1992:131). Interestingly, the main examples he cites for such confluent relationships are gay and lesbian relationships. He identifies homosexual individuals as 'pioneers' in 'the pure relationship' who are leading the process of individualisation (Giddens, 1992:2).

For Giddens (1992), changes in intimacy come about because individuals understand themselves (reflexive selves) differently and because they are constant agents of change. The essence to his thesis is this notion of the reflexive self ('narrative of the self'), which

has come about in late modernity and is partly the cause of social change (1992:75). He argues that there is a stronger emphasis on the ongoing process of self construction, the 'project of the self', which involves constant change and assessment of oneself. He takes an approach that individuals are active agents, who have brought and continue to seek change from a position of self awareness. This notion of individuals being constant 'agents of change' will be explored in light of respondents' ability to leave a marriage and their ability to change their relationships with the former spouses and children.

Other prominent sociologists, Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck Gernsheim have similarly mapped out the rise of a new social order of 'reflexive modernity', which they claim has led to the changes in personal relationships. Like Giddens they understand marriage and family life in the context of all other changes that are occurring in late modernity. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualisation thesis purports a similar image, i.e. that the new age of modernity has replaced the old structures of industrial society, bringing new risks and opportunities (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002). Similar to Giddens's (1992) thesis that people are reflexive authors of their own biographies rather than following structurally determined pathways, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:13) stipulate that 'the individual must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves.' So, for example, as mothers undertake paid employment labour becomes commodified and the male breadwinner model of family life weakens, which further draws mothers into the labour market. Women see an identity as a paid worker as part of the development of the 'self' as a project. In doing so, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue that gender, class, cultural or race inequalities no longer have the same structuring role that they once had as biographies are now subject to choice and agency and less structured. Institutional changes in welfare state regimes as well as in work and education (like those described in national context) make people's lives less structured and more unpredictable.

Beck and Beck Gernsheim (1995:170) in the *Normal Chaos of Love* argue that these changes have fundamentally altered the experience of love, sexuality and family life placing intimacy as the central core which gives meaning to their lives. They suggest that 'love is the best ideology to counteract the perils of individualisation' (1995:181). Unlike

Giddens, Beck and Beck Gernsheim (1995) include the love for children as a form of intimacy, particularly at a time of separation and divorce. They argue that the love for a child generates new conflict at a time of divorce. This concept is explored throughout this study by focusing on the reconfiguration of the parent-child relationship after separation.

In response to research evidence that claims the family is in decline or subjected to ongoing patriarchal power relations, Giddens argues that there is an 'institutional lag' (1992:154) which is caused in an uneven transition from the romantic relationship to 'the pure relationship'. However, he claims firmly that 'there is only one story to tell about the family today and that is democracy' (1998:93). This thesis therefore critically assesses the assumptions underlying the democratisation and individualisation thesis against the gendered and structured nature of everyday family life as experienced by the respondents of this study and leads us to ask the following questions: Are notions of greater autonomy and freedom expressed in the accounts of separated parents in this study? Do they demonstrate an ability to negotiate different lifestyles once they are outside the marital relationship? If they are not, what factors are impeding them from doing so? There are, however, several limitations to their theses and the following section outlines how opinions diverge on many aspects.

Critiques of Democratisation and Individualisation Thesis

There is an extensive body of critique of the democratisation and individualisation thesis based on wide-ranging research evidence of the changes in personal relations conducted mainly by feminists (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart, 1999). Although these critics accept the idea of changes in the patterning of personal relationships, they disagree with two fundamental concepts of the thesis. Firstly they argue that the extent and realisation of the degree of change has been vastly overstated. Secondly, they stipulate that structural (gender, legal and socio-economic factors) conditions in which choices are made profoundly affect the changes in personal relationships (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart and Neale, 1999). It is also argued that it is impossible to

efficiently address notions of the self and agency if 'bits of the social are parcelled up and put aside' (Smart and Neale, 1999:7).

Overstated Claims

Many feminists claim that the democratisation of personal relationships, supported by Giddens, is not a new tendency. The idea of the 'companionate marriage' emerged post-World War II to consolidate and stabilise family life. In a comprehensive review of the ideas of 'the pure relationship', Lynn Jamieson cited several studies dating back to the beginning in the eighteenth century which map out the trends for the ever increasingly intimate and individualised nature of personal relationships (1999:480). Findings from these studies demonstrated that the changing emphasis for personal relationships was on partnership, reciprocity and greater equality between the sexes. Smart and Neale (1999:8) also argue that such research provided the foundation for Giddens's conceptual framework developed in his thesis. Therefore they challenge Giddens's failure to engage with feminist scholarship on notions of changing intimacy, on which his thesis is based (Jamieson, 1999: 482; Smart, 2007). Overall, they argue that the concept of the transformation of intimacy is not entirely new and more recognition of other significant contributions should be included in his thesis. Although they do not argue that this negates his thesis, they see this as a weakness.

The acceptance of the democratisation and individualisation thesis, in the absence of any detailed empirical evidence has also been subject to critique. Brannen and Nilsen argue that the individualisation thesis, despite its general acceptance, has neither been tested nor operationalised adequately through appropriate research designs and conceptualisations (2005:413). Jamieson (1999:482) commented on the difficulty of verifying or disproving Giddens's 'broad-sweep account' of the transformation in intimacy in the absence of substantial evidence. Ill-prepared to give the thesis the benefit of the doubt and in the absence of empirical research evidence, Jamieson sought to examine theoretically, the signs concerning the convergences and divergences from 'the pure relationship' (Jamieson, 1999). These in turn are discussed in the following section.

Evidence of Deviation from 'the pure relationship'

It has been argued that there is considerable research evidence, particularly pertaining to separation and divorce, suggesting a strong deviation away from the purported 'pure relationship'. Central to an understanding of a 'pure relationship' is the notion of mutual disclosure, i.e. the relationship is dependent on partners opening up to each other. The first consideration presented by Jamieson relates to research evidence that indicates that couples in fact rarely 'open up' to each other and disclose their emotions. Vaughan's (as cited in Jamieson, 1999:487) detailed research on uncoupling (how people make transitions out of intimate relationships) demonstrated that uncoupling begins with a secret.²⁸ The process of moving out of the relationship is a unilateral process in which one of the partners begins to feel uncomfortable in the relationship and 'harbours this discontent' for quite some time. The evidence suggests that while one partner harbours this discontent, the other partner may have no sense of loss until the separation is announced. Riessman's (1990) research evidence supports this finding and depicts how individuals experience a long road to divorce. In her research on divorce narratives, Riessman (1990) found that divorcing people described themselves as having been keenly aware of their marital problems for a long time. Couples in both of these research studies did not seek to inhabit 'the pure relationship' but rather their relationships were intended to last, which couples worked to maintain. There was no open disclosure of the 'secret' that had been harboured which deviates significantly from the meaning of a 'pure relationship'. Empirical findings such as these demonstrate how the 'pure relationship' is essentially a theoretical concept.

At the core of the democratisation thesis, is the notion that women and men are more egalitarian in their intimate relationships. However, research evidence suggests that the accounts of uncoupling are highly gendered whereby women feel like they have been pushed out of the marriage and men pull away from the marriage (Walzer and Oles, 2003). The gendered accounts of uncoupling refute the idea of a more democratic

²⁸ Vaughan (1986:11) outlined how all people keep secrets from their intimate partners. She argues that secret-keeping may make all relationships possible but at the same time secrets may contribute to the collapse of the relationships. The secret that is referred to here is, however, different from the other secrets partners keep from each other. The secret is that one partner starts to feel uncomfortable in the relationship.

intimate relationship which would suggest that women also display individualistic narrative accounts of their separation or that men felt they had been displaced out of the marriage. Women's narratives tended to be grounded in collectivist accounts (Walzer and Oles, 2003) in which they expressed feelings of guilt and worry about the effects separation would have on their children (Hardesty and Ganong, 2006). They do not possess the 'freedom' to act independently as their identity and sense of the 'self' includes their position as wife and mother. They exhibit strong concerns about breaking up the family and the consequences for the children when deciding to end a marriage.

According to Giddens's thesis, when 'the pure relationship' ends people go their own way to find another relationship. However in the context of separation and divorce, this notion is hard to achieve. Smart and Neale (1999) argued that Giddens's theory of 'the pure relationship' is incompatible with the divorce process in which there is no 'clean break'. Carol Smart and Bren Neale (1999:18) further challenged Giddens's thesis which appears to be only applicable to financially independent, childless couples. This argument gains further weight when placed in an Irish context. Irish family law legislation, as described in Chapter 2 restricts an individual from 'moving on' quickly due to the lengthy period of reflection required before one can divorce. Additionally, the needs of the first family are considered (preferentially treated) before the demands or needs of dependents in a second relationship.²⁹ As evident, an individual's ability to pursue or exit a relationship is determined by the constraints of family law.

Smart and Neale (1999) also question Giddens's thesis in its failure to address how many parents remain intimate after divorce and develop close co-parental relationships. There is extensive research evidence on post separation parenting which demonstrates how parents develop cooperative 'coparental' (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Smart and Neale, 1999; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992) 'harmonious' (Lund, 1987) or 'communicative' (Simpson et al., 1995) relationships after divorce. Ahrons's (1994) research based on ninety-eight divorced couples in the US also found a group of parents, 'The Perfect Pals', who continued to consider each other best friends and continued to be

²⁹ Section 20 (1) 1996 Family Law Act determine that the needs of any children from a relationship outside of the marriage in question are taken into consideration at the time of determining financial ancillary orders upon divorce, they are given some weight but not deemed equal to the needs of the children in question.

integrated in each other's lives. Although the spousal relationship has been terminated, the parents continue to exhibit intimate practices. Smart and Neale (1999:19) use this example of a relationship that exists and challenges Giddens's thesis, as it pertains only to the 'couple' and fails to analyse other intimate relationships and practices that exist. Giddens's failure to address other forms of personal intimate relationships is perceived as a major weakness of his thesis.

Marginalisation of Children

Jamieson (1999), Smart and Neale (1999) and other feminist theorists have also challenged Giddens's theory on the basis of how he deals with children within the concept of 'the pure relationship'. Giddens's thesis treats children as the 'putative equal of the adult' (1992:191). As part of the move away from traditional times when children were expected to remain silent, Giddens argues that within an intimate democracy, children's voices should count, even though parents need to retain overall control over them. Feminist theorists argue that this assumption can be misleading at a time of separation (Jamieson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999). Irish research evidence from studies on children of divorce suggest that the large majority of children have little involvement in the residential and/or contact arrangements and most children felt that they had not been consulted about the arrangements (Fawcett, 1998; Hogan et al, 2002). This demonstrates how the ideals of democracy and equality can feed into consequences that contradict 'the pure relationship.'

The transformation of intimacy between a father and child after separation does not always occur solely due to the actions of the father alone. Research indicates that after divorce, many men rely on the support of the mother to facilitate the father-child relationship. As Arendall (1997) found, mothers are an important link to fathering post divorce, which is also demonstrated by extensive research evidence outlining the gatekeeping role mothers play at a time of divorce (Fagan and Barnett, 2003; Mc Bride et al., 2005; Sobolewski and King, 2005; Trinder, 2008). The significant dimension of intimacy in many parent-child relationships is not as straightforward as the 'pure relationship' may suggest. A good relationship between some parents and their children is often dependent, as will be discussed later in the study, on the cooperation of others.

Choice and Agency

Central to Giddens's thesis is the claim that individuals are active agents, who have brought and continue to seek change from a position of self awareness. Beck (2002) in particular, claims that there is a decline in the capacity of social institutions to dictate people's biographies. Ideas about individualisation and democratisation have been criticised by feminist theorists because they neglect key social aspects of men's and women's experience according to class, gender, or other structural barriers. According to several theorists, the individualisation thesis over emphasises agency between individual and society by downplaying the role of structure (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005:422; Crow, 2002). It is argued that the democratisation thesis pays little attention to the availability of resources in helping or hindering individuals to make their own choices.

Beck (2002) through his use of the individualisation thesis, has classified social class as a 'shell institution' or 'zombie variable'. However, researchers on divorce and changing family practices have outlined how social class is a crucial factor in understanding people's experiences of contact (and subsequent access to intimate relations) with their children after divorce (Donnelly and Finkelhor, 1993). Research evidence indicated that couples opting for joint custody arrangements (an arrangement in which a higher level of contact is assumed) tended to be two-career families with higher education and higher income levels (Fox and Kelly, 1995; Juby et al, 2005). It was indicated that lower income couples lacked the financial resources to maintain two households and to transport children between the two residences. Differences in income, education and access to transport affected individual's access to their children and therefore affected their ability to develop an intimate relationship with their children. As is demonstrated by the research evidence, many people have no real choice to pursue a 'pure relationship' and agency is constrained in this instance by social class. This leads us to ask how social class and access to financial resources shape the respondent's own biography post separation.

Another implication of this theory is that gender relations have become individualised in late modernity. Smart and Neale (1999:137) claimed that Giddens's use of the self without relating it to a gendered self is a major weakness in his thesis. The

individualisation model asserted that, in effect, women decide for themselves in relation to work issues and aren't tied into having pre-determined gender roles. This suggests that women have a greater degree of freedom to shape their own biography (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 59). However, this theory has been challenged on the basis that equality has not in fact been achieved either in the labour market or in the private sphere with regard to domestic labour (Lewis, 2002: 52). Instead of gender equality being achieved, researchers have found greater 'polarisation of women's employment', whereby there is a marked divergence in the employment rates of mothers depending on the occupational level and level of formal education (Glover and Arber, 1995:165; Irwin, 1999:42). This raises a key question about the different ways women with different educational backgrounds experience work and employment post separation. What does the study tell us about the polarisation of female employment post separation?

Smart and Neale (1999:141) also call for Giddens's ideas on intimacy to be extended and contextualised. They agree that autonomy is valued and sought for but believe that it is constrained, particularly within the post-separation context. For example in the situation of an obdurate parent, the ability of the father, for example, to develop a relationship with the child is constrained by the former partner's willingness to allow the relationship to develop. In such situations, 'the pure relationship' might not be available to all. Feminists challenge Giddens in his failure to reflect on the significance of difference across individuals. Brannen and Nilsen (2005:424) argued that 'to ignore structure is to ignore the possibility of inequalities and differences in resources that are systemic and systematic rather than individual and random.' This point raises the question of how we can study separating parents in the context of their connection to wider social structures and their embeddedness in relationship with institutions.

Other Theories on Understanding Personal Relationships

The democratisation and individualisation thesis is one of the dominant macro-sociological perspectives on contemporary personal relationships. There are however

other sociological theories which may contribute to our understanding of the changing nature of personal relationships for the respondents in this study.

Models of Family and Change

From Functional Families to Symmetrical Families

Functionalist theories in the 1950s suggested that a 'nuclear family' evolved from the response to the needs of modern industrial society. According to Parsons (1952), industrialisation brought the need for a specialised, mobile labour force, which freed individuals from kin. As such, from a Parsonian perspective, the family and family relationships evolved from fulfilling the purpose of economic production and consumption, to performing the role of socialising children and stabilising adults. Personal relationships were understood by a clear sex role distinction that prevailed with women caring for children in the home and men providing financially for the family.

However, empirical studies throughout the 50s and 60s undermined the notion of the nuclear family, which was built on functionalist and adaptive accounts that the family acted as a unit and were isolated from wider family and kin. Bott (1971:102) outlined that 'the highly developed division of labour in an industrial society produces not only complexity but also variability.' It was found that the industrial system did not have the same effect on all personal relationships, consequently the degree of isolation varied and with it the patterning of conjugal roles (Bott, 1971). Further studies captured the crucial significance of extended kinship networks, characterised by solidarity, in the day-to-day lives of families (Firth, 1956; Townsend, 1957; Rosser and Harris, 1965 as cited in Gillies, 2003). The major focus in sociological studies shifted to examine how norms of obligation and reciprocity were governing such relationships. The view of 'companionate marriage' with greater equality in domesticity and a growing emphasis on the sharing of family life emerged during this period.

Bott's (1971) study of twenty families described how families contained some cooperation and exchange of duties and some segregation. The study investigated the

roles of husband and wives and found considerable variation in the way in which spouses acted in domestic life – how ‘husbands and wives performed their conjugal roles’ (Bott, 1971). At one extreme was a family in which the spouses carried out as many tasks as possible separately of each other, with a strict division of labour in the household, to which the husband allocated a set amount of money for housekeeping while he spent and had control over the rest. At the other extreme was a family in which husband and wife shared activities, in which they stressed that spouses should be equals, helping each other, taking decisions together. Bott defined the first family as having ‘segregated’ roles and the second as having ‘joint’ roles. While the one group favoured work-centeredness and husband domination, the other group favoured home centeredness and egalitarianism. In an examination of whether occupational or class determined what roles the spouses would adopt, Bott (1971) found that only working class families fell near the segregation extreme. It was concluded that variation in conjugal roles seemed to be associated with the immediate social environment of the family (Bott, 1971).

Following on from this, Young and Willmott’s study on *The Symmetrical Family* (1973) found that married couples were increasingly moving towards an egalitarian partnership which was based on principles of sharing and negotiations. Young and Willmott (1973) claimed that the symmetrical family was most prevalent within middle class UK society but was gradually trickling down to the working classes.

Asymmetrical Families and the Sexual Division of Labour

Feminist research during the 1970s and 1980s were keen to demonstrate that middle class marriage in Britain, which was being depicted by role desegregation and equality by the above mentioned studies, was based on inadequate empirical data (Edgwell, 1980). Oakley (1974) argued that the family continued to be a site of the subordination of women, demonstrating the ideological separation between notions of private and public worlds. According to feminists, these separate spheres highlighted the exclusion of women from the public realms, effectively reinforcing the patriarchal power men held in both spheres (Pateman, 1988).

Research in the UK on the sexual division of labour within the middle classes (Edgwell, 1980) and the gendered aspects of household management (Pahl, 1989) highlighted the economic significance of women's unpaid work and the problems associated with the traditional breadwinner model. Edgwell (1980) examined the sexual division of labour among a group of professional workers and their wives at the child rearing stage of their family cycles (defined as from the birth of the first child to the marriage of the first child). He found that marital relationships remained highly segregated, unequal and husband-dominated. Additionally he found that 'the husband's orientation to paid work, plus the wife's orientation to domestic work...seemed to be the major factors that affected the degree of conjugal role segregation' (Edgwell, 1980:104).

Further examination of gender roles within marriage in the US focused on dual-career families. By controlling for class Hertz (1986) examined whether more equal relations between husbands and wives existed when partners in a marriage have relatively equal status and income. Hertz (1986:208) found that there is no guarantee that equity within the home will result from career equity. A further analysis of the findings points firstly to the types of budgets that couples implement and secondly to the differing values attached to fathering and mothering roles. She concludes that in order for gender differences to significantly decline, there must be relative equity in incomes and in work between husbands and wives.

Asymmetry in Emotional Reciprocity

The gendered asymmetry of family work however also includes emotion work. In their paper on 'workaholics' and 'whingeing women' Duncombe and Marsden (1993) outlined how a strong focus on the instrumental tasks or financial allocation of gender inequality in the private sphere overlooked additional gender differences in emotional expression in couple relationships. They found that women assume the lion's share of emotional responsibility in the private sphere. Mansfield and Collard (1988:178) found that most newlyweds were disappointed with the lack of emotional reciprocity in their relationships who were seeking 'a common life with an emphatic partner...a close exchange of intimacy'. O'Connor's (2001) qualitative analysis of distressed marriages in Ireland

found 'emotional distance' as a common complaint amongst the respondents. Duncombe and Marsden (1993:165) argue that any consideration of changes toward greater equality between the sexes must take account of how women carry the burden of the emotional work necessary to keep their partner and children – and themselves happy.

Focus on Family Practices

By the end of the 1980s in the UK and US, there was increasing critique about the simplistic understandings of the family which failed to capture the complex, contingent lived reality of family to its members (Morgan, 1996; Gubrium and Holstein, 1990). Family relationships were beginning to be defined by what they 'do' rather than what they 'are' (Silvia and Smart, 1999:7). Morgan's (1996) work on family practices is one of the most influential contributions to sociological analysis on the family. Throughout the 1990s there was a shift in focus away from 'family' as a structure towards understanding families as a set of practices (Bernardes, 1997; Finch and Mason, 1993; Gubrium and Holstein, 1990; Morgan, 1996). The term family practices described how the 'family' is a feature of social life, not a social institution, it 'represents a quality rather than a thing' (Morgan, 1996: 186).

Central to Morgan's concept of family practices were a number of key concepts, in particular the concepts of fluidity and diversity. As Silvia and Smart (1999:6) described, 'the family appears as a context of fluid and changeable relationships, as well as a site of intimacy and emotional growth for adults and children.' The everyday routine activities (emotional and practical care giving) were used to give us an understanding of what constituted family practices. It is therefore more consistent with the perspective adopted in this approach to use 'family' as an adjective rather than a noun (Morgan, 1996: 193). The focus was on how individuals carried out these practices which meant that each individual's understanding of the family was subject to change over time.

The Diversity and Continuity Approach

Contemporary theorising about family life revolves around the theme of social change, with the discussion concentrating on the issue of broader structural and social changes on

personal relationships. Many social commentators locate these changes within a paradigm of continuity and diversity within the structural and gendered realms of family life. Silva and Smart (1999) claim that personal choices only appear more autonomous but they are in fact closely connected to social conditions that produce tensions. As outlined above, feminist theorists have challenged what they claim is an over-stated account of the individualisation thesis which conceals not only the relationships between structural inequalities but also the significance of gender in the organisation of the domestic tasks, childcare, distribution of money in families and control in families.

Feminists argue that the kind of choices couples have to make and the ways in which they make them are still informed by tradition to varying degrees and are less inclined to 'choice biography' as depicted by the individualisation thesis (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart, 1999). An over-emphasis on choice may obscure the fact that structures and gender within the family itself may affect the choices available to individuals. Gender in this context is more than an individual characteristic or a role assumed or assigned to women and men. Gender in families includes structural constraints and opportunities, beliefs and ideology, actual arrangements and activities. The following sections demonstrate the interplay between the institution of marriage and gender within personal relationships.

Transition to Parenthood

Research on the transition to parenthood has indicated that gender roles become more traditional after the birth of the child as women become more physically and psychologically involved in their parental role than men (Crohan, 1996). Nomaguchi and Milkie (2003) in a longitudinal study found that becoming a parent is both detrimental and rewarding but the effects of parental status on adults vary markedly by gender and marital status. Where married mothers' lives are marked by more housework and conflict, parental status has little influence on the lives of married men. New conflicts over decisions and roles, primarily over who does what, may be the most common source of tension during the transition to parenthood (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986; Ruble, Hackel, Fleming, & Stagnor, 1988). Examinations of the processes through which men

and women experience the transition to parenthood provide a deeper understanding of how parenting is experienced differently by both genders. Therefore this study seeks to address whether men are becoming more involved in parenting and whether their involvement provides a possible route to greater gender equality? The research will examine whether there is any evidence of more gender symmetry in parenting post separation.

Parenting as a gendered activity

One question that needs to be explored is how far have social changes been associated with changes in the ways in which couples parent within intimate relationships. The societal expectation that women are the primary carers for children has been shown by Himmelweit and others to have an important bearing both on the formation of parent-child relationships and on the freedom to make 'free choices' about labour force participation (Himmelweit, 2002). If we look firstly at the formation of parent-child relationships, we see that mothers are typically more invested and involved in the daily lives of their children than are fathers (Coakley, 1997; Silvia and Smart, 1999; Thompson and Walker, 1989). Research evidence indicated that mothers devote themselves to parenting, while fathers devoted themselves to providing (La Rossa, 1988; Smart and Neale, 1999:52).

Research evidence from the literature on post-separation parenting suggests that contact with the non-resident parent is more social than instrumental (Simpson et al., 1995). As such, residential parents assume a disproportionate amount of responsibility for childcare (Furstenburg and Nord, 1985) and the gendered form of parenting continues. These findings signify the uniformity that still exists in the gendered nature of parenting and caring for children post separation. Put simply, mothers do most of the child care and housework before the separation and the division of labour post separation changes very little.

There are signs of a diversity of parenting practices with the rise of dual-income households. Silvia and Smart (1999) outlined how diversity arises as change in

employment patterns shift gender relationships. Studies in the US throughout the 80s and 90s demonstrated how some families were beginning to divide labour equally (Coltrane, 1990; Schwartz, 1994). Dual income households are forced to re-negotiate the division of childcare tasks but wives are also more likely than husbands to compensate for their spouse's stress levels by increasing their involvement in activities at home (Fagan and Press, 2008:1139). Such findings are reminiscent of the findings of Arlie Hochschild's (1989) book *The Second Shift* which demonstrated the slowness of changes in family patterns towards equality. She highlighted the strategies used by couples to avoid seeing obvious discrepancies between their ideals of equality and the actual practices of everyday life.

Duncan et al (2003) examined the values mothers used in reconciling motherhood, paid work and partnering. Their research found that mothers viewed their employment decisions in relation to their responsibilities to their children (2003:324). Even mothers who had 'primarily worker' gendered moral rationalities, were still concerned with meeting their children's caring needs (Duncan, et al., 2003). Risman and Johnson Summerford (1998) findings from an exploratory study on fifteen post gender couples³⁰ found that families who appear to be able to move toward a post gender structure are likely to have a family structure in which mothers are highly paid autonomous professionals (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Schwartz, 1994). This study will examine new ways in which post-separated mothering, in particular the relationship between motherhood and work, occurs post separation.

Research on fatherhood outlines how contemporary fatherhood is in a state of flux, undergoing a transition from 'deadbeat' fatherhood to 'achieved' fatherhood (Furstenburg and Nord, 1985). The continuity of traditional fathering practices can be seen by the

³⁰ Risman and Johnson Summerford's (1998) article about married couples who share the responsibilities of paid and family work with-out regard for gender prescriptions includes an explanation of why the authors adopt the term 'post gender couple'. The authors outlined how the couples studied share roles equitably, but they have also decoupled breadwinning from masculinity and nurturing from notions of femininity. According to Risman and Johnson Summerford (1998:24) labelling them "egalitarian," does not necessarily imply a divorcing of gender from family and work responsibilities. For clarity, the authors refer to the couples as post- gender couples, which seeks to imply that in the negotiation of marital roles and responsibilities, the couples have moved beyond using gender as their mark.

empirical data which suggest that the majority of fathers remain disengaged (Clarke and Popay, 1996; Giovanni, 1998; Brannen and Nilsen, 2006; Lamb, 1997). But the same studies highlight some changes in fathering over the last few years which signals the beginning of a diversity of fathering practices were coming up with new ways of describing the father including the 'involved father' (Giovanni, 1998), 'family men' and 'hands on' fathers (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006:340) 'explicitly egalitarian' and 'pragmatists' (Clarke and Popay, 1998:214). These descriptions depicted the fathers' increasingly active involvement in caring and childrearing tasks. However Gerson (1993: 283) argues that the belief that change is happening and is therefore inevitable is dangerous. She argues that rather than balancing greater freedom with greater responsibility, it grants men new freedoms from the burdens of breadwinning without allowing or expecting them to assume new responsibilities for their children. Gerson (1993:283) argued that this outcome has 'alarming consequences for women'. The continuity thesis argues that a large proportion of fathers remain disengaged (continues to be the traditional male breadwinner) after the separation and this has consequences for women.

Gendered Division of Labour

Research evidence suggests that despite women's increased participation in paid work, major changes in the domestic division of labour are still slow to occur (Coltrane, 1999). Hochschild (1989) has referred to this persistent unequal division of labour as the "stalled revolution". According to data presented by Breen and Cooke (2005:52) 23 per cent of Irish married/cohabiting females and 31 per cent married/cohabiting Irish males were classified as 'traditional' types.³¹ This would mean that 23 per cent of Irish married women would expect to assume the majority of domestic tasks even under those economic circumstances when they might have to work. The findings also indicated that the mean proportion of 'autonomous' women in Ireland is one-quarter while just 17 per

³¹ These results were recorded by measuring couples' relative responsibility for domestic tasks relating to 1) caring for the sick, 2) doing laundry, 3) deciding what to eat for dinner and 4) doing small repairs. In a traditional division of domestic labour the woman would always do the first four tasks and the man would always do small repairs.

cent of men in Ireland are 'co-operators' (willingly participate fully in unpaid domestic tasks).

The bulk of the female Irish respondents (52 per cent) were recorded as 'transitional'. This group represents women who work full-time when single but after marriage stay at home with pre-school children, returning to employment, often on a part-time basis, as the children grow up. Although part-time employment allows a woman to balance work and family life, it leaves a woman economically vulnerable in the event of a divorce. In light of these findings, it could be argued that claims we are witnessing a move away from traditional patterns to more egalitarian approaches may be overstated. The emphasis from the individualisation thesis on individualised rationality neglects the importance of social ties and negotiated gendered moral responsibilities in shaping divisions of labour. Maternal and paternal roles are negotiated by couples and open to a complex set of structural and gender influences especially after separation. It is thought that an adequate theorisation of the 'new' family requires an improved understanding of changes in the relative position of women and men in the reproduction of social life (Irwin, 1999:44).

Money Marriage

Another question then, is how far have social changes been associated with changes in the ways in which couples organise money within intimate relationships. The area of money in marriage gives researchers an insight into interactions that takes place in intimate relationships and is a way of examining how being a couple is achieved. Nyman and Dema (2007) outlined that families handle finances, consumption and allocation of resources between intimates very differently. Research evidence suggests that despite changing patterns of employment and gender ideology, sharing resources in families is not always equal or egalitarian (Burgoyne, 1990; Nyman, 1999, Pahl, 1989). How money is regarded can also vary between husband and wife.

Research evidence suggests that the role of breadwinning (associated with males usually), in itself is a source of status and power; a woman's income, regardless of size, is often neglected as secondary (Pahl, 1995; Schwartz, 1994; Vogler, 1998). Disregarding one

income as less significant for the family, affirms the ideology of the male breadwinner. According to Vogler (1998) this rejects an ideology of equality, that marriage should be based on equal sharing, as well as an ideology of co-providing.

The ways that couples organise and manage finances will have consequences for perceptions about entitlement and access to money for personal consumption. Studies have found that spouses who earn less (typically women) feel that they have less entitlement to spend money. Another important aspect of power in families is the relevance of what is defined as personal consumption or collective (family) consumption (Pahl, 1989). Despite the advances in the area of gender equality and women's increased economic independence, Nyman (1999) found that women and men seem to have different positions and experiences regarding access to money and consumption in the family. As such, women may find themselves in a subordinate economic position especially if the marriage ends. The research evidence from these studies suggests that only a partial decline of the male breadwinner has been achieved. It appears as if there is still far to go to reach completely new forms of individualistic intimate relationships.

Additionally, the economic consequences of divorce for women have been documented extensively (Sorenson and McLanahan, 1987; Smock, 1993; Weitzman, 1985). The literature indicates that women suffer financially after divorce (Sorenson and McLanahan, 1987:662). It is argued that economic support is conditional on staying married, and since divorce has become more common, the risk of future loss in economic status appears to be an important part of women's life chances (Smock, 1993; Sorenson and McLanahan, 1987).

Violence in Marriage

Marital violence literature is rife with studies that claim to show that partner violence is gender symmetric, i.e. men and women are equally abusive (Johnson, 2000 as cited in Johnson and Ferraro, 2000). However, Johnson argued that research evidence appears this way as violence is not differentiated into its four types.³² In a review of the domestic

³² Johnson (Johnson, 1995, 2000a as cited in Johnson and Ferraro, 2000:949) argued that at the relationship level, one can distinguish four major patterns of partner violence, which he called 'common couple violence', 'intimate terrorism', 'violent resistance' and 'mutual violent control'.

violence literature of the 1990s, Johnson indicated that 'intimate terrorism' (violence as merely one tactic in a general pattern of control) is almost entirely a male pattern. Such violence is motivated by a wish to exert general control over one's partner. Johnson and Ferraro (2000:949) argue that partner violence is primarily a problem of men using violence to maintain control over 'their women', a control they feel entitled to and is supported by a patriarchal culture.

The link between marriage and gender is a very complex but important social aspect of changing personal relationships. The literature reviewed here has emphasised how marriage is a gendered practice through 1) parenting 2) division of labour 3) organisation of money and 4) violence. Although grand theorists claim that intimate relationships are defined by democracy and equality, it appears from this review that women's and men's roles in marriage continue to be gender specific. A key point raised by this review is that it is not separation status alone that impacts on personal relationships upon separation, rather that it may be a reflection of longstanding gender divisions within marriage more widely.

Changing Personal Relationships upon Separation

According to Beck-Gernsheim (1998:67) separated families are an example of 'elective family relationships', i.e. families that are no longer a matter of destiny and obligation but one of choice and personal inclination. However, an over-emphasis on choice may obscure the fact that structures and contexts within the parents' post-separation conditions may itself affect contact. There have been a number of studies in the UK and US examining the reasons why contact continues or ceases or varies. The following factors are associated with contact; age of children, previous relationship with the child, socio-economic factors of non-resident parent, housing circumstances, and presence of new partners.

Age of Child

Although the research evidence is contradictory, it would appear that children's age does play a role in determining the likelihood of ongoing contact taking place. Maclean and

Eekelaar (1997) found that children who were older when their parents separated were more likely to remain in contact. On the other hand, Pryor and Rodgers (1999) indicated that older children were less likely to stay in contact. Research evidence from the US is varied, with Cooksey and Craig (1998) finding that contact is more likely with older children. Within an Irish context, it is important to highlight that the older the child, the less likely the court will get involved in access applications.³³ This thesis will explore what role the age of the child has in determining contact post separation and effectively shaping personal relationships.

Previous relationship with child

Fathers who are engaged in fathering during the marriage are thought to be more active in fathering post separation. However, further investigation on how the father's pre-separation involvement and relationship with the children impacts on contact has yielded mixed results. A meta-analysis on contact (Whiteside and Becker, 2002) found that a father's involvement pre-separation is positively related to both frequency of contact and the quality of relationship. Other studies in the UK have found that some fathers become more involved with their children post separation (Simpson et al., 1995; Smart and Neale, 1999). Hetherington and Kelly (2002) refer to this as 'divorce-activated' and 'divorce-deactivated fathers'. However, Kruk (1993) reports how fathers who were disengaged post separation, were found to have had particularly strong relationships with their children during the marriage but withdrew due to intense hurt and pain from the loss of the children. These findings may reinforce the belief that it is not separation status alone that impacts on personal relationships upon separation, rather that it may be a reflection of long-standing gender divisions within marriage more widely and the relationship between fathers and their children.

Socio-Economic Status

³³ Mahon and Moore (2011) found that a judge will not enquire about the access arrangements for the children if the child is over 12 years old. As Coulter (2007:51) outlined in her report on the family law reporting project that no framework exists for obtaining children's views on their own future living arrangements, education and welfare.

Many studies have found that educational level, employment status and income are related to contact (Fox and Kelly, 1995; Simpson et al, 1995; Bradshaw et al, 1999, Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992). The more years of education the non-resident father has, the more likely he is to maintain frequent contact (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Cooksey and Craig, 1998). Moreover Simpson et al. (1995) found that fathers on higher incomes tend to report more frequent contact. Total family income is also related to children's living arrangements after separation, with shared custody most frequent among separating parents with the financial means to support two family homes (Cancian & Meyer, 1998; Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1993). Although the major architects of the individualisation thesis have dubbed social class a 'zombie variable' or 'shell institution' (Beck, 2002; Giddens, 1999), the literature suggests that social class (based on income and level of education) has a crucial structuring role in giving the parents the freedom and resources to choose where to live post separation, which affects the transition to post- separation parenting.

Large scale studies have found that shared custody is more likely when both parents, rather than only the father, are in paid employment (Cancian & Meyer, 1998; Fox & Kelly, 1995; Juby, 2005). Research evidence indicates that the mother's labour force involvement influences her choice of parenting arrangement (Juby et al, 2005). A shared parenting arrangement was more appealing for working mothers as it 'liberates' who would otherwise be responsible for a single-parent family, and encourages a fuller work and social integration by allowing them more time for work and leisure (Côte as cited in Juby et al, 2005).

Housing Circumstances

Although this may be related to income or employment status and may vary with time (rupture in living circumstances is particularly acute in the immediate period) since the separation Wikeley (2001) found that non-resident parents who were home-owners were more likely to maintain contact. Having a child stay overnight allows for greater involvement as such an overnight arrangement depends on both parents having a home of their own which is large enough to accommodate the children. Simpson et al. (1995:207)

described how 'being able to afford what amounts to doubling up of home and contents after divorce is something which is beyond the reach of many parents' Additionally research has suggested that distance is an important determinant of father contact (Cooksey and Craig, 1998; Smyth et al, 2001; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992).

New Partners and New Families

There is some evidence to suggest that the arrival of new partners adversely affects contact, particularly if one remarries (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Seltzer, 1991; Simpson et al, 1995). Other research suggests that it is the arrival of new children rather than the re-partnering that affects contact (Manning and Smock, 1999; Smyth et al., 2001).

Relational Determinants

Simpson et al (1995) highlighted how 'relational' dynamics are also crucial in understanding post-separation contact. The relationship between fathers and mothers is a crucial factor in determining both the quantity and the quality of fathers' contact with children post separation. During the marriage, fatherhood meant, for many fathers in traditional marriage, being breadwinners, disciplinarians and emotionally distant while motherhood meant (also in traditional marriages) caring and nurturing. The democratisation thesis would argue that this form of traditional parenting has changed due to changing female employment patterns and family change. However, what will be discussed below is that there is increasing evidence that fathers' relationships are mediated through mothers, rather than been sustained by themselves, and this holds true even after separation (Smart, 1999).

Parental Conflict

Interpersonal conflict is caused by emotional intensity and perceived power or control over parenting and financial roles (Emery, 1994; Madden-Derdich et al., 1999). The level of paternal conflict may also contribute to our understanding of changing personal relationships post separation. There appears to be general agreement in the literature that

relationships between the separated parents are a key determinant. Divorced parents frequently report medium to high levels of conflict with one another particularly related to contact issues (King and Head, 1997), and therefore paternal relationship quality may seriously affect contact post divorce (Braver and O'Connell, 1998). Although high levels of conflict are not always associated with low levels of contact (Wolchik and Fenaughty, 1996), contact is generally found to be more likely where relationships are positive (Bradshaw et al., 1995; Smyth et al, 2001, Simpson et al, 1995).

Perceptions of Paternal Competence

Research on fathers suggests that fathers who are more competent parents are also more motivated to spend time with their children (Lamb, 1997). Within intact marriages, the research evidence indicates that fathers' perception of what mothers think of them as parents and the importance that fathers attach to those beliefs are linked with fathers' involvement and caring in the intact marriage (Fox and Bruce, 2001). Mauer et al. (as cited in Mc Bride et al., 2005:361) argue that father identity is influenced heavily by perceptions of maternal appraisals. Additionally research evidence demonstrates that mothers have a good deal of influence over fathers' family involvement both before and after marriage (Allen and Hawkins, 1999; Braver and O'Connell, 1998; Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2000). Over the last decade research and theorising has broadened the focus of parent-child relationships toward an examination of the mother-father-child (triadic) relationship (Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000). This suggests that if we are trying to understand the fathers' sense of paternal identity as a means of exploring changing personal relationships post separation we need to examine what his spouse thinks of him as a parent.

Maternal Gatework

The research evidence suggests that mothers play a pivotal role in facilitating father-child relationships (Arendall, 1997). With regard to post-separation families, researchers have specifically focused on the negative role that maternal gatekeeping plays in the relationships between fathers and their children (Fagan and Barnett, 2003). Maternal

gatekeeping is the term used to refer to mothers' preference and attempts to restrict and exclude the father from child care and involvement with children (Allen and Hawkins, 1999; Arendell, 1996; Fagan and Barnett, 2003). The factors that are likely to influence maternal gatekeeping include family structure, financial contributions, social capital and ideology (Furstenburg and Cherlin, 1991). Focusing on family structure, in particular divorced and separated families, gatekeeping may be particularly relevant when the father does not reside with his children and contact with his children is reported to decrease over time (Furstenburg and Cherlin, 1991; Lamb, 1999). Braver and O'Connell (1998) suggest that the lack of paternal involvement in divorced families was not only the result of non-residence but may also have been related to the mother's restrictions on the father. Wolchik, Fenaughty and Braver (1996) found that between a quarter and a third of non-resident fathers reported various forms of intrusion from the mother with father-child contact. However, other research relating to separated families indicated that mothers also facilitate father's involvement (Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992).

In research relating specifically to maternal gatekeeping on post-divorce families, Trinder (2008) elaborated on the meaning of gatekeeping by integrating both maternal gateclosing (behaviour which limits involvement) and gateopening (behaviour which enhances involvement) and examined why mothers appear to facilitate or restrict fathers involvement. This exploration allowed for a deeper understanding of both inhibitory process and facilitative processes. The research findings suggested that maternal perceptions of paternal competence and child welfare beliefs, parental relationship quality and parental role bargains were all strongly linked to different types of gatekeeping post divorce (Trinder, 2008:1320). Trinder found that while maternal gateopening openly supported the father-child relationship, maternal facilitation appeared to reinforce women's position as family managers and childcare experts.

What is interesting about the theory on gatekeeping, albeit facilitative or inhibitive, is that it attempts to explicitly link beliefs, behaviours and outcomes – within the social setting - therefore incorporating both agency and structure. The significant research evidence in this section suggests that personal relationships in a period of late modernity are subject

to the approval or rigour of social actors and are therefore subjected to the specific social context in which they are located.

Gender Ideology

Arendell (1997) suggested that women's ideology about the role of fathers also may have an impact on paternal involvement with children. De Luccie's (1995) study on maternal gatekeepers revealed positive weak association between mother's beliefs about the importance of the father role to children and the level of paternal involvement. Mc Bride et al. (2005) found that mothers' beliefs about the role of the father influenced fathers' perceptions of himself and his access to his children. This point raises the question of the extent to which tensions that may be a facet of mothers' beliefs about the role of the father are attributed to the father's perception of his paternal role and involvement, i.e. can the father's post-separated role be explained in terms of the mothers' beliefs about the role of the father more generally?

Parental Role Bargains

Research literature on post-divorce conflict, suggests that mothers may restrict father access to children because they are angry with their former spouse because they feel that the father has opted out of responsibility for his children (Greif, 1997). Mothers may also restrict access to children if the man does not make financial contributions. Non-resident fathers' financial contributions often become a source of conflict between parents (Amato, 2000). Trinder explains such behaviour as parents exerting a continual bidirectional, and reciprocal influence on each other (2008:1320). For example, what fathers did or did not do appears to influence what mothers believe and how they act and vice versa. This is explained and described as the parental role bargain or battle (Trinder, 2008:1320). The current study allows for the parental role bargain between the contact and financial contributions (maintenance) in post-separated families to be investigated.

One of the major findings which are vital in contributing to our understanding of changing personal relationships suggests that maternal facilitation appeared to reinforce women's position as family managers and childcare experts (Trinder, 2008:1320). Such

evidence suggests that despite the division of childcare being more equally divided amongst men and women after separation, women still carry the main responsibility for childcare. These post-divorce relationships, although showing signs of diversity, still represent elements of continuity as women continue to carry the main burden as carers.

Trinder's work on gate-keeping (2008:1298) explains how gatework is a dynamic transactional, 'bi-directional process rather than a linear unidirectional act. While this is demonstrated rather clearly, the reciprocal influences that are referred to do not include income and/or distribution of money within post-separated households which also act as 'reciprocal influences'. The bi-directional reciprocal influences are the influences resident and contact parents (and children) have over each other such as role security/bargain, parents commitment to child welfare and parental relationships (Trinder, 2008:1314). All of these 'bi-directional' influences are related to childcare and not income. Later in the article, she argues that there is 'a major gap in our knowledge concerning the role of fathers and how gatekeeping is embedded in wider family process' (Trinder, 2008:1304). This research seeks to contribute to this gap in knowledge by examining not only parental involvement in terms of childcare (contact) but also parental involvement in terms of financial provision (income and redistribution of income).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the main theoretical approaches in the literature to changing personal relationships, demonstrating the limitations of and alternatives to democratisation and individualisation thesis, and providing an alternative framework for understanding the changes in personal relationships. By tracing the sociology of changing family relationships over the last twenty years, this review has shown that this is a field of inquiry that has been led by grand theoretical narratives. This includes theoretical contributions that focus on the role of democratisation of intimate relationships and the individualisation of people's everyday lives.

This review outlined feminist responses to the sociology of changing personal relationships which call for a more gender-sensitised, empirically-based perspective

which examines the structural aspects of societies and people's lives. Writers in this field have persuasively argued for the re-insertion of individual, subjective experiences in investigations of personal relationships and have also drawn attention to the structural constraints of the public and private spheres.

This review outlined the changing models of marriage and domesticity. Research studies in the 70s discovered the 'companionate marriage' which emphasised notions of greater equality between the sexes (Bott, 1971; Young and Willmott, 1973). However, studies throughout the 80s and 90s on the gender segregation of the family were questioning how far this 'egalitarian partnership' exists, given the economic significance of women's unpaid work, and gendered aspects of household management in terms of financial organisation of women (Pahl, 1989). As Riessman (1990:15) stated 'traditional marriage is a gendered institution because of the gendered-based division of labour in it in turn creates inequality between men and women.' A key link between the literature of the 80s and 90s and recent work on 'family practices' suggested that it is not the separation status alone that impacts on personal relationships upon separation, rather that it may be a reflection of long-standing gender divisions within marriage more widely.

This chapter has outlined recent work on post-separation contact. In particular this chapter presented some of the research evidence from the vast array of studies in the US and UK on the determinants of contact post separation. In particular, the review highlighted the extensive findings on relational aspects of contact, such as the extent and effectiveness of women's influence on facilitating as well as inhibiting father-child relationships. A focus on these influences places the attention on gateway as a dynamic transactional, bi-directional process (Trinder, 2008: 1298).

Taken together, these studies highlight the ways in which personal relationships are changing. There remain, however, a number of key issues raised by the literature, which remain unaddressed. With regard to the emerging body of research on changing family relationships, particularly at a time of separation, there is an absence of research on how the conjugal role affects mothers' and fathers' negotiation of their roles post separation. There are few studies that examine how the sexual division of labour adopted during the

marriage impacts on the experience of renegotiating gender roles upon separation. Recent work on contact has focused primarily on parental involvement within post-separated families, without placing it in a wider (division of labour) exchange relationship. Has maternal gatekeeping got an opposite and equal force such as paternal banking? In the literature consulted, contact is examined without much attention given to the context in which income and care are distributed both before and after the separation. Although money has been found to be a challenge to contact (Trinder et al., 2008:33) it is not examined as part of a 'care for income' exchange model which occurs during the marriage and is ruptured at the point of separation.

Furthermore, with regard to research on gatekeeping Trinder (2008:1298) explains how gatework is a 'bi-directional process rather than a linear unidirectional act'. While this is demonstrated unmistakably in her research, the reciprocal influences that are referred to do not include income and/or distribution of money within pre or post-separated households which also act as 'reciprocal influences'. This study seeks to examine how the sexual division of labour during the marriage created different patterns of post-separated parenting roles. Each individual's experience is rooted in a specific background, shaped by the realities of life and the gender division of labour in middle-class marriages. Through a focus on uncovering deeper understandings of the structural constraints related to autonomy and choice, it also serves as a counterpoint to the macro-level comparative analyses (democratisation and individualisation theses) that have dominated the sociology of changing personal relationships over the last two decades.

The literature has also raised some key questions which require further consideration when placed in the unique setting of the Irish context. The normative and structural aspects of Irish society, as outlined in chapter two, begs us to ask the following questions about how the international literature on changing personal relationships fits with the Irish context:

- Can this study offer any insights about how the democratisation thesis applies or is affected when examined in what Inglehart and Norris (2003:56) describe as a "religious affluent post-industrial society? The democratisation thesis argues that

the dramatic shifts in social life signalled by developments such as globalisation, late modernity, and post-industrialisation, have led to greater equality in social life however greater equality and modernisation is not achieved equally in all post-industrial societies. Inglehart and Norris (2003:49) noted that “the process of societal modernisation is path-specific, with the pace of change in any given society conditioned by cultural and religious traditions”. Inglehart and Norris (2003) remarked on Ireland’s unique position as a post-industrial affluent society that demonstrates less egalitarian beliefs and attitudes about the appropriate division of sex roles among men and women. They argue that religiosity continues to attempt to exert a strong influence on social norms and behaviours in Ireland and they describe this as the “continuing Catholic hegemonic grip” (Inglehart and Norris, 2003:48). The liberalisation of attitudes towards marriage, divorce and gender equality remain slow-moving in Ireland. Will this have an impact on the applicability of the democratisation thesis?

- Do the individuals in a more conservative ‘male breadwinner’ post-industrial state conform to the individualisation thesis? In a country where prosperity and social security has reached a high level, is personal freedom and autonomy granted to all individuals equally? Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s individualisation thesis purports an image that “in the industrial developed countries, fewer and fewer people live in the kind of family that used to be considered ‘normal’ in the 1950s – that is, a unit involving an officially sanctioned lifelong bond between an economically active husband and an economically inactive wife (2002; viii). However figures revealed in chapter two suggest that several features of an industrial society remain apparent within the Irish families today and statistical data would suggest that there remains considerable support for male breadwinner families in Ireland. Russell et al. (2007) found that women’s activity rates in Ireland have improved but are still considerably lower than in the countries with the highest rates such as Denmark, Sweden and Finland. According to Russell et al. (2007:45) rates are similar to those prevailing in conservative welfare regimes that encourage the ‘male breadwinner’ arrangement rather than the dual earner model. The least

educated and women between the ages of 35-39 (presence of young children) are two groups which have especially low labour force activity rates. This begs us to ask the question of how the individualisation thesis relates to this local setting. Can this study offer any insights on the asynchrony of the individualisation thesis and agency and structure debate?

- The literature review has outlined how individualisation demands an individual biography which the entitlements, demands and regulations of late modernity can be pressed (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002). It is argued that ‘biographies are removed from the traditional precepts and certainties, from external control and general moral laws’ (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002:5). However, one pressing regulation of late modern society in Ireland is the Irish Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996. The national context has outlined that one of the clear features of the 1996 Act is that there is no provision for a ‘clean break’ in the legislation.³⁴ If there are changes in the circumstances of either party after the date of the decree, either party can seek variations to orders at any time after the divorce.³⁵ Irish divorce legislation binds a marital couple together, long after the couple dissolve. This lifelong commitment to a spouse and child re-emphasised the significance and primacy of marriage. The study will examine the perceptions of a group of parents in Ireland about how much control they have over their own life trajectory after separation. Can the study offer a greater understanding of the limitations of the individualisation and democratisation theses in a setting of legislative constraint?
- Chapter two demonstrated how Ireland has made only a modest ideological shift towards gender equality in the labour market. Giddens’ claims that the divisions between men and women, and between ‘types’ of women have broken down under the conditions of late modernity appear to offer little understanding into the

³⁴ This concept related more significantly to the period between the separation and divorce. In many situations, spouses revisited previous separation agreements four years later when applying for a divorce. Although some of the separation agreements were, at the time deemed as full and final, all conditions and factors were reviewed at the time of divorce.

³⁵ Abbott J stated in *J.C. v M.C.* that the variation of a maintenance order was possible after a divorce [In *J.C. v M.C.*, 22 January 2007, High Court (unreported)]

ways in which access to material resources, education and childcare remain highly class and gendered based within such a welfare state.

- I have demonstrated in this chapter that feminists argue that the democratisation thesis pays little attention to the availability of resources in helping or hindering individuals to make their own choices. Can this study offer any insights into which inequalities and differences in resources are systemic and systematic in Ireland rather than individual and random? I have outlined in chapter two how childcare provision in Ireland is expensive and limited in supply. Chapter 2 also described how moderate changes have been made in childcare provision over the last 30 years but despite the improvements, Ireland still had the highest net childcare costs as a proportion of average earnings in the OECD (OECD, 2007: 156). This study seeks to address how separating parents in 2008, relate to work and caring. In light of such barriers, what meaning do separating parents give to breadwinning and caring and what factors influence their choices in reconciling work and family life post separation?
- Chapter two also demonstrated how men's engagement in household labour and child minding is also limited. Recent analysis of men and women's time use in Ireland found that even among dual-earning couples, "there are still gender differences in the allocation of time to employment and unpaid tasks in dual earner couples, with women having on average a higher workload than men" (McGinnity and Russell, 2008: pxi). These findings suggest that Irish families remain 'asymmetrical'. Although the US literature maintains that there dual income families divide labour equally (Coltrane, 1990; Schwartz, 1994), the Irish context tends to demonstrate opposing results. The following chapters will explore how we can study fatherhood and the division of labour in the context of the connections to wider social structures and their embeddedness in relationship with people and institutions.
- Beck and Beck Gernsheim (2002: 9) aptly described that "education opens the trap door: it allows the woman to escape from the restrictions of her existence as a

housewife; it deprives inequality of its legitimation...her own earnings strengthen her position with the marriage and free her from the need to remain married for purely economic reasons” However the positive change in educational qualifications of the adult female population in Ireland is not experienced equally across class and age. In light of the changing educational attainment of Irish women, this study seeks to offer an insight into the polarisation of female employment experienced specifically at a time of marital breakdown.

- There are considerable norms and attitudes relating to marriage, families and gender roles in Ireland that impact on the choice and agency of separating individuals in Ireland, particularly Irish women. Smart and Neale (1999:137) claimed that Giddens’s use of the self without relating it to a gendered self is a major weakness in his thesis. The individualisation model asserted that, in effect, women decide for themselves in relation to work issues and aren’t tied into having pre-determined gender roles. However there appears to be strong gender role attitudes towards maternal employment in Ireland. Simple descriptive analysis of the European Values Study 2008 showed that Irish respondents demonstrated strong egalitarian attitudes towards men’s role in the home. However there was a strong traditional belief that children are affected by maternal employment. Looking at some findings from the European Values Study in 2008 indicated that just over 30 per cent of respondents thought a pre-school child suffers when a mother is working and over 60 per cent of respondents thought that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as paid employment.
- Irish attitudes towards the equal division of labour are equally traditional and conservative. Inglehart and Norris (2003) examined five items of gender equality, tapping attitudes towards politics, the workforce, education and the family.³⁶ Unfortunately the results for Ireland were not included in the analysis, so I decided to perform the same test and examine how the results compared to other

³⁶ For more details on the analysis see INGLEHART, R. & NORRIS, P. 2003. *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around The World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. (Pages 30-35).

nations. Principle Factor Component Factor Analysis revealed that all five items tap a single dimension with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.54. The figures found in the 2001 World Values Study for Ireland provide (see Appendix X) preliminary support for the proposition that attitudes toward traditional role for women and men remain in Ireland. Ireland, scoring 60, is situated well below the most egalitarian nations, notably, Finland, Sweden and Canada. At a score of 60 Ireland can be grouped in with many moderate-income industrialised nations such as Brazil and Mexico.

The following chapter provides the basis for developing a qualitative methodology – one in which the analysis of the qualitative data was developed from a 'grounded' approach in the sense that the author sought to generate concepts and typologies from the data – on the basis of respondents' accounts and the knowledge of contexts in which they lived their lives.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The main aim of this study is to acquire a deeper understanding of how separating parents (mothers and fathers) organise and make sense of parenting and relationships both before and after separation and within a wider social context. This chapter outlines and justifies the methods used to carry out the study, key characteristics of the sample, the organisation of data collection, the approach taken to data analysis, the ethical considerations and the limitations of the research.

Methodological Approach

A qualitative approach was used in this research as the study sought to understand how spousal and parental relationships were experienced both before and after separation from the perspectives of the divorcing parents involved in the study. The methodological approach is informed by the principle that in order to understand people's evolution of their relationships and adjustment to post-separation parenting, it is imperative to identify and incorporate their own interpretations of the reality of their experience. Bryman (2008) outlined how our knowledge of the world is based on 'understanding' which arises from thinking about what happens to us, not just simply from having had particular experiences. As noted by Schutz, I believe that gaining access to such meaning is vital for our understanding of the changing nature of personal relationships:

By a series of common-sense constructs they [divorcing parents] have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behaviour by motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men living their daily life within the social world. (Schutz as cited in Bryman, 2008:14)

Therefore I am interested in the meanings that changing personal relationships have for individuals and the process of how they understand and interpret their world. The epistemological assumption that informs my position to this research is that the respondents' own understandings of their situation needs to be uncovered to enable us to

come as closely as possible to comprehending their experiences. This 'interpretative, naturalistic approach', seeks 'to make sense of, or to interpret uncoupling and the divorce process in terms of the meanings divorcing people attribute to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:3).

The ontological approach adopted by this research will allow me to explore and investigate the way separated parents understand and interpret their own social reality. The study adopted a constructionist approach towards the respondents' stories which does not view words and practice as two separate realities. An inherent issue in family studies is that there are two realities in marriage: his and hers (Bernard, 1972). However, this research is not seeking 'the truth' of whether or not the respondents' actions were in line with their spouses' actions or words. Instead, the research is based on the principle that the respondents' accounts are part of 'reality work' by which they 'produce meaningful realities and formulate the social world' (Gubrium et al., 1994:31).

There have been many critiques of this conception of research, i.e. that it is not objective and that it can be invalid to universalise from such data. Traditionally, validity in qualitative research involved determining the degree to which researchers' claims about knowledge corresponded to the reality (or research participants' constructions of reality) being studied (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990 as cited in Cho and Trent, 2006). Researchers believe terms such as 'trustworthiness' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), 'consistency' (Hammersley, 1992) and 'credibility' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) are more closely related to assessing the quality (reliability and validity) of qualitative research. Altheide and Johnson's (1994) review of interpretivist positions on validity identified the various forms of validity while Kirk and Miller (1986) examined the meaning of reliability in qualitative research. These reviews led to new concepts and methods for assessing the quality of qualitative research (in particular research within the constructivist paradigm). Seale (1999:467) argued that the variety of new concepts demonstrated the difficulties methodologists had with obtaining an overarching quality standard for qualitative research.

Kirk and Miller (1986) explained how the 'consistency' (reliability) of qualitative research can be enhanced by firstly carrying out internal checks on the quality of the data and its interpretation and secondly by providing information about the research process. The adoption of such techniques has been referred to by Cho and Trent (2006) as ensuring transactional validity. They argue that validity as a transactional process consists of techniques or methods by which misunderstandings can be adjusted and thus fixed (Cho and Trent, 2006:323). In most cases informants are engaged in making sure their realities correspond with the interpretations brought forth by the researchers. How this study incorporated both of these principles shall in turn be discussed below. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the need for 'thick' description in qualitative research as it allows the reader to assess the validity and integrity of the research evidence.

Qualitative research has long discussed how to evaluate their science, the quality of their analyses and theoretical interpretations of data. Although there has been both epistemological and ontological concerns about the extent to which triangulation can validate or verify qualitative research (Denzin, 1997; Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Seale, 1999; Silverman, 1993) some researchers acknowledge that triangulation (multiplication of methods and perspectives) within a constructivist paradigm, can help deepen understanding although it is not a guarantee of validity (Dingwall, 1997 as cited in Seale, 1999:474). Silverman (1993:158) argued that the use of triangulation can help 'to address the situated work of accounts' rather than 'using one account to undercut the other'. This understanding of triangulation accepts a view of research as revealing multiple constructed realities. Patton (2002:556) advocated the use of triangulation to improve the credibility of the study:

It is data analysis that the strategy of triangulation really pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn.

The current research involved the triangulation of methods, sources and analysts (researchers) in order to deepen our understanding of the participants' accounts. Firstly, the use of a qualitative study to extend our understanding of parenting and relationships

both before and after separation created a second methodological approach to the topic. The findings generated from the qualitative study can be compared against and enhanced by the findings from the content analysis of family court outcomes conducted by Mahon and Moore (2011). In addition, the study involved the triangulation of sources. In the majority of cases, the respondents presented additional material that related to their stories and experiences, e.g. copies of their separation agreement, notes or letters from their ex-spouses, reports from family therapists and extracts from diaries. The availability of this material assisted me in gaining a complete overview of the experience.

The study included triangulation through multiple analyses by using different analysts (researchers) to compare and check data collection and interpretation (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003:276). The researcher organised two 'peer auditing' sessions in order to conduct a consistency check with respect to the researcher's capacity to explore and identify themes and concepts accurately (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Theoretically, efforts to triangulate data, method, researcher, and theory to bolster accuracy and reliability are all convergent with the inherent logic of transactional validity in qualitative research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 230–2 as cited in Cho and Trent, 2006:323). Overall the study endeavoured to ensure the credibility and consistency of the research by including full and appropriate use of the evidence, by displaying the analytical routes and levels of interpretation assigned and by placing checks on the research design and conduct.

Apart from the epistemological and ontological considerations of the research topic, the adoption of a qualitative approach is fitting on the grounds that the nature of the research is still poorly understood in an Irish context. Until now, more was known about the numbers of divorcees in Ireland than was known about what actually occurred within families as they managed the transition out of marital relationship and onto a co-parental relationship. More specifically, earlier research in divorced families focused on family composition and not on how parents manage the day-to-day activities and functions of post-separation parenting.

This qualitative study is a follow-up study to a content analysis study of court agreements, in which this researcher took part³⁷. The court-based research established the types of post-separation/divorce child-parent contact arrangements that follow legal separation and divorce. This study adopted a non-probable convenience sampling approach and recruited a small sample size, which means that it is not possible to generalise the results of the study to the broader population of divorced/separated parents. Many researchers have outlined how qualitative research cannot be generalised on a statistical basis (Bryman, 2008; Denzin, 2003; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Patton, 2002; Seale, 2003). However, the study is not concerned with the prevalence of particular experiences, rather it is the context of the range of views and experiences that are important. The study makes full use of the original data by sticking closely to the language and content of the participants' accounts and the explanations they convey. As such this study provides a greater understanding of the factors underlying changing personal relationships at a time of divorce that arose with the couples from the first study. The purpose of following on from the content analysis study with a qualitative element is to achieve an extended understanding that neither method alone can provide. In Ireland, this study is the first of its kind and for this reason it involved extensive 'mapping out' of the meanings, processes and contexts of divorce (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:4). In other words, the study needed to gain an understanding of the diversity and nature of phenomena related to parents in the contexts of separation and divorce as the first logical step in the process of exploring and understanding the area.

The ontological and epistemological priorities outlined above account for my choice of a qualitative in-depth interview approach to investigation. This approach, adopted to researching changing personal relationships at a time of separation, enabled me to explore the 'lived realities' of the people I interviewed. I believe that gaining access to such meanings adds to our empirical body of knowledge of separation and divorce in Ireland.

³⁷ Mahon and Moore's (2011) study of parent-child contact agreements and arrangements based on attending and observing family law circuit cases, supported by the Office of the Minister for Children, provided the baseline data on parenting arrangements post separation. Their research described the ways in which legal separations and divorce decrees shape new forms of parenting patterns in Ireland. The research identified the kind of post separation/divorce child-parent-contact arrangements that are made in the process of legal separation and divorce in Ireland.

It also helps to inform and refine sociological theory by enabling us to examine how the respondents own accounts of intimate relationships and adjustment to post-separated parenting compare with the existing literature.

Access and Sampling

One of the main foci in this research examines the role of the law in assisting post-separation parenting and therefore it was necessary to focus only on separating parents who had instructed solicitors and had gone through the courts to terminate their marriage. Accordingly access was sought from several family law solicitors, those who worked with private and legal aid clients.³⁸ Three solicitors agreed to cooperate with me and they all expressed a willingness to ask their clients whether they would consider taking part in the research project. They agreed to send out a letter to their clients, (potential respondents) in order to explain the research. As part of this letter the respondents obtained an invitation to take part in an interview (see Appendix III). The letter also gave assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity. This letter was sent out as part of the correspondence that the solicitor was sending to his clients as part of his practice. The solicitor was advised that the study did not simply want to recruit parents who were part of acrimonious cases but also those which were less adversarial. The letter included a stamped addressed envelope (with the researcher's postal address) so that willing participants could reply to the request. At no stage was the researcher aware of the clients' details or case. The researcher first became aware of the separated parent when the acceptance letter was received by the researcher.

Despite the solicitors' goodwill, the pursuit of recruiting couples through family law solicitors proved ineffective. However, it was clear that a considerable number of solicitors refer clients who were experiencing difficulties with access and custody, to a family therapist. The research was more likely to obtain couples in sufficient numbers if

³⁸ The term legal aid client is being used to refer to individuals who are on lower incomes and are financially assessed for eligibility for free legal aid and are assisted by public funds. In order to be eligible for legal aid you must satisfy a means test and your annual disposable income must be less than €18,000. If this is not the case, you are required to pay for a solicitor from your own financial resources.

it approached this family therapist, who had direct access to both parents, in spite of the fact that they were likely to constitute a highly selected (higher levels of spousal conflict) and atypical group of family law clients. Thus, as the following section outlines, access to the sample involved two separate methods: those referred by family law solicitors (parent group) and those referred by the family therapist (couples).

Access to Parents

The researcher recruited a cohort of parents through solicitors so that the research could find parents that were recently or still part of legal proceedings. The researcher made preliminary contact with a leading member of the Law Society of Ireland. This member of the Law Society of Ireland expressed interest in the proposed study and a willingness to assist in the process of recruiting parents. It was suggested that separated parents be recruited from a mail-out from a private family law solicitor and referrals from two community family law centres. The use of both methods of recruiting separated parents sought to increase the diversity of the socio-economic mix of the sample.

Fifty letters were sent from a family law solicitor who worked exclusively with private clients. From the fifty letters sent out, twenty-nine separated parents agreed to take part in the interview. Fifty letters were also sent out by two solicitors working in two community law centres but there were no responses. The same method was used to recruit parents from the private family law solicitor, while the solicitor in the community law centre distributed cover letters, information sheets and invitations to take part in the interview.

Recruitment for the study through solicitors in family law centres proved to be more difficult than initially envisaged. Despite the solicitors' support, no 'legal aid' family law clients (potential respondents) were forthcoming from the community law centres. After waiting for an allocated time period of three months, the researcher abandoned trying to get respondents from the community law centre.

The use of a solicitor to act as a 'go between' was not a favourable means of approaching legal aid clients, i.e. separating parents from lower socio-economic groups. While all of

the gatekeepers approached were co-operative, this approach yielded no additional respondents for the study. It is believed that the lack of success in recruiting respondents from community law centres related to a number of fear factors, including: 1) fear of confidentiality being breached 2) a fear that it would affect the outcome as the participant's proceedings were ongoing and 3) a fear that the research interviewing may be emotionally traumatic. It is also possible that there were literacy and comprehension difficulties.

Perhaps a physical presence at the community law centres might have benefited the recruitment process. The benefits of being physically 'on the spot' may have improved recruitment by forging closer links with the solicitors in the community law centres. As access to clients through the 'community law' solicitors was much more problematic, I expected that the practitioners too might have perceived the research as an evaluation/appraisal of their approaches and methods.

Access to Couples

At the end of each interview with a separated parent, the researcher requested the permission to contact the interviewee's ex-spouse. The recruitment of marital sets proved challenging. The response rate from the interviewee's ex-spouse was poor and only one ex-spouse agreed to participate in the research. Consequently other means of recruiting marital sets were attempted, including contacting one-parent centres and family therapists.

In each instance, the researcher talked informally with the therapist and staff at the one parent agencies in order to discuss the research further and answer any questions they had. The meeting with the one-parent agency was challenging, and strong reluctance to participate with the research was expressed. However, negotiations with the family therapist were better, although the family therapist had certain misgivings about approaching new clients. It was suggested that the therapist would approach older/former clients who were no longer attending the therapist. The therapist agreed to give these former clients information about the study to both spouses of the couple. The manner in

which the therapist contacted his former clients appeared to be more protected and sensitive than of the family law solicitor. The therapist decided that a series of telephone discussions and meetings about the research was a better way to inform the clients about the research. This method proved to work well and five marital sets were willing to participate.

Sampling

The method of sampling for this research was convenient/ opportunistic. Given the highly sensitive nature of marital breakdown, direct access to a divorcing parent sample was not available to the researcher. The selection of a non-probable, purposive group of respondents from either the solicitor or family therapist was simply not possible. The researcher had no direct communication with the respondents and all contact was between the solicitor and client and/or therapist and client. The only way of achieving more control over the sample would have been to have direct contact with the clients themselves but that was entirely impossible.

Contextual Interview with Solicitors

Before interviews with the parents commenced, I conducted interviews with ten family law solicitors. The aim of the interviews was to discover the perspectives of legal advisers on the process and practice of family law negotiations and its relationship to the separation process. Solicitors were approached through the Law Society of Ireland and were contacted by the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper was given a clear specification of the types of solicitors sought, and asked to approach solicitors who met the criteria to inform them about the research study. The researcher provided the gatekeeper with a short note on the nature of the study to issue to potential participants. In order to ensure that the anonymity of the solicitors remained in place at all times, the solicitors, who were willing to participate, were given an 'opt in' option and if they were willing to participate then the gatekeeper passed on their contact details to the researcher (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:98).

The solicitors worked in different types of legal practices around the country, i.e. big legal firms, legal aid centres and sole practitioners. The study sought to include solicitors that varied along the lines of experience, size of firm, gender, location and characteristics of their client base³⁹. The research selected solicitors across a range of city centre and suburban practices. Of the ten solicitors that participated in the study, two were male and eight were female⁴⁰. The vast majority of the participants were family law specialists⁴¹ and the majority were practicing in Dublin. Participants included senior partners, sole practitioners and solicitors who worked for the Legal Aid Board.

A considerable body of literature and research exists on the topic of solicitors' roles in managing divorced and separated families (Eekelaar Macclean and Beinart, 2000; Sarat, 1995; Wright, 2006, 2007). The interview guide was developed on the basis of findings from previous studies and was designed to allow respondents a certain amount of flexibility in sharing their views about their experiences of the divorce or separation process. As a result, in-depth, semi-structured interviews as opposed to unstructured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate method of data collection for the solicitor sample for this study. Key questions were asked in the same way each time and some probing was conducted. The probing was more limited than in the unstructured, in-depth interviews with the parents. The interview explored the following areas 1) taking instructions on parenting arrangements 2) managing access arrangements 3) relationship with clients 4) interface between families and the law. A full version of the interview guide for the solicitor sample can be seen in Appendix V.

³⁹ Some of the solicitors were practising in firms where the client base was predominantly middle class and privately funded, while other solicitors in the sample were employed by the Legal Aid Board where clients are financially assessed for eligibility and are assisted by public funds. In order to be eligible for legal aid you must satisfy a means test and your annual disposable income must be less than €18,000.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately there are no figures on the gender breakdown of family law solicitors in Ireland however anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of female family law solicitors far outweighs the number of male family law solicitors.

⁴¹ The definition of a family law specialist being adopted in this study is that provided by J. Eekelaar, M. Maclean, and S Beinart in "Family solicitors – the workforce [1998] Fam Law 673. The authors describe a family law specialist as a practitioner who spends at least 50% of their fee earning time on family work.

Key Sample Characteristics

The only criterion on which a respondent was selected was that a parent had to have been separated for at least one year. Therefore parents who were at the very early stages of separation were excluded from the sample. There were two strong reasons for wishing do to this. Firstly, one of the main aims of the research was to explore parents' experiences of the legal process, so it was essential that parents had adequate experience with legal actors (solicitors and courts) which was best done in the second or third year following the initial separation. Secondly, the researcher had great reservations about seeking to interview divorcing parents so early after the breakdown of a relationship at a time when emotions would be intense. The following section will firstly outline some of the key characteristics of the parent sample before identifying key characteristics of the couple sample.

Sample Characteristics of Parents

From the respondents' characteristics, I was interested to examine how the sample was represented along a number of key criteria which have been considered important to understanding the factors that affect post-separation parenting (Smart and Neale, 1999; Trinder et al., 2002; Simpson et al., 1995). These characteristics include the following: 1) gender 2) age of respondent 3) length of marriage 4) legal status 5) time since separation 6) socio-economic background 7) re-partnering status 6) ages and number of children 7) custody status of respondent.

The sample of parents contained sixteen mothers and thirteen fathers. The spread of the ages of the respondents was broad-ranging from mid-thirties to mid-fifties. Six out of the twenty-nine parents resided in rural communities (population $\leq 5,000$) and twenty-three were suburban dwellers. Contrary to expectation, there was a broad and even spread in the duration of respondents' marriages with no particular length of marriage being more vulnerable to marital breakdown than another (White, 1991 as cited in Amato and Previtti, 2003:606). Three-quarters of the respondents were married between ten and

twenty years (twenty-two out of twenty-nine respondents), while just under one-fifth of marriages lasted less than ten years.

Table 4 below indicates how the gender of the respondents was divided evenly between mothers and fathers. The table also highlights that there were more separated parents in the sample than there were divorced parents. The number of separating parents recruited is also a reflection of the way the sample was obtained. Recruiting parents from a family law solicitor meant that parents were still involved in legal proceedings and the majority had not yet obtained a divorce.

Table 4: Gender of Parent by Marital Status (N=29)

	Male	Female	Total
Separated	9	7	16
Divorced	4	9	13
Total	13	16	29

At the time of the interview, the average time since separation for a respondent was 3.1 years and the average time for divorce was 1.6 years. This distribution of time since separation is reflective of sampling parents that were at least one year separated. The spread of time since separation was valuable because it assisted analysis of the role time plays in the experience of adjusting to post-separated life. This distribution also allowed for the study to examine the changes in contact arrangements over time.

For the purpose of analysis the sample was also divided along the lines of social class which was defined on the basis of occupation (Central Statistics Office, 2006).⁴²

⁴² Social class groups (introduced in 1996) are defined on the basis of the following occupation: 1 Professional workers 2 Managerial and technical 3 Non-manual 4 Skilled manual 5 Semi-skilled 6 Unskilled. All others gainfully occupied and unknown. The occupations included in each of these groups have been selected in such a way as to bring together, as far as possible, people with similar levels of occupational skill (Central Statistics Office, 1996). In determining social class no account is taken of the differences between individuals on the basis of other characteristics such as education. Accordingly social class ranks occupations by the level of skill required on a social class scale ranging from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest). This scale combines occupations into six groups by occupation and employment status following procedures similar to those outlined above for the allocation of socio-economic group. A residual category 'All others gainfully occupied and unknown' is used where no precise allocation is possible.

Questions about income were not asked but the occupation of a respondent indicated the social class of the respondent. The study was therefore able to divide the sample into the different socio-economic strata. Twelve participants were categorised as professional workers, twelve were managerial, four participants were technical workers and one participant was unemployed. On the basis of the respondents' occupations, over three-quarters (approx 80%) of the respondents may be regarded as white collar middle class, whereas less than one quarter (17%) are working class. White collar workers appear to be over represented in the study groups. This over-representation of white collar, middle class respondents is again reflective of the sampling method adopted by the study. The recruitment of respondents from a well-established private family law solicitor, who specialised in Circuit and High Court family law cases and did not do any District court cases⁴³, moulded the sample to reflect the experiences of separation in middle class families. Despite the over-representation of a middle-class status, there is an adequate range of socio-economic groups in the study to examine how experiences of post-separation parenting can be influenced by social class and income.

There were four participants who had remarried, twelve participants who had re-partnered,⁴⁴ and thirteen who neither re-partnered nor remarried since the separation. The inclusion of separated parents who had re-partnered and/or remarried is an important aspect of understanding the experiences of post separation as the literature suggests that new parental relationships can be a problem for many families (Peacey and Hunt, 2009:74). Table 5 below outlines the gender of the parent by custody status. Sixteen participants regarded themselves as the resident parent (primary carer), of whom one was male and fifteen were female. Twenty seven parents had joint custody and two parents had sole custody of their children.

⁴³ The Circuit and High Court have concurrent jurisdiction in the area of Family Law. The Circuit Court has jurisdiction in a wide range of family law proceedings, (judicial separation, divorce, nullity and appeals from the District Court). In hearing such cases, the Circuit Court has jurisdiction to make related orders, including custody and access orders, maintenance and barring orders.

⁴⁴ The study defined re-partnering when the new partner is either residing with the parent or has been introduced to the children.

Table 5: Gender of Parent by Custody Status (N=29)

	Male	Female	Total
Resident Parent	1	15	16
Non-resident Parent	12	1	13
Total	13	16	29

It appears that non-resident females and resident males are under-represented in the study. This is largely due to the fact that females tend to be the primary carer and are very rarely the non-resident parent. The breakdown of custody status per gender is unknown in Ireland but recent findings from the Family Law Reporting Project demonstrate that women are the primary carers in the vast majority of the cases (Court Services, 2007a:27). The difficulty with recruiting non-resident mothers and resident fathers is reflective of the predominant custody status of separated/divorced women in Ireland. This sample mismatch does not constitute a weakness in the context of the study as the purpose of the study is to characterise depth of data collection rather than breadth in terms of sample size (Ritchie et al., 2003:104). This means that the study focuses on the experiences of resident mothers more than non-resident mothers and non-resident fathers more so than resident fathers. The experiences of both resident mothers and non-resident fathers are highly complex, calling for explanation in the light of a larger number of cases.

The number of children each respondent had varied from one dependent child to five dependent children. The ranges of ages of the children varied from two to twenty-three. The wide distribution of age ranges for the children will provide the study with detailed understandings of post-separation parenting for both older and younger children. The collection of this data will allow the study to compare the experiences of post-separation parenting when the age of the child differs.

There are two further characteristics worth noting. The first concerns the number of respondents who received a barring order. Eight out of the twenty-nine respondents were served with a barring order. The second characteristic is that three respondents made a

Section 47 application.⁴⁵ The application of further court orders, in addition to an application for a judicial separation or divorce, indicates a high level of animosity in these cases. These respondents seem to represent a group of high conflict cases which again is reflective of the recruitment of respondents through a family law practice. This appears to be an additional limitation of the couple sample who appear to be over-representative of adversarial divorces.

The description of the sample demonstrates how the sample accumulated provided the study with a diverse range of experiences of separating parents. The limitations are the under-representation of 1) separating parents from the lower socio-economic groups 2) non-resident mothers and resident fathers. The following section will outline the key characteristics of the couples.

Sample Characteristics of Couples

As explained above the subsample of ten marital couples were recruited from a family therapist. The most noticeable feature of the marital couples was that all of the couples had been embroiled in long and fierce custody battles. The presence of intense hostility amongst the sample reflects the sampling method used. All of the couples were ordered by the court to attend this family therapist. The family therapist's duty is to assess the couple and children and make a recommendation to the court, regarding the best outcome in relation to the custody and access of the child. In such cases, the family therapist works together with the family to try and agree a parenting arrangement that meets the best interests of the child. Therefore all the couples were involved in the preparation of a Section 47 report. The couples were therefore chosen on the basis of two criteria: first that they and/or their partners had approached or had been referred to the family therapist; and second, that they were well established clients of the family therapist, i.e.

⁴⁵ Section 47 of the Family Law Act 1995 confers jurisdiction on the Circuit and High Court when hearing family proceedings to get a welfare assessment report which can relate to the welfare of either an adult or a child involved in the proceedings. These reports are most frequently ordered where there is a dispute over the guardianship, custody of or access to the children.

they were not recent clients of the therapist. The study will outline some of the characteristics of the couples.

The spread of the ages of the couples at the time of the interview is broad: one couple were in their mid-thirties, two couples were in their mid-forties and two couples were in their mid-fifties. There was also a broad spread in the duration of the couples' marriages with no particular length of marriage being more susceptible than another. Two couples were married for less than ten years while the other three couples were married for almost twenty years each. A common characteristic shared by all the couples, which reflects the sampling used, is that they recently separated in the last two or three years.

On the basis of both husbands' and wives' occupations, four of the marriages may be regarded as middle class, while only one couple was working class. All but one of the wives had been to university and all but one of the husbands had obtained a third level degree. Neither of the parents in the working class couple had obtained formal educational qualifications beyond school-leaving examinations. The majority of the wives in the couple sample continued to work throughout the marriage, albeit on a full time or part-time basis. Two of the couples were dual income households during the marriage, two of the households were one-and-a-half-income households while only one couple was a single income household. The fact that all of the couples had enough assets to divide between each other and set up two separate houses after the separation is also suggestive of an middle class imbalance.

The spread of ages of the respondents' children is extensive: two couples had at least two children under five, whereas the other three couples were divided equally between those whose youngest child was of school age and those whose children were attending university. A common feature of the couples, which again reflects the sampling used, is that all couples had at least one child aged eleven or younger at the time of separation. It was in relation to the younger children only that parents requested the assistance of the family therapist. The number of children in each couple also varied extensively: two couples had three children, one couple had four children, one couple had two children and one couple had one child.

Instrument (Data Collection)

The research in this thesis is based on individual in-depth interviews with separated parents and separated couples. A more detailed version of the interview guide for the parent is outlined in Appendix IV. Three initial interviews were carried out to test the scope of the interview guide and several changes were made to the guide. The main change that was made was the manner in which I led the interviews. Following on from the pilot interviews it became clear that this sample had a lot to say about their experiences and once they had agreed to take part, my role in leading the interview was to only insert key questions at important stages, without interrupting the flow of the respondent. After carrying out the pilot interviews I realised that too many questions interfered with allowing the participants to tell the story of their experience of the separation, so I changed the way in which I carried out the interviewing and only used the questions on the interview schedule as a prompt. The same data collection method and interview schedule was used for the parent and couple sample.

As with other exploratory studies, in-depth, unstructured interviews as opposed to semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate method of data collection for the study (Mason, 2002; May, 2001; Patton, 2002). Due to the exploratory nature of the study, data collection was less structured as there is little known about marital breakdown and post-separation parenting in Ireland. I took a largely open-ended exploratory approach for a major part of the interviews, seeking to cover aspects of the marital relationship, the divorce process and the parenting relationship post separation. Unstructured in-depth interviews involved a broad agenda which mapped the issues to be explored across the sample but the order and way in which they were followed varied across the interviews. As a result, each interview comprised its own particular focus, namely the specific experiences, relationship and responsibilities of that interviewee.

The ordering of data collection was designed to put respondents at ease (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:112). The order in which topics were addressed varied and there were three main areas which the interview explored. A more detailed version of the interview guide for the parent sample is outlined in Appendix IV. The first stage of the interview related

to the nature of the separation,⁴⁶ i.e. this area attempted to explore present and past relationship with the former spouse and the overall experience of the initial stages of the separation. The research explored how the parents physically separated and how the parents experienced the move out of the marital home. The research was also keen on finding out how the parents experienced the legal system and other systems they encountered in the context of ending the marriage, i.e. the courts, mediators, counsellors, family therapists etc.

The second stage of the interview focused on decisions the parents made about their children since the separation. This stage focused the parents' attention on how they manage post-separation contact, i.e. the frequency of contact, where contact takes place, what happens on contact, how the children move between the two houses etc. This stage of the interview also explored how the parents made decisions about the children and coordinated rules across two households. It examined how parents discussed with each other matters concerning the welfare of their children.

The third stage of the interview focussed the parents' attention on their satisfaction with the parenting arrangement and/or the financial arrangements overall. This stage of the interview acted as a form of evaluation of how things have developed since the separation. This stage examined the areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the overall parenting and financial arrangements since the separation.

In order to assist in the collection of demographic data, each interviewee was requested to complete a personal information sheet at the end of the interview. The study was keen to ascertain some key demographic data which assisted with the analysis of the research. On completion of the interview, the researcher recorded other items from what they heard or saw outside the immediate context of the interview. These notes were written up as field notes in the interview data summary form which was completed as soon as the interview was concluded.

⁴⁶ It is difficult to make sense of separated family life without knowledge of how family life was experienced during the marriage. This is due to the way respondents often engaged in the process of making sense of current practices by reference to the past. Respondents often made sense of current experiences/behaviour or actions by comparing and contrasting with behaviours in the past.

The parent and couple respondents were often people in distress. Many of the most straightforward questions provoked feelings of immense pain and sadness. It became clear in the study, particularly for the men, that the disclosure of such personal details was quite new. It enabled many to have a relatively full and uninterrupted airing of their story, which led them to open up their personal and social world, perhaps something that solicitor involvement did not permit. Many explained how they had waited for this opportunity to express 'their side of the story' in order to reveal the truth about what happens at separation. For many, the interview acted as a means of learning more about what happens to parents in these situations. Sometimes they asked whether what they said was 'normal' so managing to stand firm was an important part of the interviewing process but this was extremely difficult at times. All parents expressed how they felt lost during the first few years following the separation as they were left without any 'road maps' or 'guideposts' for their future. The decision to participate was based on their interest in helping other separating parents in the future who would find themselves in similar situations as these parents.

Location

The majority of the interviews with the parents and couples took place in the researcher's office. Twenty interviews took place in the researcher's office; seven took place in the respondents' place of work; seven took place in cafes or hotels and five took place in the respondent's house. These locations were chosen on the basis of the respondents' preferences and convenience. All respondents were interviewed one-on-one. The interviews were audio-recorded subject to interviewees' consent, which was given in all instances without reservation. Duration of interviews ranged from 90 to 150 minutes. During a small number of interviews, respondents became emotional or upset, whereupon the interviewers asked whether the individual wished to terminate the interview or to take a break. However, no respondents wished to do so and all appeared to see the interview as an opportunity to highlight the challenges involved in post-separation parenting.

Data Analysis

All the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and typed up. The interview data was analysed by the framework approach as advanced by Ritchie, Spence and O'Connor (2003:213). They describe this form of analysis as a form of 'conceptual scaffoldings' as the analysis is made up of a series of stages which involve different analytical tasks (Ritchie, Spence and O'Connor, 2003:213). This first stage involved sorting and reducing the data by generating a set of themes and concepts according to which the data were labelled, sorted and synthesised. In this first stage of analysis, I read the entire transcripts to identify emerging concepts and themes. I went through each of the transcripts systematically and created free nodes, using the NVivo 8 (QSR International) software coding system identifying each theme of interest.

As recommended by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) this process was conducted in order to construct a thematic framework. For each of the main topic areas that were of central interest I created codes arising from the data from the transcripts and arranged them in themes as they arose. I sorted and grouped them under a smaller number of broader categories and placed them within the overall framework. As a result, sixteen thematic codes were identified. At this stage, I organised two 'peer auditing' sessions in order to conduct a consistency check with respect to my capacity to explore and identify themes and concepts accurately (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Theoretically, efforts to triangulate data, method, researcher, and theory to bolster accuracy and reliability are all convergent with the inherent logic of transactional validity in qualitative research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 230–2 as cited in Cho and Trent, 2006:323).

The second stage of analysis involved the write up of descriptive accounts of the key themes by identifying key dimensions and mapping the range and diversity of key events and observations. Descriptive analysis was conducted by unpacking the content and nature of each theme and concept. Having completed these first two stages, I began to make sense of the evidence. It became clear at this stage that there were distinct

similarities and differences between certain respondents and their experience of their conjugal role and post separated role.

The third stage of the research involved mapping key concepts and the researcher interpreted these concepts by creating typologies. Typologies have been described by Patton (2002:457) as ‘classification systems made up of categories that divide some aspect of the world into parts along a continuum’. The researcher chose to use typologies to help describe and explain the different experiences of roles and relationships that were developed post separation. Typologies evolved from the data and were based on the post-separation relationships between the parents and in particular each parents’ relationship with the children of the marriage. All of the cases fitted into one of the categories derived from the data. Constant checking and adjusting of the dimensions of the typology defined what underlay the discrimination between each category (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As a result, the categories were gradually modified and refined. For example, in the analysis of respondents’ contact post separation the research distinguished between weekday overnight, weekend overnight, ‘day only’ contact and limited or infrequent contact. The variation of post-separation contact across the sample is one of the defining features of each group. This stage of the analysis was the most challenging. I developed detailed and subtle categories from the various aspects of the respondents’ stories in which I was most interested, and I began to examine the different components of the analysis in relation to one another.

The five groups of parents that were identified were as follows: 1) egalitarians 2) involved but constrained 3) involved but stressed (couples) 4) aggrieved mothers and 5) excluded fathers. Once I had developed the typologies, I looked for similarities and differences among the groups. I examined issues such as the following: 1) age of parents 2) age of children 3) time since separation 4) length of marriage 5) type of household income during the marriage 6) nature of the break up (i.e. long period of mutual complaints v sudden announcement 7) type of settlement reached (e.g. mediated agreement, court based) 8) amount of parent-child contact 9) type of co-parenting (shared, parallel, disengaged) 10) level of ongoing conflict.

The final stage of the analysis was finished by providing an explanation about why the data took the forms that were found in the various groups. I found that the typologies were reflective of the conjugal roles that were at play during the marriage. The parents in each group represented changes (discontinuities and continuities) that were taking place in family roles and practices. The egalitarians demonstrated a striking discontinuity between family practices before and after divorce. However, the aggrieved parents and excluded fathers demonstrated a strong continuity in their segregated conjugal roles and gendered practices both before and after the separation. The egalitarians demonstrated most convincingly how they discontinued their pre-divorce parenting practices. From the beginning of the separation, the men opted to be equally involved in parenting and they became active fathers. As we can see, these parents re-created their family practices along non-gendered principles, and the division of paid and unpaid work became equal. The egalitarians appeared to have no more bargaining strength than their former spouse. Their interactions appear to be guided by rules of fairness and sharing within a functional co-parenting relationship. At the other end of the continuum, the aggrieved parents and excluded fathers continued traditional family and parenting practices post separation and did not re-create new roles after the separation. The fathers had little involvement in unpaid work and the mother had little involvement in paid work both before and after the separation.

Overall these four analytical stages were iterative and the researcher often moved between the original data and the conceptualisation, abstraction and interpretation derived from the data. In presenting the analysis the study uses a small number of tables and figures, but for the most part the study adheres to the conventional mode of data exposition in qualitative research, namely the extensive use of verbatim quotes. The full and appropriate use of the evidence is done both in order to back up argumentation and in order to demonstrate respect for the 'voice' of the parents and solicitors who participated in the study. The findings are presented in the following four chapters.

Limitations and Researcher Effects

This last section of the chapter highlights the limitations of the study that should be borne in mind when interpreting the results. The first limitation of the study pertains to the limits of the inferences that the study achieves. As an explorative, qualitative study, the sample was a non-probable convenient sample. This means that it is not possible to generalise the results of the study to the broader population of separated/divorced parents. A related limitation pertains to the inability to draw inferences between dependent and independent variables, such as the nature of the parenting arrangement adopted post separation and the employment status of both parents; in order to yield firm conclusions about relationships between variables, a much larger, random sample would have been necessary.

As described above, it was not possible at the sampling stage to ensure that the parents sampled for the study represented a diverse range of experiences of changing personal relationships. The sample therefore does not necessarily provide 'symbolic representation' as it does not include the full spectrum of dimensions that are thought to be significant in shaping the experience of post-separation parenting. As a result, the study is limited in how it can conjecture and hypothesise about possible factors and circumstances that influence the diverse range of experiences, behaviours and needs within the sample.

The study is of a retrospective kind. An exploration of how parents uncouple and experience the divorce process, from the vantage point of three to ten years on, involves unravelling the processes which have taken place in the past and runs the risk of respondents reconstructing the past from the vantage point of the present.

Another limitation of the sample was that the parents were self-selecting. All participants were actively involved or were keen to express their experience of separation. This may introduce a prejudice towards participants who wanted and were able to talk about their experiences. This sampling strategy may create a bias in many different directions, both towards those who are managing relatively well and those who are still really struggling with the separation (and were probably not prepared to be interviewed).

While the fact that the respondents were not all marital sets is on the face of it a disadvantage, one can also argue that it creates less of a reporting partiality. Mandemakers and Dykstra (2008:495) argue that there is higher selection and social desirability bias due to self-enhancement, family obligations, dissatisfaction with received support and relationship quality in studies where respondents are linked (Mandemakers and Dykstra, 2008:496). In short, notwithstanding the advantages in collecting dyadic data on personal relationships, there are also methodological concerns with this approach.

The sampling of marital sets through a family therapist led to a further limitation within the research. This sample of five couples represents an overly-hostile group, who are unable to agree a parenting schedule. The most noticeable feature of the marital couples was that all of the couples had been embroiled in long and fierce custody battles. The accounts presented by these couples represent the more problematic separations.

Despite these limitations to the research, the study has a great deal of information about what the parents in the sample had to say about parenting post separation. From this I have distilled the key concepts, themes and differences between parents' experiences of dissolving a marriage and adjusting to parenting post separation.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Social Work and Social Policy in Trinity College Dublin in 2007. All relevant ethical issues were taken into account when conducting the research, most importantly, the researcher ensured that the well-being and interests of those participating in the research were safeguarded at all times. The researcher provided sample members with information about what the research was about, who was undertaking it and financing it, why it was being undertaken, and how it will be disseminated. A copy of the information sheet for the separated parents and solicitors is provided in Appendix VI and VII respectively. As in any research study, the researcher obtained sample members' informed consent to participate in the study. The researcher ensured that their consent

was based on full knowledge of all material matters including the purpose of the research, funding sources and intentions regarding dissemination. Informed consent was also based on an understanding that participation was voluntary. The researcher also ensured that each parent and solicitor were aware that should they wish to withdraw from the interview, they could do so at any time and that they did not need to give any reasons or explanations for doing so. A copy of the consent form for the separated parents and the solicitor is provided in Appendix VIII and IX respectively. One copy of this consent form, including researcher's contact details, was left with the participant allowing them to contact the researcher with any questions or concerns (for example, if they wished to withdraw from the research after the interview was completed). The other copy of the consent form was signed by the participant and kept by the researcher as a record. In addition to ensuring that all respondents were happy to take part in the research and understood the purpose and nature of the study, information on a support group for people experiencing marital, relationship and family problems was provided to all interviewees.

The study involved parties who belong to a vulnerable group, i.e. separating parents. However, in order to protect their interests, the researcher protected the rights of those studied, their sensitivities and privacy. In presenting the data, the researcher used appropriate and practicable methods for preserving the anonymity of data. Such methods included the removal of identifiers and the use of pseudonyms. I have changed not only respondents' names but occasionally I have also altered their occupations, number or ages of children in order to preserve their anonymity. The following specific measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity: 1) all major identifiers (names of individuals, specific locations, etc.) were removed from research materials (i.e. transcripts) 2) all research records were kept in a locked, secure location to which only the researcher involved had access; and 3) all research materials (i.e. transcripts) were stored separately from identifying materials (i.e. signed consent forms).

***'Degrees of Reflexivity'*⁴⁷**

Ritchie and Lewis, (2003:13) outline that “in the social world, people are affected by the process of being studied and that the relationship between the researcher and social phenomena is interactive.” I have been strongly influenced by the notion of ‘emphatic neutrality’, a position that recognises that research cannot be value free but which advocates that researchers should make their assumptions transparent (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:13). In so doing, I will demonstrate my efforts to remain committed to being as objective and neutral as possible but consider some of the challenges that arose throughout the research.

This research is not a purist grounded theory approach in that I had some familiarity with the theoretical and empirical literature in the area before I began my data collection and analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 75) have cautioned that ‘ the trouble is that researchers often fail to see much of what is there because they come to analytic sessions wearing blinders, composed of assumptions, experiences and immersion in the literature’. However I attempted to be open from what emerged in the data and didn’t begin the analysis with preconceived categories or typologies, but allowed the typologies to emerge from the data. For example, the pilot interviews highlighted that I needed to look more closely at the intact marital relationship rather than starting at the point of separation, so I adjusted the interview schedule accordingly. The significance of the marital relationship resulted in a re-framing of my topic. While I was still interested in how parents manage life post separation, I began to focus on the link between the marital relationship and the post-separated relationship. This allowed me to consider the changes in the division of roles and responsibilities post separation, and the ways in which new conceptions of the self-developed in shaping peoples’ post separated identity.

Secondly, the interview process involves the production of knowledge and my co-authorship of this knowledge must be acknowledged. My difference to the interviewees may have been a resource as well as a limiting factor. At the time of the interviews I was married, childless and considerably younger than all of the interviewees. I had no

⁴⁷ This term was coined by Mauthner & Doucet (2003) in their paper on reflexivity in qualitative studies.

particular experience of separation or divorce either personally or through family members or friends. I believe I was viewed as old and mature enough to be genuinely warm and interested in their position. My status as a younger, childless woman rendered me less threatening than perhaps if I was a similar age than the respondents. The respondents were invited to ask questions during, before or after interviews, and at all times I answered questions honestly. Many respondents asked me whether I was married. In such instances, I did inform the interviewees that I had recently married. Answering the question may have coloured their perceptions of me and cause them to censor their own views or comments. The participant may have given less detailed responses on the grounds that I was 'one of those married people'. However the fact that I was only just married at the time of the interview created some distance between me as a married female and the participants' experience of marriage and separation. I had some experience of married life but because of my age and relatively brief experience, the participants could distance their experience from mine. In answering honestly, I believed I was viewed as unthreatening and different. I believe this facilitated a more conversational approach to the interview and helped to build a rapport (Legard et al, 2003:143).

Like the respondents I am middle class, white and Irish. However unlike half of the respondents I am female. Oakley (1998:709) described how 'gender permeates all aspects of social life and the qualitative interview involves processes of permanence and impression management; processes whereby interviewers and interviewees seek commonalities and differences, as well as enacting socio-cultural expectations regarding such things as 'femininity', manliness, professionalism and so on'. There has been some consideration in the literature as to whether 'the power brought by interviewee's 'maleness' usurps the power of the female researcher' or 'pressures to enact cultural ideals of masculinity' may 'cover up' key issues faced by men (Pini, 2005). In many instances, the male respondents used sexist language and demonstrated sexist beliefs which may have placed the men in a position of power in the interview. As a facilitator of men's narratives, I felt that being located in traditional discourses of femininity by male participants was also an advantage as I was viewed as unthreatening and different.

Keeping a non-judgemental stance about what they said was at times challenging, however there is evidence that I was successful in this, in that there were comments made by interviewees that in another context I would have challenged, and yet they seemed to be comfortable expressing these views to me.

Another potential problem I was conscious of was the commonly held belief that men incur 'difficulties in expressing intimate emotions' (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993:233). However more specific research on family life suggests that men taking part in such research perceived women to be 'naturally' more interested in the personal and emotional which made it easier and more acceptable to discuss personal matters with a female interviewer (Lohan, 2000). What became apparent during the course of the interviews was that the group of men who volunteered to take part in the study were, on the whole, very comfortable discussing their experiences and feelings in detail. Despite some men expressing doubt about the ability of 'men' to discuss emotional and intimate experiences with each other, their own behaviour in the interview setting contradicted these assumptions and beliefs, as Eoin demonstrated:

It is too personal to be talking about it, particularly with guys. I think women are better at that way of communicating, guys aren't that good. I mean it feels good to be talking about it here; I probably haven't done enough of this" (Eoin, 41 years old)

Eoin's quote above provides a striking example of the way in which men, in the presence of a female researcher, disclosed how they felt that they had been given space to think and discuss their experiences, a space that they might not otherwise have had with a male interviewer. The interview created a scenario in which the participant felt safe (protecting his sense of masculinity) disclosing feelings which he might have preferred to keep private or hidden from male interviewers. In this situation, gender incongruence can be seen as a resource and advantage.

One of the greatest challenges in this research was remaining objective and distant whilst interviewing formerly married couples. Interviews with the marital sets (former wives

and husbands) were conducted separately. There were many ways in which my objectivity may have been compromised whilst interviewing either individual from the marital set. Firstly, the disclosure of personal details from the spouse first interviewed could potentially impact my approach to the second interview. An abstract from my field notes that was written immediately after the interview with a female respondent from the marital set subsample revealed that the circumstances and timing of the interview could have directly influenced the research. Unbeknownst to me at the time, the interview took place immediately after she had handed over the children to her former spouse in an atmosphere of extreme tension. An abstract from my field notes read:

She arrived late and distressed because the father was collecting the children and the middle boy (2 years old) didn't want to go with the father (which apparently has been happening every time access occurs in the last few weeks). It took him twenty minutes to go with the father and he had to be forced – he was kicking and screaming. The interviewee was distressed upon arrival but she wanted to do the interview. She later informed me that she did not want to keep me waiting but she was still thinking of how her child was coping after a distressful handover. She frequently looked at her phone; I wasn't sure whether she was checking the time or checking to see if an SMS had come in reporting on her son's well-being. The mother got very emotional at the end of the interview – she said that it had been a while since she had gone through all of it and just wanted it to end.

I was conscious of the fact that she was unable to concentrate and focus on the interview after experiencing a difficult handover. I suggested several times that we re-schedule however she was unwilling to do that. I felt that she wanted to get 'her side of the story' down as she was aware that her former husband was taking part in the research. When I interviewed the father, he was more relaxed and told me that handovers worked best when his former wife was not present. He proceeded to give an example of how the wife had to rush off to a meeting the previous week and so the children had no option but to go quickly with the father. In fact, the mother was going to speak to me on this occasion. It was only after this interview with the father did I realise the extent of the distress experienced by all parties at the handover. However the father had understood the circumstances quite differently. He had interpreted the last 'quick' handover as a practice that could be adopted in the future. This thought gave him greater hope that handovers and access with his children would become less problematic. However the former wife

had informed me that it was a once-off because of the research interview. She explained how she needed to be around at handovers as the children were experiencing high levels of anxiety. As the father continued during the interview, I could not help to think about how these messages were being explained to me, a third party but the message was lost between the couple themselves. Although I approached the second interview with more information, I began to see how there were two stories to be told. I quickly learned how people could interpret the same event in completely different ways when the same event meant different things to each person. In doing so, I believe I remained more objective going into the marital set interviews as I realised there were two stories to be told.

Secondly, the situational context in which the interview took place may have affected the research. In one instance I interviewed a female respondent in her new home. During the interview the former husband called into the house to drop off something for their fourteen year old child. His presence disrupted the flow of the interview but more importantly, I was struck by the manner in which the former couple interacted at the doorstep. The interaction gave me a real insight into the level of animosity that remained two years after the separation. Seeing this tension in action was more real than hearing about it. Although I was concerned about how that interaction impacted on my perception of the couple as a whole, I believe that the interaction made the research experience more real as I gained at first hand, an example of the daily problems faced by each spouse.

The environment of the interview was also very informative. In one instance I interviewed a former husband in his home and his two young children were present. The father was talking openly about his ex-wife while his children were running in and out of the room. I began to feel quite uncomfortable as I felt that the young children were hearing largely negative stories about their parents' relationship. I tried to change the conversation when the children came into the room but the father told me that they were not listening. During the interview, the respondent's adult brother called into the house. As I was introduced to the brother, he uttered negative comments about the former wife. Again these comments all took place in front of the children and shed some light on the level of hostility in the particular case. The language, mood and environment of the

interview were extremely negative. Approaching the interview with the wife, with this contextual background was exceptionally challenging. A picture had been built up for me but I tried to put this picture to the back of my mind and focussed on her story.

Finally, all participants were aware that their former spouses were taking part in the research and many asked questions about what their former spouse had said in the interview. One mother warned me that when I spoke to her former husband, he would appear to be an eloquent, sophisticated, charming man. She was keen to make sure that I looked beyond this 'facade' and saw the man as she saw him: "a deceitful, selfish, dogmatic man". When I interviewed the father, he did appear very well-spoken, charming and 'normal'. As I had interviewed the wife first, I had created an image of the father in my head. I had tried to remain neutral in my thoughts and approach to the interview but at times I wonder whether I was influenced by the order in which I interviewed the spouses. Sometimes I was asked for my opinion of their story, situation or former spouse; in such instances I always managed to stand firm and to explain clearly the boundaries of my position and reflected the interview back onto their experience.

I must outline that I subscribe to the notion of 'degrees of reflexivity'. This phrase characterises the limitations to remaining emphatically neutral as it highlights the limits to what I was aware of at the time of data collection, i.e. the level and nature of the influences on the research both at the time of conducting it and in the years that follow. Mauthnew & Doucet (2003:425) argue that some influences are easy to identify and articulate at the time of the work while others may require more time, distance and detachment from the research. I have outlined the influences that were more easily identifiable however I endeavour to reflect on other potential influences of the research as I continue to engage with the data.

Managing the Research Process

It is important to remember that researchers can inadvertently place themselves in harmful situations both physically and psychologically. Lee (1997) talked about "interviewer vulnerability" and in deciding to interview relatively unknown people in their own homes, I was conscious of my own potential vulnerability. I took the precaution

of leaving the time and location of the interview with a trusted person and I had my mobile phone with an emergency number ready to dial. In researching sensitive and vulnerable groups of divorcees, I was also conscious of placing myself unwittingly in stressful and anxiety-producing situations. At the end of each interview I regularly turned to two colleagues to discharge what I had so strongly felt during the interview but could not unleash. Since these interviews were inevitably deep and sensitive, it was crucial for me to be able to promote and maintain a sense of balance and containment, and this arrangement proved very helpful for this cause.

Analysis and write up of the marital sets data proved to be the most challenging aspect of the research. When members of the one family or couple report their personal experiences from their own unique and diverse perspectives, how are the differing accounts to be interpreted and presented? Multiple interviews helped to reveal the complexities, contradictions and tensions in people's accounts and in their daily lives however attention and caution must be paid to the conflicting attitudes and feelings expressed by the marital sets. Extreme caution was taken in unravelling perceptions and in taking account of the respondents' feelings. I was conscious of placing either individual from the marital set in danger and so caution was exercised in concealing the identities of the respondents from the public but also from their former spouses. Gabb (2010) described how it is "extremely difficult to conceal the identity of someone from those around them – those who know their story". Family research has outlined that the most obvious way is to avoid producing family case studies (Mauthner, 1997). It is for that reason, that chapter seven will follow a slightly different layout. Chapter 7 will generate thematic connections across marital sets rather than pulling together the individual threads of a couple's story. In doing so, I feel that I am honouring the research relationship and protecting the identity and confidentiality of the respondents.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the reasons for adopting a qualitative, interpretative approach to the exploration and analysis of decision-making have been outlined. The actual methods used

and access, sampling and conducting of the interviews have been discussed. The next five chapters will describe the findings according to each group, i.e. the egalitarians, involved but constrained parents, the involved but stressed couples, the aggrieved parents and the excluded fathers. Within each chapter, the study explores two important aspects: firstly I examine the descriptions of the respondents' experiences of ending their marriages and, secondly I examine the experience of parenting post separation.

Chapter 5: Egalitarians

Both of us are completely committed to the children. That is the main thing and actually I am the dad and she is the mum and no matter what we do we are always going to be, so our approach was we will try and make it as best as possible as we can for the kids.

Gary, 45 years old, separated 2 years

Who are the Egalitarians?

This chapter explores the experiences of the ‘egalitarians’ who share equally their parenting and their time with the children after the separation. This group of five mothers and one father represent a very significant group of Irish parents as they indicate the changes that are taking place in family practices. The egalitarians operate to varying degrees joint conjugal roles⁴⁸ and are dual earner couples.⁴⁹ When faced with the re-negotiating of their roles and behaviours at a time of separation, these parents adopted a non-gendered, egalitarian approach to this reconstruction which moves away from traditional gender roles within Irish society.

A distinctive feature of this chapter is the possibility it creates for analysing the changes (discontinuity) that are taking place in family practices. The dual-income couple poses an important contrast to other family forms in the sample set and allows us to examine the effect that the couples’ working lives have on gender roles both during and after the marriage. Secondly it allows us to examine whether the attainment of equal economic status by husbands and wives leads to egalitarian division of labour and authority both during and after marriage. Research on dual income marriages is mixed about whether joining two careers in one family leads to significant changes in gender roles (Hochschild, 1989; Hertz, 1986; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). Some argue that there is greater equality in the division of labour in two income households (Coltrane, 1990, Schwartz,

⁴⁸ The research has adopted a meaning of joint conjugal role by defining the sharing of childcare tasks at least as an ideological commitment (Bott, 1971:52). Jointness can refer to normative values rather than actual practice of sharing certain tasks. The respondents’ conjugal roles were assessed ‘relative’ to the rest of the sample rather than being absolute. Additionally the study allowed for both an internal and external perspective when considering the sexual division of labour.

⁴⁹ The egalitarians involved a mix of dual-career and dual-job couples. The differences between jobs and careers were found in relation to the income generated and the time demands required.

1994). While other evidence points to fathers reluctant engagement in wives' traditional domains and claims that the release of women from domestic chores does not lead to gender equality in marriage (Pleck, 1977, Edgwell, 1980; Breen and Cooke, 2005; Baxter et al., 2005). Risman and Johnson Sumerford (1998:25) also highlighted how the meaning of sharing equally in family work in the literature has evolved from an 'ideological commitment to a documentable reality' over the past three decades. This chapter presents interesting comparisons about how this group of parents make sense of parenting and relationships both before and after separation.

In addition, the data presented below makes it possible to assess the relative importance of the democratisation thesis for the renegotiation of roles and behaviours post separation. In light of Giddens's arguments for the democratisation thesis, we might expect that the democratisation of Irish society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within intimate relationships. The men and women in this group who have all renegotiated their roles and behaviour post separation might be assumed to have discontinued their gendered parenting practices based on a shift in gender ideology which largely shaped the division of unpaid work during the marriage. Their post-separated division of unpaid work appeared to be based on gender equality ideals. However, as we shall see, the reality is more complex and the role of each former spouse in sustaining shared parenting will be explored.

Profile of the Egalitarians

Table 6 below shows that the egalitarian group comprises of five mothers and one father. At the time of the interviews in 2008, the majority of the parents in this category were in their early forties. While four of the marriages had been long marriages, which lasted over fifteen years, two of the marriages were of moderate length, lasting just over ten years. They separated within the last four years and in all cases, the parents were able to agree a settlement, without recourse to the courts. In half of the cases, the parents were able to agree a settlement through mediation. The egalitarians had young families, with each parent having a child or children under the age of eight at the time of separation.

Table 6: Profile of Egalitarian Parents

Name	Age	Age of Children	Length of Marriage	Time Since Separation	Household Type	Settlement
Sandra	43	9, 5	18	1	Dual Income	Agreed between Parties
Carol	42	17, 14, 10, 10	20	2	Dual Income	Agreed between Parties
Patricia	42	16, 14, 13, 10	20	3	Dual Income	Mediation
Gary	45	15, 13, 11, 9	16	2	Dual Income	Mediation
Mona	38	13, 10	10	4	Dual Income	Agreed between Parties
Laura	38	13, 11, 8	12	4	One and a Half	Mediation

**The research has differentiated the types of settlement reached into three classifications, namely 1) mediated 2) solicitor-based (including 'on the steps of the court'⁵⁰) and 3) court-based (adjudicated). Although there were additional applications made by the respondents (application for discovery, relocation, interim maintenance), the settlement reached in this table refers to the separation or divorce settlement only.*

Table 6 also indicates that egalitarians were largely part of dual income or one-and-a-half income households. The egalitarians had all completed third level education. The mothers in this group had a strong commitment to the workforce. Sandra, Carol and Mona were employed full-time during and after the separation. Gary was employed full-time during his marriage and his ex-wife had a part-time job during and after the separation. Patricia had been employed part-time during the marriage. Laura was the only parent who had been a homemaker both before and after the separation and was seeking to return to education at the time of the interview.

⁵⁰ Most family law litigation ends in settlement, (Coulter, 2009) however the settlement may be achieved late in the day, on the steps of the court and after lengthy adversarial battle.

In the following section, I outline the story of three egalitarians which demonstrate how different combinations of factors play a part in their ability to discontinue the traditional division of labour and transform their behaviour and role and adopt an egalitarian approach to post-separation parenting. These accounts highlight different issues which allow the research to draw out several analytical points about the way in which the egalitarians discontinue the parenting roles they had during the marriage.

Sandra's Story

'Double Shift'

Sandra and David married in 1989 when Sandra was twenty-four and David was twenty-nine. Both Sandra and David were successful legal professionals and were married for eighteen years. After nine years of marriage, they had their first child which was shortly followed by a second child four years later. Both David and Sandra worked long hours, in excess of fifty hours a week and employed a nanny who looked after the children during the week. Sandra described how David was a devoted father during the marriage but worked very long hours: *"typically my husband wouldn't have come home till about bed time, eight o' clock, you know when we were living together. I mean my husband was quite devoted to the children."* Although Sandra believed that her husband was devoted and 'cared about' the children, she subsequently explained how she was the parent who 'cared for' the children: *"I would have organised all the school activities. My nanny would take them during the week but at the weekends I would've been taking them to parties."* Sandra described how she also took on a greater share of unpaid work in the household: *"I was a glorified housekeeper, and I would have done an awful lot for him. I have no objection to that. That's the kind of person I am. I'm kind of organised. I was the homemaker."*

Husband's Influence

Sandra looked back on the marriage as being somewhat premature; remarking how young she was when she got married: *"I was twenty-four when I married. That is very young. He was my first relationship and I was his so you know, we did come together very*

young.” Looking back on the relationship, Sandra felt that she was heavily influenced by David and did not feel like she had an equal say in the relationship: *“He’s clever in an argument and he’s persuasive and I just felt sometimes his influence was too much. Part of that’s probably because he’s five years older. And I regret that I didn’t stand up to him more actually. He made me feel that he was cleverer than me.”*

Sandra felt that David dictated how they lived their lives and she felt that he was self-centred. David decided where they went on holiday, where they went for dinner, how they decorated the house and he rarely placed Sandra’s wishes over his own. In the years preceding the break-up Sandra grew tired of having to *“skirt around him on issues that he merely didn’t like.”* David’s *“dogmatic”* personality became a real *“barrier”* in their relationship and Sandra began to think that the marriage was not fulfilling her individual needs: *“that kind of dynamic is sort of wearing over the long term and maybe I’ve got stronger or maybe I’m more resolute now. I’m in my forties and I realise time is running out and actually why should I not do the things that I want to do.”* Sandra’s account of the marital relationship emphasised the presence of power, influence and control. The absence of mutuality between the couple grew tiresome for Sandra.

Gradual Transition

The couple attended counselling but Sandra felt that her decision had been made: *“I realised that I wanted to be separated. I’d made the decision in my own head and I wasn’t really going back. It took him a bit of time to come to terms with that.”* Sandra recognised that she started to disengage from the relationship before David and realised that he would need time to come to terms with it. Both of them continued to live in the family home while they discussed the separation. There appears to have been no quick decision to end the marriage nor was there any fault or poor behaviour apportioned to either spouse. The couple agreed that David would gradually move out of the family home so that the children could slowly get used to the change in living arrangements. This move out of the family home took place over six months. Although it was difficult living in the house together for that period, Sandra was reluctant to make any dramatic

changes which might negatively impact the children. Prioritising the children's interests above their own was a dominant theme amongst the egalitarians.

Child Focused Arrangements

Sandra knew that David would want an equal share in parenting and she facilitated this by remaining in the family home with David for that six month period: *"I mean it was difficult, really difficult him being still in the house but there I couldn't push him out. They are his kids too. I knew my ex-husband would want to see them a lot. They are very important to him."* Sandra's attitudes about the role of a father facilitated David's transition from fathering within the marriage to fathering post separation: *"He's maintained contact with them all the time and they've now gone off with him on their own, which they never would've done before."* Sandra was able to separate her relationship with David from her children's relationship with David: *"I think it's very important for the children that they continue to see their father as much as possible and so not withstanding my failure of a relationship with him that doesn't mean that they shouldn't see him."* The ending of the marriage did not prevent Sandra and David from discussing and agreeing a parenting arrangement. Reaching an agreement was done without recourse to the family law courts or solicitors as Sandra and David felt that they were in the best position to organise their own arrangements: *"We realised that there were no better people to work out our own arrangements than us. Whilst the separation was not ideal, we were able enough to talk to each other about what was best for the children."*

The two children move between the two houses during the week with the assistance of the nanny and they divide weekends on a three week basis: *"They stay with him on a Tuesday and a Wednesday night and all the other days of the week they're with me. We worked out the custody so that it's every third weekend that we have a weekend entirely on our own with them. Not every second, every third one and the second one is shared so that he has them one weekend, the second weekend would be shared, and the third weekend would be mine."* This arrangement was made on the basis that neither parent has to spend too much time without the children: *"So it means that if you work it out of*

over a three week period, there's never more than three days in which we don't see them. So that was a better arrangement than doing every second weekend." While the couple recognised the need for routine, they also remained flexible with the arrangements: *"I think we had to be flexible about it and acknowledging the benefit of routine so that's how we got to it really."* The egalitarians seek to preserve the child's relationship with both parents and share the child's time equally.

Strong Financial Position

Sandra highlighted how her strong independent financial position facilitated the initiation of the separation: *"I mean if I was dependant on him I probably would have continued (in the marriage). I mean that's reality and I'm lucky enough. I didn't have to".* Additionally, Sandra described how their strong financial position eased the negotiation process and permitted them to agree the financial terms of the separation with less tension: *"We found it pretty easy to agree on the terms of the separation in financial terms because luckily we were both earning and independent of each other. I don't need any support from my husband and he doesn't need any from me and we both care for the children."* As a dual income professional couple, Sandra and David had enough financial resources to set up two separate homes of equal value and size: *"It was never a thing about whose money it was and in fact the whole lot has just been split in half. Luckily we have an expensive house and we can sell it for a lot of money and both buy a house in the same area with the proceeds. We are very fortunate in that way."*

Gary's Story

Building Career and Family

Gary and Breda married in 1989 and were married for sixteen years. When they married in their late twenties, Gary was a young medical professional and was working long hours to complete his training. As part of his medical training, Gary had to spend several years gaining work experience abroad. Breda, who studied psychology, met Gary at university. Breda was supportive of Gary's career and for the first seven years of their married life, Gary and Breda were living and working abroad. The couple were both keen to start a

family and had three children in the space of those first seven years of marriage, while residing abroad: *“we had three children under age (five, three and one year old), and at one stage it was extremely busy.”*

When Gary and Breda returned to Ireland seven years later, Gary continued to work long hours. Breda had started her own business and worked long hours to make sure the business would work. The couple had another child three years later. Gary recalled having to work long hours, while his children were all under the age of ten: *“I was on call here every night and one day every third weekend when we came here first thirteen years ago. It was extremely busy.”* Gary described how the relationship became fraught two or three years after returning to Ireland: *“things weren’t going well from around 1998. I suppose we were just arguing and really busy and with the pressure and stress and strains and between one thing and another we parted.”* With four young children and two demanding jobs, the couple had little time for each other and their relationship.

Trying: Counselling and Mediation

Gary and Breda reached a point where they felt that they couldn’t continue fighting anymore and they agreed to go to marriage counselling: *“It really got to the stage when you say this can’t go on. It was really fraught and we went to counselling.”* Such confrontation created the possibility for negotiation as both Gary and Breda recognised that the relationship was deeply troubled. Attending counselling allowed them to try to save the marriage but shortly afterwards, with the disclosure of all the *“honest feelings about the relationship”*, both concluded that the relationship was past hope: *“we kind of, I think she sorted of said look, it is not going to work. We are not going to be together and I felt that that was the case too.”*

The counselling sessions paved the way for Gary and Breda to negotiate a separation agreement through mediation: *“We went to mediation and we were doing that for maybe two years. That was really about the separation. It was really to do with how we would organise the finances and what finances my ex-wife needed and what did I need and who*

paid for school fees and who paid for all the usual things. So that was very good for us."

The couple were committed to mediation and attended over twenty sessions.

Working as a Team

Over this two-year period Gary and Breda were still living in the same house. After two years of mediation and talks, Gary agreed to move out of the family home and buy a second home in the same area as the matrimonial home: *"I was still living in the house, and then I bought a house right beside the family home, and that is where I am living now. So for the first year or so when we were separated we were living side-by-side and we'd agreed joint custody and joint access."* The eldest child moved in with Gary, the second eldest was attending boarding school and the two younger children lived with the mother.

Gary and Breda had a flexible arrangement in which the children moved freely between the houses: *"they [the children] would just come over and back to whichever house they wanted to. It wasn't a formal thing. They didn't have to be in such and such a house."* Gary and Breda regularly dropped into each other's house and continued to have meals together: *"At least once a week everyone would come to my house and we would eat together and once a fortnight I would probably go over to her house. We are at least not different to a married couple at all."* The two houses were big enough to allow each child to have their own room in each house: *"all the kids have a bedroom in my house as well."* Gary described how both parents are *"committed"* to the children and place their needs first.

Gary felt the process of *"putting everything out on the table"* was beneficial for them to see how they were both going to manage parenting and financial responsibilities after the separation. As the main breadwinner in this dual income family, Gary's approach to a financial agreement was orientated by equality. He believed that he and his ex-wife should have access to an equal amount of money after all bills had been paid: *"I didn't suddenly say, well if he is living with me, you don't get €500, I would stop that...everything is more or less accounted for."* The egalitarians had a strong sense of

equality when approaching a settlement. Gary recognised and emphasised an important precondition for the dual income family and shared parenting – a high income – but also recognised the need for a good quality parental relationship: *“we are lucky that financially we can do it and “we know each other and we get on fine.”*

Patricia’s Story

Caring and Earning

Patricia and Gregory were married for twenty years and had been separated for three years. Gregory was a very successful businessman and Patricia was a physiotherapist. Patricia worked in the earlier years of her marriage and set up her own practice when she had her first child, three years into the marriage. The couple had a large family and Patricia’s work hours were more flexible and she organised her practice around the children’s school hours. The couple also had a nanny who was able to collect the children from school and mind them while Patricia was at work. The couple had three more children over the next five years. Gregory worked in the financial sector and had a very demanding job. He spent very little time in the home or with the children: *“the problem with Gregory was that he was never much aware of what was going on in the house, although he loved his children and was committed to them.”*

Patricia grew increasingly frustrated at how Gregory detached himself from the family and children as the years went by. She described how the youngest child, their only daughter, had no real relationship with Gregory: *“my daughter had never really seen or known Gregory. He’d never actually been around and he never watched hockey matches that they played in. In fact he never went to see my son play even though he [son] had asked him. He always said he was too busy.”* When the relationship started deteriorating, Gregory spent more time away from the family home and was drinking heavily. Patricia described how the couple weren’t getting on but rarely fought as Gregory was away so much: *“we had arguments but they were few and far between because he was away so much. I suppose when things got rough he stayed out more. It was kind of fortuitous that it did happen that way.”*

"Taking the Sting Out of It"

Patricia and Gregory agreed to separate and attended mediation. Patricia felt that one of the reasons they were able to move beyond the acrimony was because she acknowledged her responsibility for part of the break-up: *"I acknowledged that I was part of the breakdown and I apologised for my part in the breakdown. I felt that took a huge load off my shoulders because no matter what, unless it's the most extraordinary case, we all are part to blame even though I could list a whole lot of things that he did but each of us had a perception of what marriage should be and they were independent perceptions and they didn't meet in the middle."*

The couple agreed a shared parenting arrangement for the children *"it wasn't a problem because, even though I could have shot the man, it was our problem not the children's."* They agreed to share the parenting of the children *"literally down the middle"*, and the children now live with Patricia but *"they go to Gregory on a Monday and Wednesday for their dinner and weekends are split into two shared weekends and two full weekends and he has the month of July and I have the month of August."* Patricia took additional steps in order to sustain the father's relationship with his children such as taking the children to the holiday contact location: *"in July I'm up and down to this country village. He has a house there so I ferry them down and I bring them back."*

Encouraging the Father's Role

Patricia's attitude towards the role of a father also played an important part in the outcome of the parenting arrangement. Patricia's own experience of her father impacted on how she viewed the importance of Gregory's parental involvement post separation: *"my dad was never really around for us and it's just so important to have a dad. It's so important for the children to have a dad or for him to be a major part of their lives."* Patricia was able to separate her relationship with Gregory from her children's relationship with him. In fact, Patricia felt that she was being a better mother by encouraging and facilitating Gregory's relationship with his children: *"what has gone on between Gregory and I, is between Gregory and I and the children do not need to suffer. I*

just think that, myself as a mother that I'm doing the best for my children - they need to have both parents."

Patricia supported Gregory's re-engagement in the children's lives by helping him develop a more involved role. She described how she helped him with some basic practical support in the beginning: *"he would phone me and say 'how do I cook a chicken? How do I know the potatoes are cooked?'"* And Patricia constantly re-affirmed the father's role by telling him how the children enjoyed their time with him: *"so I'd make that point to him – that they commented on the meal – because it's really good for him to see that they really are pleased with what he is doing."* Overall Patricia is happy that Gregory has reinvented his relationship since the separation: *"he's doing really well though because he never did anything like that, so it's fantastic and it's great for them to see that he is actually involved."* It appeared that Patricia played a crucial role in facilitating father involvement post separation.

Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

Kitson (1990:111) explained how the term 'causes of divorce' have a number of meanings.⁵¹ In examining the stories of the egalitarians in breaking up their marital relationships, this section will explore the reasons the respondents had for the divorce. This section also examines the participants' self-described marital complaints including 1) absence of emotional reciprocity 2) burden of double shift 3) no common life and 4) the submerged self.

Absence of Emotional Reciprocity

Duncombe and Marsden (1993) argued that key elements of expressive love and intimacy have been overlooked in studying gender inequality in the private sphere. This data, in common with their findings, suggests that gender differences – a fundamental asymmetry

⁵¹ Kitson (1990:111) explained that there are societal-level explanations (broad social changes such as the shift from agrarian to industrial, bureaucratic life), legal grounds for divorce (situations viewed as legally acceptable for ending a marriage), correlates for divorce (social and psychological factors that have been found by research to be associated with a greater likelihood of divorce), and divorcees own self-described marital complaints.

– in emotional expression appears to be an important feature in heterosexual relationships (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995:151). This research provided evidence that the women complained of their male partners' inability or unwillingness to express intimate emotion. Sandra, Carol, Laura and Phillipa expressed concern with how their marriages were not meeting what they wanted in a relationship. They were seeking intimacy and a relationship with a husband through verbal interaction and sharing as demonstrated by Patricia: "*we never talked. We had different perceptions of what marriage should be.*"

Conflict between the marital relationship and individual relational aspirations also contributed to the breakdown of the relationship. The egalitarian women felt that their marital relationship was conflicting with their own individual needs, in particular their desire for a more equal and fulfilling relationship. Failure to achieve change in the gender division of emotion work led them to leave the marriage. As Duncombe and Marsden (1993) found most wives wanted their husband to make them feel emotionally "special" through unprompted romantic and intimate behaviour. There was a strong sense that egalitarian women felt bored in the relationship as they failed to achieve change in the gender division of emotion work⁵². The egalitarians were seeking something of a 'pure relationship' in which there would be better communication, understanding, reciprocity and more shared time. In these cases the marital relationships ceased to 'deliver' and the couple separated. In this case exiting the marital relationship apparently indicates, what Giddens (1992) would refer to as a 'transformation of intimacy'.

Second Shift⁵³

Although these couples had nannies to assist them with their childcare duties, the women had long experienced the 'second shift' of earning and caring, and of organising paid childcare. They felt that they carried an unequal share of childcare and that their husband was not actively engaging in family life. These 'work centred' women found it was

⁵² 'Emotion work' refers to the work (emotional responsibility) necessary to maintain a couple relationship (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993:150).

⁵³ Arlie Hochschild's (1989) book *The Second Shift* highlighted the slowness of changes in family patterns towards equality. She highlighted the strategies used by couples to avoid seeing obvious discrepancies between their ideals of equality and the actual practice of everyday life.

difficult to avoid these gender relations when it came to managing their daily lives (Halleröd et al. 2007, West and Zimmerman, 1987). Hobson (1990) outlined that nearly every study of the division of paid and unpaid labour confirms that women, no matter what level of earnings, still take the responsibility for unwaged household work.

Consistent with research findings, this study found that fathers' restricted involvement in family life impacted on the mothers' perception of the marital quality (Barnett, 2005). Fathers worked long hours and mothers experienced added pressure to assume responsibility for children and housework. In dual income couples, wives are also more likely than husbands to compensate for their spouse's stress levels by increasing their involvement in activities at home (Fagan and Press, 2008:1139). West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that the best explanation for why women do an inequitable share of household duties is because we have defined such work as part of 'being a woman' and 'doing gender' appropriately.

No 'Common Life'

The literature indicates that wives want 'a common life' and seek to pursue shared interests with 'a close exchange of intimacy' (Mansfield and Collard, 1988: 178-9). The egalitarians held a high expectation from their spouse and expected a substantial level of emotional support, companionship and personal fulfilment from their former spouses. The egalitarians, who were 'work busy', had little time for shared interests. Time is recognised as a crucial factor in the process of creating and maintaining a sense of family (Morgan, 1996). For many parents, it was the lack of spending quality time together which signified the end of the relationship. Women referred to their husbands as 'workaholics' as Laura indicated: "*he is there as much as he can be but he is a workaholic.*" Working long hours has been found to limit the amount of time that people have to participate in family activities and relationships (Almeida, Maggs, & Galambos, 1993). Gary explained how the pressures of having four young children and a busy career left little time for the relationship. After dedicating most of his young married life to his career, he grew apart from his wife and his interests changed.

The Submerged Self

Askham (1984) found that women were much more likely than men to talk of themselves as being constrained within marriage. Women, who felt that their self was being constrained whilst remaining in the marriage, initiated the separation in order to pursue their own wishes. Sandra described the disintegration of her marital relationship by starting at the very beginning – when she was twenty-four and decided to marry, which she later felt was too young. This depiction portrays how her ‘self’ was submerged. She projected the inequality in their marriage. Whereas she was someone who valued shared activities and reciprocity: *“I would have done an awful lot for him...but I became a glorified housekeeper”*, she defined her husband as the other – his selfishness and unwillingness to do things that she wanted to do.

Equally Laura felt that her personality and life project had been submerged because of her commitment to her husband and family. However, when Laura felt that her commitment to her husband had not been reciprocated, she decided to pursue her own interests: *“I would have done everything for the kids. I had given up my career to follow his career around and we have moved and I went through the stage – this is unfair, then I decided to go back to college – that was my way of instead of being angry with him, I had to find my own direction.”* Vaughan’s (1986:20) description of the uncoupling process outlined how individuals turn to alternatives in order to redefine the self. In two of the cases, women built up their careers during the latter stages of the marriage which gave them a new source of identity which gave them a sense of self-realization (Vaughan, 1986). In doing so, the women left the marriage and embarked on a new project of the self. This was adequately depicted by Beck and Beck Gernsheim (1995:62) who stated ‘if they were disappointed women used to abandon their hopes, nowadays they cling to their hopes and abandon marriage.’

Discussion: Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

The description of marital complaints provided by the egalitarians reflected what they found were the shortcomings in their marital relationship. Egalitarians opted out of the

marriage as they were seeking a more equal and democratic relationship in terms of emotion work. The change that they were seeking was less to do with the changes in the division of unpaid work and more to do with the division of emotion work in the private sphere. During the marriage, the egalitarians did not perceive their former spouse to be equal partners in managing the marital relationship. The lack of mutual exchange in the relationship, in terms of emotional exchange, led to dissatisfaction. The egalitarians were seeking something of a 'pure relationship' in which there would be better communication, understanding, reciprocity and more shared time. These findings support Giddens's thesis that people are seeking intimate connections with others that are maintained on the basis of mutual knowledge, reciprocity and understanding.

Inequality in the division of labour was a major complaint. A thorough analysis of the interview data revealed that among the couples characterised by a joint pattern of childcare behaviour, there was a marked tendency for the wives to assume primary responsibility. Mona described how her former spouse was as "*good a parent as I am and they (the kids) always spent a lot of time with him (father).*" Additionally, Carol stated how her former spouse was "*a good father and he did a lot and he would share a lot of the load.*" However, even amongst these joint childcare couples, adherence to basic sex role norms was as widespread as it was among segregated childcare couples. In other words, the egalitarians, who were characterised by a joint pattern of childcare behaviour, maintained that wives were primarily responsible for childcare as fathers were working longer hours. The descriptions portrayed an interesting gendered meaning of equity, whereby, egalitarians perceived their relationship to be fair, but the mothers did more than fathers and carried this second shift.

The employment status and access to resources allowed the egalitarians to be autonomous and initiate the separation. The financial independence of the women gave them the confidence to move away from the relationship and separate, as Sandra explained: "*money does actually give me some sense of self esteem that I can manage it on my own.*" Carol also suggested that "*I have been building up my career all through that time to try and get a level of earnings that would support all of this.*" This group of highly educated, high earning women overcame typical gender barriers to initiate a separation

and exit the relationship. This would confirm Giddens's theory that greater role equality, at least in terms of employment has affected women's ability to pursue more intimate relationships. Improved conditions for real autonomy were demonstrated as women, who acted as initiators, had the space to act independently of collective ties.

Moving Out of the Marital Home

The physical separation was a very gradual process for all of the egalitarians. The egalitarians appear to discuss and think through the potential consequences of the transition from one house to two houses and how it may affect the parent-child relationship. Both parents wanted to minimise the harm they cause to the children. The gradual process of moving out of the family home which took up to two years in many cases was based on minimising the disruption for the children.

Putting Children First

The egalitarians found their common ground from the beginning, i.e. they wanted to disrupt the children's lives as little as possible. These findings are found also in a study on 'The Good Divorce' whereby the actions of the 'cooperative colleagues' were grounded in similar fashion (Ahrons, 1994:139). In so doing, these parents subscribed to child welfare principles of putting children first, resembling the 'reconfigured committed contact' group of parents found in Trinder et al (2002:6) research on contact in the UK.

Trinder et al (2002:6) explained that parents, who placed their needs of the children first, endured parental responsibility and parental amicability to ensure that the child's welfare was prioritised. The egalitarians demonstrated parental amicability as they had to endure considerable time living together, 'albeit separate and apart',⁵⁴ with their former spouse as part of the gradual transition out of the family home. During this period the egalitarians continued to facilitate each parent's relationship with the children. The accounts of the egalitarians suggest that there was no sudden abandonment or desertion, rather a drawn out period of separation after which one person moved out of the family

⁵⁴ Section 5(1)(a) of the Article 41.3.2 Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996 and Article 41.3.2 of the Irish Constitution.

home, as Laura indicated: *"We were in the same house for a couple of years but apart, if you know what I mean and then he eventually moved out."*

Two Houses, Two Homes

Research evidence also indicates that shared parenting is most frequent among separating parents with the financial means to support two homes (Cancian and Meyer, 1998; Donnelly and Finkelhor, 1993). Egalitarians could afford a second home of equal value and comfort, which was located in close proximity to the family home. Egalitarian parents were able to not only provide two houses, but each house was equipped with separated wardrobes, toys and play areas for the children. These parents had the resources to replicate the children's sense of family life and home in two houses in the same area. Living in the same area meant that the children had access to the same set of friends, regardless where they slept on any particular night. Equal distance was a not a factor impeding access which is an important determinant of contact (Braver et al, 1993; Cooksey and Craig, 1998; Seltzer, 1991).

In order to obtain such a home, the egalitarians patiently waited until the right home was available, as Carol indicated: *"It took a year to find a house. We then set about the arrangements to move. He bought a house in X, it's beautiful and it is really suitable for them as well."* In this case, Carol accompanied the children and father to view new properties, to support the children and ensure they were adequate to house the four children: *"they were looking at the houses and I'd go down and look at the houses as well if they came up... Well to try and show them that there wasn't (a problem).... It was very important to try and protect them as much as possible."* The word 'we' suggests that the parents were working together to ensure a smooth transition for the children. An amicable post-separation relationship between the parents is a key determinant of contact (Smyth et al, 2001; Lund, 1987; Simpson et al., 1995).

One Voice

Research evidence highlights how the person who breaks the news has an advantage by shaping the opinion of the listener (Kitson, 1990; Vaughan, 1986). By telling the children

together in a non-adversarial manner, the egalitarians assured the children about their future, as Laura described: "*We called them in; we decided when we were going to do it. It was hard for us – it was horrible – it was the worst thing that I ever had to do. I sat them on the couch and told them. We did it together, we told them, as nicely as we could, that he was going to move out but, you know, that we both loved them very much. We had done a lot of reading about it first.*" Hogan et al (2002) in a study on children's experiences of parental separation in Ireland discovered that children, when being told about the separation, wanted to receive reassurances from parents that they were concerned about their children's well-being and committed to being available for them.

Discussion: Moving out of the Family Home

The move out of the family home was very similar across the six egalitarian parents. These couples were better prepared for the separation, enabling them to settle the housing arrangements in a less emotionally charged atmosphere than that prevailing when the separation came as a surprise, as will be discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. In each case the parents experienced a period (varying from six months to two years) of co-residence whilst the couple prepared themselves and their children for the move. Parental responsibility and amicability ensured that two homes of equal stature could be set up for the children and parents. The language and emphasis on 'we' indicated how the parents continued to embark on a joint project of child rearing. As Smart and Neale (1999) discovered, the parents remain connected through their joint project of rearing the children after separation.

Household income was a key factor in setting up two households after the separation. Differences in household income made for different transitions into parenting post separation. For parents in higher income families, like the egalitarians (upper-middle class families or dual income families) access to economic resources improves and hence the transition to parenting across two households is easier. Wikeley (2001) found that non-resident parents who were homeowners were more likely to maintain contact.

Although the major architects of the individualisation thesis have dubbed social class a 'zombie variable' or 'shell institution' (Beck, 2002; Giddens, 1999), the research suggests that income and occupation has a crucial structuring role in giving the parents the freedom and resources to choose where to live post separation, which affects the transition to post separation parenting.

Mediating an Agreement

This section of the study looks at how the egalitarians negotiated a financial and parenting settlement. In comparison to the other groups of parents in the study, the egalitarians were able to mediate an agreement and avoided going to the courts.⁵⁵ The four themes to emerge from the interviews that impacted on the negotiations of a settlement were 1) parental responsibility 2) objective third party 3) financial independence and 4) moral negotiations.

Parental Responsibility

Smart and Neale (1999:33) discussed how divorcing parents have been encouraged by family law legislation to make their own arrangements. The Family Law (1996) Divorce Act was no different in encouraging separating parents to resolve their problems through mediation. This policy of non-intervention stressed the idea that parents themselves should resolve their own differences and the extent to which this condition is fulfilled was further secured and governed under Section 6 and 7 of the 1996 Act, whereby lawyers were obliged to discuss with both the applicant and respondent the prospect of mediation. Egalitarians opted for mediation and were able to negotiate gradually and privately, i.e. without extensive involvement from solicitors or the courts. Laura described how "*over time we looked at all the options and we got on fairly reasonably, we agreed fairly easily.*" Sandra described how they were able to communicate on matters concerning the children: "*we were able enough to talk to each other about what*

⁵⁵ Conneely (2000) research the Irish Family Mediation Service found that the family mediation services play an increasingly central role in marital dissolution. The Family Mediation Service assisted almost 1,500 couples in 2007 (Annual Report, 2007). Conneely (2000:7) also found that the use of mediation was more common amongst the educated, middle-class client stating that 'while it is not an exclusively middle income facility, the service continues to be attractive to the employed, home-owning sector.'

was best for the children.” There have been concerns that private ordering, in itself, can be detrimental to women because their economic, social and psychological vulnerability all militate against the image of equal bargaining presumed in mediation (Grillo as cited in Conneely, 2000). Egalitarians however, who had an equal sexual division of labour were less vulnerable than other women in the sample and therefore felt they benefited from mediation.

Smart and Neale (1999:33) also elaborated that parents, who make their own arrangements, should have one focus in mind, the welfare of the child. The focus of child welfare was that of the egalitarians’ accounts of agreeing a settlement. They described how they approached the parenting agreement “*from the same place*”, i.e. there appears to have been a dominant principle of child welfare that dictated that adults must take responsibility for children in their care and must seek to put the needs of the children first, as described by Phillipa: “*we agreed to joint custody which really wasn’t a problem because I mean even though I could have shot the man, it was our problem not the children’s.*”

The Objective Third Party

Many of the egalitarians used a mediation service as a guide to help them shape their agreement.⁵⁶ Booth (1999:22) outlined that divorce policy which is geared to make parents feel empowered through their participation in the decision-making process will lead to less conflict. Mona described how mediation helped her to figure out what was needed for the agreement, i.e. it set out the parameters of the agreement: “*We went to mediation for a while, so I suppose that set me on the path of knowing in what direction I had to go in terms of the financial situation. I thought the mediation service was great.*” Using mediation supported her capacity to analyse the issues and problem solve.

Conneely outlined how international evidence suggested that women who underwent mediation agreed that the process had a beneficial impact on their children, (Emery and

⁵⁶ Mediated agreements were not included in the study on parenting and access arrangements conducted by Mahon and Moore (2011). Such agreements were endorsed by the court but the details were not read aloud for the researchers to capture. Therefore this follow-up study, together with the information gleaned from the court study, provides a more inclusive array of post-separated arrangements for families in Ireland.

Jackson, (1989) as cited in Conneely, 2000:4). Our findings supported such evidence, as Phillipa stated: *“so the mediator was very good. He helped us sort out, I suppose the practical breakdown of times and stuff and I mean in fact I had worked it out that it was far better to have a neutral third party.”*

Many of the egalitarians were fearful of engaging in legal correspondence in fear that they would lose control over the separation and end up in a worse situation, as Carol indicated: *“I just wasn’t able to face somebody else taking control of my destiny in the courts. I wanted amicable separation rather than, you know, the courts deciding for us.”* As such, it relieved their anxiety about what would happen in the future. Avoiding legal involvement and attending mediation supports parents’ capacity to modulate aggression, tolerate their former spouse, analyse and problem solve and bind their anxiety (Steinman et al, 1985:558 as cited in Bruch, 1992).

Financial Independence

Hertz (1986:87) outlined how independent incomes, having two high incomes, increases the likelihood that couples will distinguish between communal and individual resources, allowing for greater equality in decision-making about financial matters. Equal access to resources during the marriage increased the egalitarians’ ability to use their resources in ways that brought about a convergence on the outcome of the arrangement. The egalitarian women felt they were able to agree a financial settlement as they were in an equally strong financial position as their former spouse: *“we found it pretty easy to agree on the terms of the separation in financial terms because luckily we were both earning and independent of each other. I don’t need any support from my husband, he doesn’t need any from me and we both care for the children.”* In common with other findings, the data suggests that control over financial resources has implications for women’s autonomy and well-being in the marriage (Pahl, 1989). The research evidence in this study found that this belief may hold true after the marriage too.

Some of the women had been building up their potential power (material) in order to overcome any obstacles they may have encountered when they separated. These women, as Burgoyne (2004:169) highlights realised that ‘a norm of sharing and equality in

marriage can be overridden by a conflicting norm which gives the earner the right to control and own their income', which is particularly important at a time of separation. The 'contingency plan' (Burgoyne, 2004:169) that Carol devised was that she built up her own financial position over the years so that she was in a more stable and equal position at the time of the separation: "*I have been building up my career all through that time to try and get a level of earnings that would support all of this.*" In these situations, there was little to argue about as both spouses contributed equally to the household before the separation and this would continue after the separation. In this aspect, the pre-separation financial contributions to the family and household continue after the separation.

The growing integration of mothers into the labour force has been a crucial development in equality in relationships. Hertz (1986: 21) discussed how the implications of a couple's financial independence appeared to be pivotal to the material as well as the psychological basis of the marriage. If this is true, our evidence suggests that this is also true beyond the marriage. The egalitarians did not require ongoing maintenance from their former husbands and were able to buy out their former husband's share of the family home. This notion supports Giddens's theory that the democratisation of society has led to egalitarianism among men and women. Although this was not always present during the marriage (in terms of the gendered division of household labour), gender equality (through financial independence) prevailed into their post-separated co-parental relationship.

Moral Negotiations

Although many parents were personally dissatisfied with the outcome of the parenting arrangement, they felt that the agreement reached was beneficial for the children. Mona indicated how it wasn't easy to agree an arrangement: "*we just kind of muddled through and eventually we did set up a system but that was half and half. It was half the time with him and half the time with me. I felt that that was going to be good for the eldest son particularly, but I hated it.*" Mona was left by her husband when her children were young. Notwithstanding her pain, she was able to see how important the children were to her former husband and she worked hard to make shared parenting possible even though

she did not want to include him. The point is that the egalitarians could view children's interests separate from their own. The arrangements for the children were approached with an ethic of care, i.e. 'what is important is not arriving at the fair decision...but at meeting the needs of particular others or preserving the relationship of care that exist' (Tronto, 1989).

Carol agreed with her husband that everything was going to be divided 50-50 upon separation, as she perceived this as the 'right thing to do': "*We had agreed to have joint custody, okay, 50/50 in everything. Initially I did not want them gone for seven days like, but what can you do? It's just one of these like impossible choices. But we were trying to do everything right.*" This account from Carol suggested that there was a moral imperative that she must take responsibility for the children, by rejecting what she wanted and placing the needs of the children first. Balancing the needs of the children with the needs of the self was a moral dilemma that faced some of the parents. These findings support Smart and Neale's (1999: 135) argument that care is as much about justice (the right thing to do) as are rights, but it is also part of a welfare approach in that it seeks to minimise harm and to sustain positive relationships.

Discussion: Negotiating a Settlement

Egalitarians approached the negotiation of a settlement in a manner which prioritised the child's interests. Contrary to other research findings, which suggest that shared parenting arrangements are reflective of the way parenting was shared during the marriage, the egalitarians did not share parenting during the marriage (Juby et al, 2005:159). Egalitarian fathers had been 'involved in theory' and 'cared about' the children during the marriage. This positive regard for the other parent allowed the parents to develop a functional relationship in which shared parenting occurred. This form of cooperative style of negotiation involves great consideration for both own and others' interests. The former spouses' needs and the needs of the children are explicitly given top priority over individual needs.

For the egalitarians who were dual income couples, there was an emphasis on two separate purses, economic independence and individual ownership of money both before

and after the separation. This independent management system in which both spouses have an income and each retains access to his or her own income encompassed the more modern ideals associated with individualisation.

The legal context with an emphasis on the use of mediation facilitated the initiation of an agreement. Attending mediation benefited both the parents' own well-being and the functioning of parenting post separation. The egalitarians were able to mediate an agreement due to the equal positions and exchange relationship that they maintained before and after the separation. There has been extensive research exploring how power works in gender relations during divorce mediation (Dingwall, et al, 1996). It is argued that private ordering, in itself, can only be detrimental to women because their economic, social and psychological vulnerability all militate against the image of equal bargaining presumed in mediation. Ignoring power relationships present in the private domain only serves to reproduce them (Grillo (1991:179) as cited in Conneely, 2000).

Sharing Contact

Another striking feature of the egalitarians was that they shared their time equally with the children. The arrangements included a week-on, week-off approach as well as mid-week changes. The factors which contributed to the operation of the shared level of contact were 1) continuation of family life 2) neutral handovers and 3) reciprocated flexibility.

Continuation of Family Life

There were different types of arrangements in which parents and children were committed to regular contact. Overall the children of the egalitarians divided their time equally between the mother and father. The children were central to both parents' lives, so a high level of contact occurred, as Sandra calculated: "*there's never more than three days in which we don't see them.*" Whiteside and Becker's meta-analysis (2002) concludes that the level of the father's involvement pre separation is positively related to both frequency of contact and the quality of the relationship, which may suggest why the egalitarians, who were the most involved fathers during the marriage in our sample and

had the highest frequency of contact post separation. This continuity of care, is also thought to be more likely when mothers perceive their children's father as involved in family care (Juby et al., 2005).

Similar to findings with the 'reconfigured continuing families' group in the Trinder et al research (2002), there was a great deal of overlap between the two houses, as the egalitarian parents and children regularly celebrated special occasions together. The joint celebration of special days demonstrated to the children that the relationship between the parents was at least functional, as Patricia indicated: *"The children enjoy it and it makes it a lot easier too because it means that they have that time and also they can see it's not their problem, it's between me and Gregory. They can see that we are still friends, functioning at that level. It gives it, we were so adamant about that with them. These things do happen and it's not their fault and people can still function in a civilised manner."* There was a strong sense of continued family life with the egalitarians who would continue to have their former spouses for dinner once a week and sit together as a family.

Neutral Handovers

The use of nannies and/or schools as an intermediary third party assisted with the handovers of younger children. Sandra described how her young children move between the two houses with the nanny: *"As I am working they have a nanny and they've had a nanny all their lives. She has maintained a relationship and is still working with us notwithstanding the separation. So she goes between the two houses."* Another egalitarian mother, Mona, described how having the handovers at the school avoids unnecessary contact with her former spouse: *"all the pickups now are done by the school so in fact for me it's nicer because, I don't particularly want him here. I just feel better if it's all done through the school and it seems to work pretty well."* The parents described how these arrangements assisted the transition and was an effective tool in making the contact arrangement work.

Reciprocated Flexibility

Although the egalitarians have fixed parenting schedules, they also allow for flexibility in order to “*keep it nice for the kids*”. There was a dominant recurring message from the egalitarians that they operated according to a strong child welfare discourse. Parents operated together and backed each other up if they wanted the child or needed the child minded: “*but we are relaxed, if there was something on that you wanted to bring them to and it wasn't your day then it would be fine.*” Children were also permitted to make occasional changes to the arrangement if they wished: “*I mean sometimes if one of them is going out and going to be late then they will come back to me. It's kind of easy.*”

Trinder et al (2002) discovered five different types of arrangements in her sample of sixty one families. ‘The flexibly routine’ contact schedule was similar to the contact schedule that the egalitarians adopted (Trinder et al., 2002:5). Flexibility is respected and reciprocated and not abused. Both parents give each other adequate notice and respect the parent’s time with their children: “*if there are weekends when he's away they stay with me and if he wants them another time they just go down. He doesn't live too far away which is very useful, he is out of sight and they can walk down it is five minutes away.*” Such support was eased by the distance between the two houses and the level of trust between the two parents that it would not be abused.

Discussion: Parent Child Contact

The mothers and fathers in this group had equal time with their children. The key socio-demographic factors relating to contact appear to be the parents’ educational level, employment status and income. Firstly, the more years of education the non-resident father has, the more likely he is to maintain frequent contact (Fursteberg and Cherlin, 1991; Cooksey and Craig, 1998). Additionally Donnelly and Finkelhor (1993) argued that highly educated parents are more likely to know about shared parenting arrangements and have the resources to implement it. The egalitarians, who were a group of highly educated individuals, were able to share parenting post separation.

Secondly, large scale studies have found that shared custody is more likely when both parents, rather than only the father, are in paid employment (Cancian & Meyer, 1998; Fox Kelly, 1995; Juby, 2005). The egalitarians, unlike the other groups in the sample, were largely composed of dual career households and the 'work centred' mothers had a strong attachment to their career. Research evidence indicates that the mother's labour force involvement influences her choice of parenting arrangement (Juby et al, 2005). A shared parenting arrangement was more appealing for working mothers like the egalitarian as it 'liberates' those who would otherwise be responsible for a single-parent family, and encourages a fuller work and social integration by allowing them more time for work and leisure (Côte as cited in Juby et al, 2005). As Kaufman (2000:131) argued, motherhood is only part of egalitarian women's identity.

Thirdly extensive research evidence demonstrates a strong relationship between family income and children's living arrangements after separation. Shared custody is most frequent among separating parents with the financial means to support two family homes (Cancian & Meyer, 1998; Donnelly & Finkelhor, 1993). As discussed in the section on housing above, the egalitarians who were part of dual income households, were able to provide two homes of equal value and comfort in the same area post separation. Such an undertaking involved considerable costs which they were able to incur.

Symmetrical Involvement

A high level of contact time (particularly overnight stays) means that each parent is involved in day-to-day activities such as supervising homework, preparing meals, bedtime arrangements etc. As such, the contact arrangement adopted by the egalitarians directly influences the parental division of labour in which both parents share the day-to-day responsibilities of childcare. This study identified four closely related ways through which the fathers became more involved in parenting: 1) discontinued traditional fathering 2) maternal facilitation and 3) setting rules and boundaries across two households.

Involved in Theory to Involved Fathering

There is extensive research evidence that reports how some fathers become more involved with their children post separation than they had been before (Smart and Neale, 1999; Simpson et al, 1995). Hetherington and Kelly (2002) referred to these fathers as ‘divorce activated’ fathers. The men in this group, the ‘involved fathers in theory’ whose involvement in childcare tasks was described as ‘accessible’ during the marriage, adopted a more egalitarian role after the separation. These fathers took up more active caring responsibilities post separation and were exclusively responsible for the children 50 per cent of the time. Laura reported how her former husband: *“sees much more of the kids. He would be a much better father now. They see a much nicer side to him; they don’t see him as they did.”*

Mc Bride and Rane (1997 as cited in McBride et al. 2005) provide evidence with the findings that mothers’ perceptions of the paternal role were the best predictors of father involvement. In particular, the perception of the father’s parenting competence is an important factor in custody preferences (Wilcox, Wolchik, & Braver, 1998), and mothers who perceive the father as a competent carer are likely to be more open to sharing custody with him. Egalitarian mothers did not perceive their parenting status as superior to fathers. Despite mothers carrying more of the childcare burden during the marriage, the mothers still recognised that their children had as good a relationship with their father and they wanted to make sure that this continued post separation: *“He is a very good father to them. He absolutely adores them, I mean he is every bit as good a parent as I am and they absolutely adore him.”* Seery and Crowley’s (2000) qualitative study on relationship management identified perceived father-child relationship quality rather than paternal competence as a key predictor of father involvement.

Maternal Facilitation

Trinder (2008:1300) citing Maccoby and Mnookin’s (1992) study as evidence, described how even in separated families, resident mothers can facilitate fathers’ involvement. Egalitarian mothers reported varying amounts of father-child relationship management work, similar to that described in Seery and Crowley’s study. Such gateopening

behaviour was found within the egalitarians. While some mothers designated tasks to the father, others organised weekly meetings to discuss matters relating to the children: "*We have regular meetings. What I do is I make a list of stuff like the youngest girl (11) walking home, part of the way from school. Like what does he feel about that and when she got a mobile phone what does he feel about that? So I pass that by him. At least you know I said it and I've got it written down, pocket money, and school trips.*" Frequent discussions about the children were found to be a key factor in cooperative coparenting (Sobolewski and King, 2005:1198).

The appraisal of the father's efforts in caring for the children and the building up of positive images of the father were evident in Phillipa's story: "*so I'd make that point to him – that they commented on the meal – because it's really good for him to see that they really are pleased with what he is doing.*" Overt re-affirmation of the father's role was described by Trinder (2008:1309) as a proactive gateopening strategy adopted by mothers that was particularly relevant in the post separation context.

Cooperative Coparenting

Sobolewski and King (2005:1196) argue that when parents can engage in shared childrearing, it is likely that the (non-resident) father's involvement with his children will be enhanced. Egalitarians were aware that they needed to set the same rules and boundaries across the two households. Frequent movement between the two houses required a high degree of cooperation and communication between the parents. In cases where there was good parental cooperation, parents relied on each other to respect the other's rules and maintain the same line of discipline as Phillipa described: "*What I said to my ex-husband was that if I had disciplined in his house that I'd be happy for him to carry on the discipline in his house and I'd do the same for him and that's fine.*" Cooperative coparenting is defined as the ability of mothers and fathers to actively engage with one another in order to share childrearing responsibilities (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991) and the egalitarians demonstrated their ability to effectively coparent. Whiteside and Becker (2000) meta-analysis found that interparental cooperation was

linked with more frequent father visitation especially when children, as in the case of the egalitarians, were young.

Egalitarian parents often accepted that minor differences (such as eating practices and TV watching) were inevitable while parenting across two households but managed to agree a basic set of rules. Instead of increasing conflict, which is found to impact poorly on the coparental relationship (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1991), the egalitarians, focused on the bigger picture: *"I think that they watch a bit more television at their dad's house but generally we would have the same view on discipline and that's been set for a long time."* Egalitarians were aware that failure to coordinate more serious rules across the two households would create a situation in which one parent would be undermined. As both parents have a positive regard for the other, they were not interested in doing this.

Discussion: Parental Involvement

This study supports the research evidence that the role of the mother is crucial in supporting father involvement post separation (Arendall, 1997, Fagan and Barnett, 2003; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Trinder, 2008). Egalitarian mothers were happy to see an increased level of involvement from the father and encouraged such involvement in all matters relating to the child's life. In doing so, mothers took on most of the work of keeping the shared access going in terms of preparing the children emotionally, keeping up the flow of information and 'ferrying' them to contact. Smart (1991:496) has described how the work involved in sustaining the image of the father and access arrangements is another dimension of post-separation caring that mothers are required to do (Smart, 1991:496).

Egalitarian mothers in this group did not place their parental role as superior to that of the father. As evidence suggests, ideology heavily influenced maternal gatekeeping behaviour (DeLuccie, 1995; McBride et al., 2005). The egalitarian mothers placed equal value on the role of the father which was seen as critical for ensuring the child's best interests. According to Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) shared custody is more common among couples in which the mother had identified caring for the family as a principal

activity of the father. The mothers in this group also described how their ex-husbands were good fathers, who had simply never engaged in active parenting during the marriage but who had a willingness to pursue fathering post separation. They spoke of the child's fondness for the father and did not criticise their parenting ability.

The parents' cooperative relationship allowed them to coordinate rules and discipline across households and allow for flexibility. Open and direct communication between the parents facilitated this level of involvement and shared parenting. As indicated in the literature, the quality of the paternal relationship may seriously affect gateopening post-divorce behaviour (Braver and O'Connell, 1998).

Conclusion

The accounts presented by the egalitarians highlighted that women carried the burden of childcare responsibilities during the marriage (with the support of domestic help) and men were not as involved in parenting. In doing so, these couples were reinforcing each other and reproducing gender differences. However, what is important to underline that in these couples, both wives and husbands are engaged in a process of change. They are not reproducing a set of gender roles upon separation. They are producing new ways of organising gender and of doing post-separated parenting.

These accounts appear on one hand to support and on the other hand challenge the democratisation and individualisation thesis and its arguments that democratisation of (macro) society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within intimate relationships. There is evidence that the egalitarians acted as reflexive agents who were seeking to work on the 'project of the self', as autonomous individuals who were seeking a 'pure relationship' as Giddens's theory might predict (Giddens, 1995). However, the results also seem to highlight a weakness in Giddens's theory which fails to include the intimacy (ongoing personal relations) required in post-separation shared parenting arrangements.

Supporting the democratisation thesis it would be reasonable to assume that some of the structural changes, such as changes in education and women's participation in the labour force, have an impact on greater role equality. The women and men in these relationships were autonomous within their marriages and were the initiators of the separation. An ideology of equality between women and men and a belief of every individual's benefit of economic independence was deeply rooted in their discourse. The egalitarians had access to financial resources which permitted them to make decisions about their well-being and relationship. The egalitarians demonstrated how they were beginning to understand themselves and were seeking change. As Giddens (1992:75) argued, individuals place a strong emphasis on the 'project of the self' and are active agents of change. This process was demonstrated by the egalitarians that reassessed their position within the marriage.

In keeping with the research evidence, this study found that the resources to which the egalitarians had access, such as levels of education and access to money, together with gendered social norms appear to act as facilitators on the extent to which they opted for shared parenting (Juby, 2005, Steinman et al. 2005). Fathers in this group, who were reported to have had a strong commitment ('caring about' rather than 'caring for') to the children during the relationship, discontinued their previous 'theoretical involvement' and adopted a more active, engaged understanding of fathering. The provision of two suitable homes, financial independence and the resources to support a shared access arrangement, facilitated the success of the arrangement. These findings support Giddens's (1992) theory that the democratisation of society has led to gender equality within the post-separated parent-child intimate relationship.

On the other hand there was evidence to suggest that the relationship between parents after separation is crucial for supporting the father-child intimate relationship. As fathers transformed into active fathers post separation, they developed a dyadic intimate relationship with their child. However, fathers' involvement post separation was highly dependent on the facilitation of the mother. The key role in facilitating and encouraging the fathers' involvement with the children challenges the kind of theoretical approach proposed by Giddens who emphasises the influence of democratisation at the micro

relationship level (Giddens, 1992). As Trinder (2008:1319) found the mother's facilitation of contact appears to reinforce women's position as family managers and childcare experts. The hard work required in preserving and continuing a shared parenting agreement refutes the notion that individuals can walk away from an unsatisfactory relationship. The empirical evidence found in this research highlights the weakness in Giddens's theory which fails to include the intimacy (ongoing personal relations) required in post-separation shared parenting arrangements. Without the mother's facilitation, it is unsure whether the fathers would have developed intimate relationships with their children.

In the next chapter, we look at another group who had an uneven sexual division of labour during the marriage which improved mildly after the marriage but remained troublesome for both men and women. The unequal division of paid and unpaid work created a power imbalance between the mother and father at the time of separation. While considering the same issues as the present chapter, the relative structural (economic, legal and class) differences of these 'involved but constrained' parents enables us to test Giddens's (1992) theory on individuals as 'agents of change' and Beck's (2000) argument that there is a decline in the capacity of social institutions to dictate people's biographies.

Chapter 6: Involved but Constrained

I am on a knife-edge that it (contact) will change, a knife-edge is a strong term but I am constantly aware that if anything goes wrong, that it will change and I will see the kids less

Eoin, 39 years old, separated 3 years

Who Are The Involved But Constrained Parents?

This chapter explores the experiences of the involved but constrained parents who maintained a high level of parent-child contact with varying degrees of ongoing conflict. The parents are ‘involved’⁵⁷ because of the high level of quality access taking place (not shared like the egalitarians in Chapter 5) however, access was constrained due to the tension that existed between the parents. This group of eight fathers and three mothers represent the most dominant pattern in the sample (and across US and UK literature; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Hoggett, 1994; Smart and Neale, 1999) of mother-residence and father-contact. These parents, when faced with the renegotiation of their roles and behaviour at a time of separation, attempted to discontinue their gendered approach to parenting and family practices. However, these families were faced with many barriers and elements of a gendered approach to parenting still remain as the basis for the distribution of power and responsibilities in the recreation of their new parenting practices after the separation.

‘Adaptive women’, who were part-time workers during and after the marriage experienced reduced income after separation. The women in these cases remained the primary carers and were primarily responsible for childcare after the separation. These women were married to men, like the ‘guest father’, who had been minimally engaged in childcare responsibilities during the separation.⁵⁸ The unequal division of paid and unpaid work created a power imbalance between the mother and father. Post separation, the former couple continued to embark on the exchange of care for income and income for

⁵⁷ Flouri and Buchanan (2001) defined ‘involved’ fathers as those who take an equal role to mothers in the management of their children, are interested in their education and spend time going on outings with them.

⁵⁸ It is important to highlight that the respondents in this section are not marital sets. The individual respondents had similar accounts that appear to be part of the same story.

care. However, women kept the children if they thought that men were holding back the money, while men withdrew financial support if they thought that the women were keeping the children and preventing contact.

A unique feature of this chapter is the possibility it creates for analysing the barriers that exist for some couples in adopting a shared parenting arrangement. The literature has indicated that although the way couples share roles while living together (segregated conjugal roles) has a strong influence on how they divide responsibilities when they separate, however, other factors also have important roles to play (Juby, 2005:157). By exploring the role that legal and socio-demographic factors play on respondents' experiences of changing family practices post separation, this chapter reveals some of the systematic properties that underlie and structure the discontinuity of parental roles and relationships post separation.

Additionally, the chapter draws attention to some of the consequences of leaving out discussions of the structural aspects of societies and people's lives, for the application of Giddens's thesis and its ability to understand the connection between autonomy and choice. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how concepts that take account of context and structure as well as individual agency create a better understanding for this group of parents.

Profile of the Involved but Constrained Parents

Table 7 below demonstrates that the involved but constrained group comprised of eight non-resident fathers and three resident mothers (these were not marital sets but individual respondents). The majority of the parents were in their late thirties or early forties, although Peter and Aine were in their early fifties. The respondents had young families and at the time of the separation, there was at least one child in each family aged ten or under. The marriages were of moderate length (around ten years) and the parents had been separated for a considerable time (in most cases over five years), i.e. they were separated for a longer period than the egalitarians.

The dominant economic household type for the involved but constrained parents was a one-and-a-half-income household, in which the father was the main breadwinner and the mother worked part-time. There were, however, two parents in the involved but constrained group who were part of dual income households. In the first case, Peter, whose wife was self-employed, continued to pay spousal maintenance as the wife earned substantially less than he did. In the second case, Ciaran's ex-spouse was also working full-time. They had only been married for six years and had had no joint assets.

Table 7: Profile of Involved but Constrained Parents

Name	Age	Age of Children	Length of Marriage	Time Since Separation	Household Type	Settlement *
Josh	43	9, 5	11	5	One and a Half	Solicitor
Cian	42	15, 12, 6	10	6	One and a Half	Solicitor
Rob	39	6	10	4	One and a Half	Solicitor
Eoin	41	12, 8	12	5	One and a Half	Solicitor
Ciaran	37	7	6	6	Dual Income	Solicitor
Larry	45	20, 16	12	6	One and a Half	Solicitor
Mike	45	17, 15, 12	12	8	One and a Half	Court Based
Peter	52	20, 15	13	7	Dual Income	Solicitor
Mairead	42	17, 15, 12, 10	13	6	One and a Half	Solicitor
Maria	39	14, 11	12	5	One and a Half	Solicitor
Aine	52	18, 16, 10	18	12	One and a Half	Court Based

**The research has differentiated the types of settlement reached into three classifications, namely 1) mediated 2) solicitor-based (including 'on the steps of the court'⁵⁹) and 3) court-based (adjudicated). Although there were additional applications made by the respondents (application for discovery, relocation, interim maintenance), the settlement reached in this table refers to the separation or divorce settlement only.*

⁵⁹ Most family law litigation ends in settlement, (Coulter, 2009) however the settlement may be achieved late in the day, on the steps of the court and after lengthy adversarial battle.

Mothers were considered the primary carers and the mother's house was considered the children's home. The mother received the family home in six of the eleven stories, the family home was sold in three cases (with a 65%-35% division of the proceeds of the sale in favour of the mother) and the family home was given up (rented premises) in two cases. Maintenance for the children ranged from €500-€1,000 per month per child and was being paid in all cases. Fathers tended to see their children every second weekend and usually one night during the week.

The profiles of the involved but constrained parents and the egalitarians are similar in some respects. By and large, both groups of parents were in their early forties, had young children and had been married for at least ten years. However, the following three main differences between the two groups existed: 1) the women in the involved but constrained group were more financially dependent on their ex-spouses for financial assistance both before and after the separation 2) unlike the egalitarians, all the parents in this group had some areas of conflict (disputes over contact and maintenance) 3) they required the use of the solicitors/courts to settle disputes and arrange a parenting and/or financial agreement.

In the following section, I outline the story of three involved but constrained parents who demonstrate how different combinations of structures play a part in their ability to try to discontinue the traditional division of labour and adopt a non-gendered approach to parenting post separation. These accounts highlight different issues which apply more widely to all the parents in the involved but constrained group and are elaborated on in the discussion that follows.

Cian's Story

Breadwinning Role

Cian and Megan were married for ten years and had three children during the 1990s. Cian worked long hours in the finance sector. Megan worked part-time during pregnancies, in what Cian described as "*relatively low paying jobs*". Cian was the main breadwinner "*in terms of what determined us buying a house*" and Megan's economic contributions brought her mere "*pocket change*". Over the years, Cian and Megan fought about the

division of labour in the house. Megan felt that Cian avoided his parenting duties: *“she had developed this mantra that I didn’t care about the kids and was more interested in work.”* Whilst Cian felt that Megan didn’t appreciate his contribution to the family: *“money doesn’t just fall from the trees. I mean money was the big thing, my money was our money and her money was her money. From your mother’s experience in life, money just comes out of something.”*

Over the last three years of the marriage, Megan decided to return to college. The couple spent less and less time together as Cian was devoted to his job during the week and Megan was fully engaged in her studies. Shortly before the break up, Megan announced that she was pregnant with the third child. The third child was intended to bring the couple together but in fact it had the opposite affect and Megan decided that she *“wanted to end the marriage”*.

Rocky Transition

Cian was advised to stay in the family home by his solicitor. Remaining in the family home was seen as a vital *“bargaining chip”* for negotiations for a settlement: *“He (the solicitor) just said to me, one bit of advice, just stay in the house until everything is summed up. Don’t leave the house. That’s your best bargaining chip, is your presence in the house. Until you get something signed, stay there.”* The couple remained living together in the family home, albeit separately, for the following year. Cian described this period as: *“terrible, I slept in the spare room. It was increasingly worse and worse”*. Cian, who was shocked at the announcement and largely rejected the separation, described how living together was *“so difficult because I didn’t really want the separation at the time.”* The period was confusing for Cian: *“during that time, you feel like there’s possibly reconciliation. Things would warm up and then things would go off again.”*

Towards the end of this period of co-residence, the couple managed to agree a settlement and they had agreed that the wife was going to live in the family home. Cian moved out of the house and bought another house about fifteen minutes away. Three months later

however Cian received legal correspondence indicating that Megan was seeking to relocate to the west of Ireland: *"I'll always remember it. It was the week before Easter, I got a letter from her saying, I'm moving the children to the west of Ireland. Basically that (large middle class suburb) is too dangerous a place to bring up children, so I'm moving them to a remote part of the west and this is the first time I'd heard of it."* Cian was shocked as he recalled how he was agreeing to sign over the house only on the basis that she promised not to move back to the west of Ireland where they were both from: *"I said the only concern I have is that you sell the house and move. And there's hardly any mortgage on the house so this is like a six hundred thousand euro house. And I said the only basis I'm signing this over is that you're going to stick to your word. I remember saying that to her; that you promised me you'd never do this. You said you'd never take the children away."*

Cian was horrified when he found out, that during the same period, his wife had taken his children to the west of Ireland *"I tried to get through to her. I eventually got through to her family. She'd actually taken the kids on holiday to the west of Ireland for a week when I got this letter so I thought Jesus Christ, has she made the move already and she is going to keep them there."* Cian sense of frustration grew when he discovered his children had been informed that they were moving to the west: *"the children had been told, before I was ever told, that they knew for about a month and a half that she was thinking of this move to the west of Ireland. She brought them to the west of Ireland showing them houses that they were going to live in."*

Cian did not hesitate to contact his solicitor but *"even the advice I got at that time was, look this can happen, and your wife as an adult has the freedom to move wherever she wants to. She's the primary carer. Don't expect this is going to be easy. It's going to cost you a hell of a lot of money to actually take this case."* A lengthy court battle ensued and eventually Megan was not permitted to relocate with the children and the court stipulated further conditions that restricted Megan's ability to relocate in the future.⁶⁰ From this

⁶⁰ This is an example of a separate relocation application and court process during the interim period before the separation settlement was agreed outside of court.

account we see how conflict and a lengthy court battle are a significant factor and contributor to the damaged spousal relationship.

Money and Child Disputes

As part of the settlement, Megan got the family home (which was valued at €600,000) but under the following condition: *“If you ever sell it, you need my (husband’s) permission and I want 25 per cent of the proceeds. So the house is yours for the rest of your life as long as you want to live there but if you ever try and do anything funny you’re not going to walk away with all the embedded equity in the house.”* In addition to that, Megan was paid a portion of Cian’s bonus every year which acted as a form of spousal maintenance (approx. €70,000 per year). Cian also paid €350 maintenance per child per month. Cian described how his ex-wife has not been *“put out”* by the separation: *“I mean I pay her significant maintenance and having seen her affidavit, she actually has more reserves than I have. She obviously hordes it but at the same time I mean she’s been able to change her car but tell them [the solicitors] she has significant maintenance issues. It’s a lot of money for somebody with no mortgage.”* Conflict over the sharing of financial resources continued post separation. As will be discussed, the social construction of the family sees breadwinning as a dominant theme and the economic consequences of marital disruption for *“adaptive”* women.

Megan and Cian agreed a parenting schedule in which Cian would have access one night during the week and every second weekend. Communication between the couple was poor *“I couldn’t communicate with her verbally because it would just turn everything into a row at the doorstep. She told them at one stage that I was trespassing on her property when I actually walked up to ring the doorbell.* Cian described how his perception of Megan altered: *“my ex-wife turned into a person I didn’t recognise. The fact that she’d take the kids away, the fact that she was telling our children to keep secrets from their father, I couldn’t believe it.”* Cian felt that Megan had too much control over his relationship with the children and for the first few years had lurking fears that he would not be able to see the children. Looking back on the period since the separation Cian described how he has detached himself completely: *“I think personally like earlier on in*

the separation everything was like you'd be looking to have a reason to have a go and through a realisation when the whole west of Ireland thing happened, I said that's it now, I'm not getting involved anymore. I'll just go there and collect the kids. That's largely how I behaved for them for the last four years now."

Maria's Story

Decline of Segregated Conjugal Relationship

Maria and Terry were married for twelve years and separated five years ago. Terry was a successful lawyer who was a partner in a law firm. Maria had met Terry in university where she studied psychology. Maria worked fifteen hours a week in a children's youth centre. Maria enjoyed the work but received very little income from her part-time employment. Maria and Terry started a family soon after they married and had two children. Throughout the marriage, Terry was the sole breadwinner in the family and Maria was responsible for the care of the children and the household. Maria described how Terry's engagement with the children was: *"very erratic, I mean he was good at the sort of playful task, much less so at the routine tasks and the management side of things so he was involved only really on holidays and weekend times."* Maria felt that the couple's different parenting styles were significant: *"his basic attitude is a sort of toughening up one for children and my one is much more of a responsive attitude."*

The couple spent less and less time together as the years went on and Maria described how Terry's behaviour became more unreliable: *"he was always very erratic because he has a drink problem and also because of work problems and he would often promise to be home to read the bedtime story but it wouldn't materialise."* Disengaged from family life, Maria described how Terry *"went off to have another relationship."* Although Maria recalled being hurt by the affair, she accepted that the couple had disengaged from the marital relationship. Looking back, Maria felt that they held *"very fundamental differences on how we view relationships"* and this contributed to the breakdown of the marriage.

Exerting Control

Maria described how her ex-husband was “*in and out of the house for a year*” before they applied for a separation. The father was able to buy another house nearby and Maria remained in the family home. The father’s new home was “*within walking distance*” so the children had frequent access with their father, once during the week (from 6pm in the evening to the following morning) and every second weekend. Maria and Terry struggled to agree a financial settlement and took several years to come to an agreement. Maria described how Terry was not disclosing all financial information: “*I spent three-and-a-half, nearly four years trying to get his basic financial documents and I had to go to court repeatedly to make him and then it would be adjourned and then I would go and he would refuse to have anything to do with them.*”⁶¹

During this time, Maria described how she had to “*hold this kind of line*” in arguments with Terry about bills that needed to be paid: “*he would say I haven’t got any money, I can’t pay the school bills, you are going to have to do it, so it meant that I had to say, I am not doing that. I had to hold this kind of line_having no idea about what the story really was. I had this constant feeling that I didn’t know on what basis I could make a decision. I didn’t want to be unfair to the guy if he genuinely didn’t have any money, but I didn’t feel that I could trust him so there was this constant game play going on.*” The situation worsened when Maria found out that her ex-husband had lied about not having enough money to pay school fees: “*I also found that he was hiding a very large sum of money from me and telling me he didn’t have the money to pay the school fees. I mean he didn’t know I knew, so at that point, all complete trust was gone.*” Such action led to increased levels of distrust and conflict between the parents and contributed significantly to their poor relationship.

Eventually Maria and Terry agreed a settlement and Maria got the family home in lieu of maintenance and Terry paid child maintenance of €500 per month per child and the mortgage repayments on the family home. However, Maria described how the legal system made it difficult for mothers: “*I regret hugely that there isn’t a way that requires*

⁶¹ This is explained whereby one spouse makes a court application for discovery but this couple are still able to settle the terms of the separation, once the discovery process is complete.

people to make arrangements sooner, arrangements that are binding in some way, because I was at home most of the time and he was the one who was earning, and he was the one with the money and power in that sense, and I think he used it." Although Maria continued to work part-time, she was struggling to meet the day-to-day expenses.

Child Welfare Beliefs

When it came to agreeing the parenting arrangement, Maria felt quite torn about how to balance the needs of the children with the rights of her husband: "Well there was a huge big conflict around it. I was very torn because he is a devoted father, because by the standards of a lot of people that is quite a lot of contact and he was adamant that he would be involved in the day-to-day lives as well and honestly that was something I wanted to facilitate." However, Maria felt that the children were being affected by the arrangement as they were regularly upset: "there were lots of tears and hysterics and I knew things weren't right because my daughter would often be upset with tummy aches in the mornings going to school. She didn't want to go to school and didn't want to be separated from me." Maria explained how she reacted to the children's distress by trying to limit the father's involvement: "although I agreed to the arrangement in the beginning, I was constantly trying to pull back from that arrangement, but every time I said I would he said he would go to court".

Maria was intimidated by Terry and did not pursue legal action for a change in the arrangement: "I felt intimidated by him and afraid of his capacity to twist anything I said. He was very good at stuff and he could argue with me very effectively." Eventually the parenting arrangement became routine and the children settled down. Over time, however, the couple adjusted to the arrangement. Looking back, Maria remarked on the change in Terry's fathering since separation: "he is actually a much better father since we split up because he will always have a fear about losing the children if he messes up, or slips up, so he almost always turns up to pick them up, you know, he sticks to the arrangements." This account highlights how disputes over children and maintenance were interlinked. If he withheld money, she prevented contact taking place. This was a dominant theme for this group of parents and will be discussed in more detail below.

Eoin's Story*Family Relations*

Eoin met Susan in the early 90s and he quickly fell in love with her. Shortly after meeting Susan, Eoin was required to go to work in a large firm in the United States. Although Eoin and Susan had only been dating for three months, Eoin asked Susan to move with him to America: *"I was on the way to the States and asked her to come with me and we lived together for a year and then we got engaged and got married about six months after that - it was probably impulsive a little bit."* Eoin's family never attended the wedding as they did not approve of the marriage: *"they didn't like her"*.

Eoin and Susan lived abroad for seven years while Eoin was climbing up the corporate ladder. They had their first child while living abroad and Susan looked after the child. After Susan became pregnant with the second child in the late 1990s, Susan insisted that they move back to Dublin. Susan was part of a large family and she was very close to her siblings. She felt that she needed more social support from her family. Looking back at the relationship, Eoin described how he felt redundant once they returned to Dublin as Susan spent so much time with her family and sisters: *"the minute we got back to Dublin, I was made redundant because she had such a close bond with this sister."* Eoin recalled looking at the phone bill once and was shocked at the frequency of calls between Susan and her sister: *"there were over 150 phone calls in one month. Multiply that by two for the other way around too."*

Seasonal Lows

Eoin explained how Susan suffered from depression and went through regular bad periods, particularly around the Christmas season. He explained how she did not get treatment but he tried to address her concerns: *"I tried to sort things out. I tried to sit down with her. We went through the same thing three years ago."* In the final year of their marriage, Susan went through, what Eoin described as: *"another tough period, she got a bit depressed and down in the dumps, so I thought right, it is another terrible month for her so right, we will sort it out."* Eoin and Susan sat down with the children and explained that *"daddy is moving out just to sort things out between mom and dad."* Eoin

described this period as “*recoverable*” and the kids were also told that this was a temporary move.

Fait Accompli

Two weeks after moving out Eoin discovered that the separation was going to be more permanent. Eoin explained how Susan had “*slowly conditioned the kids that the living arrangements weren’t going to change and dad was gone.*” Eoin felt deceived and manipulated that “*she put me under pressure, saying if you move out for a bit, everything will sort itself out and everything will be wonderful in three months, the marriage will work. I said that is a good suggestion (in a sarcastic tone) and I got a flat and within two weeks of that I was looking to meet with her and sit down and fix it and I then realised it was a ploy to get me out.*” Eoin could not believe that Susan had crafted the entire move out of the family home and grew even more despondent when he found out that Susan was ready to institute proceedings: “*solicitors were lined up and everything, it was quite impressively done (sarcastic tone).*”

When Eoin turned to a solicitor for advice, he was told that he should return to the family home.⁶² The return to the family home caused additional stress and after a week Susan moved out of the house with the children. Eoin described how he was depicted as the selfish father who kicked his children out of their home “*I was the worst in the world for coming back.*” Eoin received similar advice from his solicitor about the importance of remaining in the family home whilst the couple were negotiating their settlement: “*in fact the solicitor wouldn’t have worked with me if I didn’t return to the house. The solicitor’s advice was that you had to do it, it puts you in a better position, a less difficult emotional position and you are not sitting in some flat, in some place you don’t know.*”

⁶² The sampling method adopted, i.e. the recruitment of respondents through a family law practice, resulted in the respondents receiving the same legal advice. Although this was the case, this family law practitioner was well established and appeared to be ‘bargaining in the shadow of the law’ (Mnookin and Kornhauser, 1979). This term describes the process of negotiating as a form of conflict resolution and how its procedures often need to be understood against a background to the law.

Shared Understanding

Susan and Eoin agreed that the family home was going to have to be sold. Before the official negotiations began, Susan approached Eoin and requested that she be rehoused in the same lush suburb in Dublin. Eoin had grown up in this suburb and also want to rehouse himself there but unfortunately there were not enough assets to re-house both Susan and Eoin in the same suburb. Eoin described how *“I kind of tended to concede a bit, because, you rationalise it, and the kids are in the tennis club and football club there.”* The couple ended up in the family law courts as they were unable to agree a division of sale of the assets. Eoin described how the two sets of parties were in the negotiation rooms in the family law courts and *“the solicitors were scuffling between the two rooms because they wanted 75% of the assets, and I said no, I will see you in court, and as it turned out that was just a game, you know. They agreed to a 62%-38% split.”* As such the couple settled ‘on the steps of the court’ and avoided having their cases heard in court. The family home was sold and the mother bought a house in the same area as the family home and the father rehoused himself in a more affordable area about a thirty-minute-drive from the family home. Again the level of conflict increased as the parents were unable to reach a settlement in a less adversarial manner.

Eoin pays ongoing maintenance of €1,250 per month for the wife and two children. Maintenance is not specifically allocated between the children and the wife. The negotiations were only about money and the arrangements for the children didn’t feature. At this stage, Eoin was having overnight access to his twelve year-old daughter and eight year-old son every Thursday and every Saturday. Eoin was satisfied with the overall level of contact but he was concerned that work would interfere with weekday access: *“my worry is that I will probably lose the Thursday with work changes and everything.”*

Eoin described how he has a hostile relationship with his ex-wife but he tries to remain on good terms with her as: *“You got to keep on her good side, you actually have to be pals as much as possible because if you don’t you end up losing out, so you got to keep things very amicable.”* Eoin felt that his level of parental involvement post separation is controlled by Susan, the resident mother. He felt excluded from decision-making or more authoritative parenting, due to Susan’s dominance as the central parental figure. As I shall

outline later, many of the fathers, felt their involvement was undermined by the resident mother when she spoke poorly of them in front of the children and in some cases actively discouraged access. This account demonstrates how household income was a key factor in setting up two households after the separation. Unlike the egalitarians, individuals in the involved but constrained group had less financial means (one-and-a-half income households) and fathers were constrained by having to move further away to a more affordable area.

Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

This section attempts to tease out the situations, circumstances and problems which result in the marital relationships ending. The couples in this group, similar to the egalitarians, described how the marital relationship ended after a protracted period of dwindling intimacy, rising dissatisfaction and recurring arguments, during which partners simply grew apart and lived separate lives. The section highlights the triggers and reasons why the parents in this group ended their relationship.

Marriage Money⁶³

Money is a very complex phenomenon within the family. The uneven distribution of income appears to have contributed to the breakdown of the marriage. Cian felt that the pooling of money in his household facilitated and concealed unequal sharing, since equal sharing was assumed but his former wife was taking control over the management of money. This finding echoes John Pahl's work on gender, households and money management, outlining the complex way in which couples have organised their finances in the context of changing norms around gender equality (Pahl, 1989).

One important characteristic of the social meaning of money is where money comes from (Stocks et al., 2007:20). In one-and-a-half income households, the main source of money came from the father. As such, fathers had the power to down a standard of what is reasonable spending, what is referred in the literature as 'earner entitlement' (Elizabeth,

⁶³ The term 'Marriage Money' was first used by Singh, S (1997) in *Marriage Money: The Social Shaping of Money in Marriage and Banking*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin

2001:402). In the process of defining the money, the father's relative power over the money influenced how it should be used. It seems that main breadwinners have the right to give final approval of the way a former spouse handles the family budget. This itself is a form of control.

The social context of money, i.e. the meaning different forms of money has to the individuals and the couple, is important in exploring the process of being a marital couple and doing gender within a couple (Nyman and Dema, 2007:21). Cian's personal meaning of money adds to our understanding of how power in the household was distributed. Male breadwinners perceived their income as pertaining to the family while income derived from the wife's part-time employment was not. Fathers' description of their income as belonging to the family is a way of highlighting his role as a breadwinner. Such findings reflect strong gender ideologies pertaining to the male breadwinner (Vogler, 1998).

Conflicting Parenting Styles

How to raise children properly is a deeply fraught and contested issue (Smart and Neale, 1999:89). Different approaches to parenting during the intact marriage triggered conflict and frustration between the parents. Maria described how her husband's authoritarian style of parenting was at odds with her more authoritative approach to parenting: "*his basic attitude (to parenting) is a sort of toughening up one for children and my one is much more of a responsive attitude.*" Maria grew frustrated that Terry would discipline the children without explaining the reasoning behind the punishment. Maria on the other hand was more responsive to the children and approached the parent-child relationship more democratically. The differences in parenting style during the intact marriage played a significant role in the conflict that followed post separation in relation to assessing the best interests of the children.

Self as Project

The actions of some of the parents during the latter stages of the marriage revealed 'the balance between attention to self, as opposed to attention to other and to the relationship'

(Lewis, 2001:128). As Vaughan's (1986:20) detailed outline of the process of uncoupling suggests, when an individual no longer finds a relationship compatible with the sense of self, they (initiators) turn to alternatives that supply the self-validation they are seeking. They invested energy into an activity or transitional person⁶⁴ (Vaughan, 1986). Some initiators found it in education, such as Cian's wife Megan, who returned to college in the later stages of the marriage.

While some invested energy into re-educating themselves or work, others invested energy into a transitional person. The initiators began to create a social life from which the former spouse is not included. The former spouses of Peter, Maria and Mairead all had affairs at the latter stages of the marriage. While in Eoin's case, Susan began to rely more on family, finding companionship that is missing in the marriage: "*there were phone calls from Susan to her sister, there were over 150 phone calls in one month.*" This process of uncoupling was characterised by the pursuit of alternatives in ways that sever marital ties instead of strengthening them.

Discussion: Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

If we look across the behaviours of the couples in this group we see that many aspects of the behaviour were traditional, especially in relation to the division of money and unpaid work (including parenting). Families were economically unequal since the men earned significantly more money, had financial control and contributed more to the shared pool. Women's unpaid work did not appear to be included in the calculations. Smaller economic contributions were seen as less significant. The non-financial contributions such as housework and child care were not included in the father's account of essential contributions to the house. It appeared that a norm of equality in marriage was overridden by a conflicting norm which gave the earner the right to control their income.

The way in which married couples organised their financial affairs within the marriage both supports and challenges Giddens's (1992) or Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) theses of a shift to completely democratic and individualised intimate relationships.

⁶⁴ Vaughan (1996:36) argued that finding a 'transitional person' is part of the uncoupling process, i.e. someone or something that will bridge the gap between the old life and the new.

Despite the fact that many of the men in this group were categorised as breadwinners, their jobs were their priority and they did little unpaid work at home. There was evidence that they shared the money that they earned and felt that they worked for the family. Although there was a gendered division of labour, there was a more democratic sharing of money. There appeared to have been no great divide between what was 'yours' or 'mine' and all money was put into the family pot. However, at the point of separation, this form of sharing was no longer held. The principle of a 'shared pooling' during the marriage did not mean 'shared pooling' after the marriage. The difference in exchanges both before and after separation revealed the indirect power and control by the earners.

Further support for the Giddens's thesis was found in the desire for open discussions about the conflicting parenting styles, as mothers were seeking to adopt more democratic ways of parenting and being responsive to the children, instead of punitive. The conflict in parenting styles followed a traditional gender pattern. This finding suggests that one partner became dissatisfied in the relationship when they felt that a shared understanding and an ability to work together was impossible. The mother was seeking elements of the pure relationship, in which she attempted to negotiate and discuss how they wanted to work together in parenting.

Further support to Giddens's (1992) or Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) theses of a shift to completely democratic and individualised intimate relationships was evident from the individual's shift in focus away from the marital relationship and onto one's self as the relationship declined. These individuals demonstrated that they were seeking changes in their intimate relationships because they understood themselves differently (pursuit of a college course and new relationships). They placed more emphasis on the ongoing process of self-construction and created their own biographies.

Fighting Over the Family Home

The experience of moving out of the family home was hotly contested in the majority of involved but constrained parents' accounts. Unlike the egalitarians, the parents in this group were unable to agree who should move out of the family home and how the family

home should be dealt with upon separation. The men in many cases were influenced in their choice to remain or leave the family home and were affected by a host of factors including 1) squatters' rights 2) constructive desertion 3) daddy as 'the evictor' and 4) financial resources.

Squatters' Rights

Legal advice to remain in the family home was received by four of the male respondents in this group. Remaining in the family home was seen as a vital "*bargaining chip*" in the negotiations for a settlement. A position in the family home Eoin described "*puts you in a better position, a less difficult emotional position and you are not sitting in some flat, in some place you don't know.*" Smart (2007:163) outlined how the 'home' lacks a fixed meaning and can incorporate elements such as the quality of the relationships which are associated with the home (father-child), or a type of particularly activity (parenting), or to do with movement (sense of nostalgia for something lost, for example, parental role). As such, the family home in this context was given a full and rounded conception which embodied a sense of emotional and relational, i.e. the idea of the home as something more than a physical place to reside. The family home was seen as more than a financial asset.

Constructive Desertion

'Constructive desertion' took place when some of the wives in the sample intentionally forced their husbands to leave the family home by alleging that the husband acted in an offensive manner. The serving of interim barring orders as a manner in which one can initiate a physical separation was observed in eight instances (across all typologies although only one in this group) in this study.⁶⁵ In this group, Mike, who was served with a barring order shortly after the announcement of the separation, described how he was powerless as he was "*forced*" out of the family home as she "*made some sort of*

⁶⁵ An amendment to the Domestic Violence 1996 Act was made in 2002. The following amendment was made to the 1996 Act: (a) in section 4 (interim barring orders), by substituting the following subsection for subsection (3) "(3) (a) An interim barring order may be made ex parte where, having regard to the circumstances of the particular case, the court considers it necessary or expedient to do so in the interests of justice. (b) The application for such an order shall be grounded on an affidavit or information sworn by the applicant. A copy of the order is served on the respondent as soon as practicable and a full Court Hearing has to take place within eight working days of the Interim Barring Order being made.

allegation, of which I'm not aware of happened". He viewed the barring order application as "a tactic on her behalf to get me out of the house and she saw the opportunity in the fact that she could go down and get a barring order and I couldn't do anything about it."

This sense of powerlessness and freedom to act, in the face of real legal constraint, impairs the fathers' ability to be with their children during a crucial transition. Interesting to note that court statistics indicate that there is a high rate (over 50 per cent) of barring order applications being withdrawn or struck out, an outcome that occurs when the applicant either withdraws the application or does not appear in court on the day of the hearing (Fahy and Fields, 2008:24). The significance of this high rate of withdrawal/non-appearance has not been researched.

Additionally some other participants employed a more subtle form of eviction by requesting a "cooling off period" under the pretence that they would "take one last chance at the relationship". Eoin described how he did not feel like any attempt was made to "recover" from "another terrible month for her so right, we will sort it out." Instead he realised that he was manipulated into leaving the family home: "I then realised it was a ploy to get me out." The mothers' actions exacerbated the level of conflict and increased the level of distrust.

Daddy the Evictor

The return to the family home after being "evicted" was a devastating experience for these fathers. Eoin described how he was placed in a difficult position between following legal advice and meeting the needs of his children: "the worst in the world for coming back as she had to leave with the kids, and that was a difficult one for me because the kids are the most important things." Mike also described how: "having to move back in again wasn't the way to get anything sorted. When I moved back in nothing really improved, it just got worse". The family home at this stage was a site of conflict. Findings from research on children's experience of separation in Ireland indicated that children experience distress when they witnessed conflict between their parents, when a parent was barred from the home, and when a parent left suddenly (Hogan et al.,

2002:34). Needless to say all three can coexist upon the serving of a barring order. When children were aware that there were serious difficulties, or had witnessed conflict and even violence, the lack of information or a sudden departure added to their confusion and distress (Hogan et al., 2002).

Financial Resources

Similar to the egalitarians, the fathers' level of income in all cases was substantial enough to allow him to set up a second home of comparable size and comfort to the family home. According to Simpson (1995:73) this increases the chance of the child feeling comfortable whether in the home of the mother or father. Most of the fathers were able to buy a second house in the same or neighbouring area, so the distance between the two houses was minimised. Simpson (1995) found that the distance between the homes of fathers and those of their children affects the frequency of contact. The closer together the homes of children and fathers, the more likely they were to see each other.

Discussion: Moving Out of the Family Home

Participants' verbal account of being removed from the home reinforces the notion of constraint at various levels. The researcher was struck firstly by the legal preference (as indicated by legal advice) to remain in the family home despite the high level of conflict that exists at a time of separation. The problems that fathers encountered in remaining or returning to the family home, on foot of such advice, were considerable. It appears that in order to have a fair separation process, there is an expectation that parents should endure ongoing conflict, demonstrate commitment through physical presence and place their own needs over their children's needs. This is a pretty stringent set of conditions which influence the initial (physical) transition of post separated parenting.

The researcher was also struck by the manner in which Mike was removed from the family home. Understandably the methods used for applying for and serving barring orders are designed to protect, but this thesis will not debate the principles behind such issues. The fathers complained that the use of 'ex parte' applications were unjust and based their justification on the outcome of the application. What is significant here is that

far from structural constraints such as the law being unimportant, it remains critical in shaping the fathers initial transition into post-separated parenting.

Mnookin and Kornhauser highlighted the importance of legal system in capturing the richness and complexity of separating parents' lives: 'to divorcing spouses and their children, family law is inescapably relevant' (1979:951). This quote is particularly apt given the significant legal practices that constrain the movements in and out of the family home. The findings for this group of parents reveal how significant the contexts and conditions under which individuals separate. Rather than presenting a picture of 'choice biographers' who have the 'the freedom to choose' and are autonomous individuals, the data here suggests a more constrained transition out of the family home. The failure to include the role of context and structure within the individualisation thesis makes it difficult to use it as a concept for understanding changing personal relationships upon divorce.

It appears that the movement out of the family home is highly gendered for the involved but constrained group. The findings in this research found that the family home was bound up with feelings of intimate family life, father-child relationships and parental identity. Although research findings (Gurney, 1997) have continually found how men and women understand the notion of 'home' differently whilst they co-reside, unexpected removal from this space upon separation signifies a point in which the meaning of home is intensified. The meaning of the family home changed dramatically when the fathers returned to the family home as they experienced a disjunction from the space of their personal relationships and parenting practices. Such findings resonate with findings from other studies which have suggested that parents may express awareness of their family relationships when they are outside of the home (Simpson et al, 1995). This is thought to be associated with a sense of vulnerability in such contexts, which might either reinforce a sense of being a family, or negatively challenge people's identities (Ribbens et al., 2003).

Negotiating a Settlement

Klein and White (1996) define negotiations as both parties stating their aims, and using their resources to convince the other party to move towards these respective aims. The following themes emerged from the interviews with the involved but constrained parents 1) conflict 2) money as power 3) children as power and 4) shared understanding.

Conflict and Control

Conflict has been defined by Sprey (1979:134) as ‘the confrontation between individuals, or groups, over scarce resources, controversial means, incompatible goals, or combinations of these.’ The scarce resources in this instance refer to access to the children, an income and/or the family home. Conflict during the early months following the announcement of separation appeared highly gendered. Resident mothers believed that their ex-spouses were controlling them by restricting their access to financial resources (child maintenance). Non-resident fathers felt that the resident mothers were exerting control over their relationship with their children. Emery (1994) referred to how this power refers to the control that individuals perceived themselves to have over their own lives, especially with regard to financial and parenting roles.

Money as Power

An important aspect of money in families is power (Stocks et al., 2007). The distribution of power in decision-making is crucial in determining access to money and consumption. The distribution of financial resources was significant in understanding resident mothers’ difficulties with the negotiations. The day-to-day financial responsibilities fell on the mother as the mothers were the primacy carers who were dependent on the fathers’ continued contribution to the rearing of the children. Researchers have demonstrated that patterns of control are important for access to money (Burgoyne, 1990; Nyman, 1999; Pahl, 1989). The major sticking point for the resident mothers in this group in the immediate period after the announcement of the separation was their former husband’s dominance and control over the mother through the restriction of the flow of money, in particular, maintenance for the children.

During the early interim stage, there was no financial agreement in place and the resident mothers described how disagreements over maintenance caused “*massive outbursts*”. Maria described how Terry tried to control her and assert his authority over her by restricting child maintenance payments: “*maintenance was always an issue. I think looking back at it now, it was his hold on the situation, and why he actually didn’t want a legal agreement. He was constantly threatening to cut it (maintenance) off or cut it back and that was a common part of the arguments, so that was his way of keeping a hold on the situation.*”

Several studies have highlighted the fact that control (and power) can be direct, but that more often in the case of families, indirect (Nyman, 1999; Pahl, 1989; Stocks et al., 2007). Mairead talked about how her ex-husband paid the maintenance weekly as a means of exercising control over her role: “*I mean I never asked for maintenance for me, it was all just for the kids. He just kept paying that amount and he would pay weekly. He never paid it monthly because it’s a control thing.*” The former husbands appeared to have no sense of the work and cost involved in raising children. As pointed out above, an important aspect of money in post-separated families is control. It appeared as if subtle and informal mechanisms for maintaining male power after the separation were at work.

Children as Power

The fathers felt that the resident mothers were exerting control over their relationship with their child. For many of the men in this category, access was denied or made more difficult in the early months following the announcement as Rob described: “*I left home and that is when access to Mary (daughter) stopped.*” The sticking point for all of these non-resident fathers is that their wife was in control of the children and the fathers had little power or control over their access with their children during the early stages, i.e. before they agreed a joint custody order as part of the judicial separation. It may simply be that women control their former husband’s access to their children in sinister and manipulative ways by adopting more covert undetectable ways of maintaining a position of control.

Shared Understanding

There was evidence that the involved but constrained parents demonstrated reasonable consideration for the interests of others too. In the process of negotiations, the parents displayed shared understanding which emerged over time that there are certain things which they would do for each other if necessary. In one instance Eoin described how he wanted to make sure that his children continued to reside in the same community, even if he meant that he could not afford to live there. He placed the needs of the children above his own and was keen to allow them to stay in the area with their mother, even if it meant that he could not afford a house in that same area.

In addition, Peter accepted an offer for the family home from his former spouse which was well below an equal sum but it was considered appropriate according to her means: *“she paid as much as she could afford, at the time she didn’t have a whole lot of money. That wasn’t a huge percentage of what the value was of it.”* In such instances, the parent does not pursue their own interests but they are prepared to emphasise their own needs less or lessen their demands in order to achieve a compromise, especially if it favours the well-being of the children.

Discussion: Negotiating a Settlement

In accordance with existing research evidence, the main finding in the involved but constrained group was that there is a strong link between money and children during the early stages of the separation (Simpson et al. 1995; Lewis et al, 2002; Smart et al., 2005). Disputes over property, children and maintenance were interlinked, as most resident parents were awarded the family home and had control of the children. The non-resident parents who were outside of the family home had money and controlled issues regarding maintenance. According to the parents in this group, resident parents used the children as their strongest “bargaining chip”, while non-resident parents used money as their strongest “bargaining chip”.

In this group the women had the main responsibility for the children. The fathers assisted on weekends but a clear division of female and male labour was present and the sexual division of labour during the marriage influenced the circumstances in which they were

negotiating. It was in these negotiations and practices that gender imbalance resided. These imbalances were the result of a skewed balance of power in the couple's relationship both before and after the separation.

Parent-Child Contact

In the involved but constrained group there was a high level of access taking place but unlike the egalitarians, time with the children is not shared. Non-resident fathers tended to see their children every second weekend and usually one night during the week.⁶⁶ These separated parents are similar in many respects to the 'competitively enmeshed' families from Trinder et al. (2002) research. The factors that impacted on the type of arrangement which eventually settled into a high level of contact were 1) working and parenting 2) divided homes 3) all give and no take and 4) fluidity.

Working and Parenting

Working long hours contributed to the type of arrangement many of the fathers were able to adapt. They were unable to have overnight access during the week as they worked too late to collect their young children before bed time as Ciaran described: "*I would see her during the week every Tuesday and I had to forfeit that because I couldn't do it. I was working in the centre of the city and I was living in X (45 minute drive from city centre). It is impossible with traffic, so regrettably I can't do that.*" These findings echo research evidence which demonstrates that the type of hours worked by parents may also affect parenting arrangements (Juby et al, 2005). They found that fathers who work late in the evenings during the marriage were less likely to develop the kinds of parenting skills and had less time to develop a relationship with their children (Juby et al., 2005: 160). Working lives remained unchanged after the separation.

At times these problems were assisted by mothers who facilitated overnight access mid-week by allowing the father to collect the children from 6pm midweek (after work)

⁶⁶ One common findings within the literature on contact after divorce highlights that research based on information from resident parents reports lower levels of contact than that drawing on information from non-resident parents (Braver et al. 1991; Wikeley, 2001).

and by allowing the fathers to drop the children back to the mother's house early the following morning. Josh, who had such an arrangement, described how it worked: "*On Wednesdays I collect them at 6pm and I pick them up from their mother's house and bring them home with me and they stay the night and I drop them back to their mothers' [house] the following morning.*" In doing so, the mothers were ensuring the father's involvement and increased contact with the children.

Divided Homes

As the relationship between the parents remained tense and competitive, they were unable to share time together, so celebrations or handovers were conducted in a divided manner. Parents opted to communicate less to avoid conflict during their weekly contact as Cian described "*She told them at one stage that I was trespassing on her property when I actually walked up to ring the doorbell. She said 'You are to wait in the car and I'll bring the children out to you.'*" Collecting the children in a car outside the marital home prevented the parents from having to communicate with each other.

Secondly, the parents were unable to spend time together in the family home so special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas were often celebrated apart as Mike fittingly described: "*I don't feel welcome into the house*". Cian described how he and his ex-wife organised birthday parties for the children: "*for the times that they were having their parties at their mother's house, I'd have a separate party just for the kids and myself to celebrate. I wouldn't go to the one in her house.*" As the non-resident parent was outside the family home, most fathers saw the child for a couple of hours on the day of the celebration.

All Give No Take

Seven of the eleven parents began post-separation access with their children under flexible arrangements. These arrangements tended to be more problematic and led to an increased need in communication between the parents. The increase in communication led ultimately to an increase in conflict as Josh described: "*from time to time she would expect me to take them at the drop of a hat. There were a couple of times that I couldn't and issues would be raised*". Cian and Eoin described how flexibility in their

arrangements was not reciprocated. Eoin depicted a typical scenario of how the resident mother used flexibility in the arrangement to take control of access and her time with the children: *“she was away on business and the kids were with me and then it came to the weekend, and she was back on the Friday and she cornered me at one stage and said, ‘oh I want the kids tonight’, I said ‘listen, it is Saturday night and no’ but she was negotiating on the spot and I said, ‘no I really want them over on Saturday night because it is a precedent if I have gone away, I don’t get them on a Friday’”*. Eoin also felt that if the situation was reversed his ex-wife would not be as accommodating as he was but he also felt that there was little he could do.

Fluid Arrangements

Contact arrangements since the separation did not remain fixed routine practices. Children modified arrangements, especially when they became a little older. The involved but constrained parents had younger children at the time of the separation. However over the six or seven-year period since the separation, the children grew older and contact became the children’s choice. The parents and contact schedule had to adapt to the changing needs of the children. Mairead described how the children increasingly determined their own access with their father. Although there were access arrangements were still in place, the children were no long obligated to spend the entire weekend with their father: *“The eldest fellow would probably, of a three-night weekend, he would spend one night with his dad. He might spend a Friday or Saturday but he would always come home to me on a Sunday. That’s his choice and the eldest daughter would always spend a Friday night at home. She would never go down to her dad before a Saturday and would always be home on Sunday night. So basically two of them would only see him one or two nights out of every fourteen.”* As the contact arrangement involved children to carry them out, the children became actors or agents who grew increasingly able to determine their own movements.

Discussion: Parent Child Contact

The fathers in these cases, who were part of ‘one-and-a-half-income’ marital households, attempted to reconcile their caring and providing responsibilities more evenly after the

separation. Upon separation they did not opt to work less or change their working conditions but dedicated every second weekend to parenting, i.e. exclusive contact from Friday evening to Monday morning. Additionally the mother's facilitation supported the father's more frequent contact with the child. In effect, their new role post separation provided a more effective scheduling for their fathering duties. They talked about enjoying exclusive quality one-on-one time with their children. There were, however, several barriers to adopting an egalitarian approach to post-separation life for the involved but constrained parents.

Firstly the unequal division of paid work and family work meant that the fathers were the primary breadwinners and were responsible for providing financially for their children and ex-wives. Their ability and freedom to create their own biography after separation (i.e. a more involved parental identity) was constrained by employment constraints and the gendered division of labour in the post-separated family, i.e. their responsibility to provide for the family. It appears that the context in which they lived during the marriage largely influenced their role post separation.

These fathers had a high attachment to the workforce and worked long hours (60 hours per week). Upon separation they did not opt to work less or change their working conditions but dedicated their weekends to parenting. These fathers were able to do so as the mothers were carrying the burden of childcare responsibilities. Mothers reconciled employment with parenting whereas fathers fitted in parenting with employment. If we examine Giddens's theory on the project of the self, we see how failure to relate self with 'a gendered self' is a major weakness of the argument (Smart and Neale, 1999:137). Our findings suggest that women and men are tied into having pre-determined gender roles post separation and are not free to determine their own biographies. The lack of financial independence and gender equality post separation curtails their ability to create their own biographies.

The age of the dependent child is a crucial factor in examining parent-child contact. Although each family had a young child at the time of the separation, by the time of the interview (on average five years later or more) these children had become young

adolescents. As such they became active agents and were able to choose for themselves whether they wanted to have access. Parents and children's understanding of family and family practices were subject to change over time and were largely negotiated by a sense of moral responsibilities rather than rights and obligations.

Studies have shown that frequency of contact is related to income (Simpson, 1995; Stephens, 1996). Contact with children costs money, which is the reason for the 'socio-economic advantaged parenting perspective' (Stephens, 1996:471), which suggests that income is a strong determinant for level of contact between non-resident fathers and their children. The first aspect of this argument has been dealt with in this chapter in which those who can afford a child staying with them will increase the frequency of contact. However, the second argument relates to underlying norms and attitudes associated with higher earners in relation to understanding of fatherhood, which is less to do with provision and more to do with active fathering practices as income increases (Donnelly and Finkelhor, 1993).

The maternal gateopening behaviour of the mothers in this sample could be described as 'proactive gateopening' (Trinder, 2008:1307). Upon separation, they discontinued their dominant primary carer role, by allowing space for the father to parent. These mothers had to facilitate contact between the father and the child, particularly midweek, and include their father in parenting activities. These mothers, to varying degrees, sustained father-child relationships by assisting flexible mid-week contact. Seery and Crowley (2000) have developed the concept of women's relationship management work in exploring maternal strategies to manage and promote father-child relationships.

*Asymmetrical Collaboration*⁶⁷

Both mothers and fathers have an impact on the re-negotiation of the parental roles post separation. The research identified four themes that impacted on the renegotiation of

⁶⁷ This term was used by Trinder (2008:1319) to describe how some mothers would proactively facilitate near-equal contact but retain primary responsibility for family management.

parental roles including: 1) discontinued traditional fathering 2) mother knows best and 3) maternal gatework.

‘Guest Father’ to ‘Involved but Constrained’

The fathers in this group appear to have redeemed themselves in the eyes of resident mothers and become active fathers after separation. Often for the first time, these fathers are taking sole responsibility for their children as Aine described “*Maybe for him it made him realise because when he has them, he has to look after them, whereas before he didn’t, when we were married he was never there because basically he worked all the time.*” Mairead referred to the separation as a “*wake up call*” for many fathers. She believed that many fathers only realise they are absent from their children’s lives when they are removed from the family home and their relationship is no longer borne by the mother. These fathers were able to overwrite their marital history as a ‘traditional father’ with a new ‘engaged active father’ identity.

Research evidence suggests that the quality of parent-child interaction is as important as the quantity of contact (Amato & Gilbreth 1999; Smart & Neale, 2000). Fathers felt that spending exclusive chunks of quality time with their children at weekends enhanced the overall quality of the father-child relationship as Cian described: “*I give them the certainty that these are the times that they will see me and I will always be there. My practice as well is that on my weekends I’d have the children. I haven’t really ever gone out.*” Smart and Neale (1999:104) argue that becoming a more involved father means that fathers develop better relationships with their children and as a consequence their children’s childhood becomes richer.

Mother Knows Best

Despite the father’s change in parental identity and involvement, many of the fathers faced major challenges, with limited authority to make decisions about their children. Decisions were often made unilaterally by the mother as Ciaran, whose child went to private school, described: “*there was a lot of talk about her going to a private school and I was initially against it, private schools are great but for a child that age and I would*

prefer for her to go to a national school, but I was just told no, this is the way it is going to be and we are doing this. It is completely one-sided." Just as the 'competitively enmeshed' non-resident fathers from Trinder et al (2002:15) sample, non-resident fathers did not accept this secondary parenting role and felt that the mother was trying to undermine their position. Such gateclosing work on the part of the mothers reinforced themselves as the primary parent (Trinder, 2008).

On the other hand, the resident mothers in this group argued that they took on sole responsibility for the children despite the division of contact between the parents: *"there's no doubt that the mom parents."* Mona described how she and her ex-husband make decisions relating to the children: *"it is more a case of me suggesting that this needs to be done and him agreeing to it rather than us having this genuine conversation about the child's welfare and trading ideas about which way to approach it and who might do what and how you might share the task. He has never have been to a parent teacher meeting."* According to the resident mothers, the divisions of responsibilities are clearly differentiated along gender lines, much as they were during the marriage.

Maternal Gatework

Bad mouthing was perceived as a way of undermining the father's position. The fathers in this group believed that resident mothers were deliberately discrediting them and undermining their parental role, as Cian described: *"my daughter will say to me – mom said you do this, mom said you do that, mom said you are more concerned with your work and I'll say mom is mistaken. Well sometimes I lose it."* According to Trinder (2008:1312) such gateclosing work related to subtle emotional pressure.

Similar to other research findings, some fathers expected mothers to actively encourage contact (Trinder, 2008). Instead of encouraging access, Ciaran described how his ex-wife engaged in sentimentality and emotions, when the daughter went on access with the father: *"she bursts out crying 'I miss my mommy so much.' It just came out of the blue. She was perfectly happy. There were no issues. It is all because it was built up."* *'You are going to go to your daddy's tomorrow, ring me, make sure you ring me as soon as you*

are with your dad', "rather than saying 'have a great time, see you Sunday, you will be grand."

For mothers who were seeking to reduce contact, gateclosing was reported as being prompted and justified on child welfare grounds (Trinder, 2008:1311). Resident mothers on the other hand described how they attempted to reduce contact as they believed they were protecting their children and acting in the best interests of the child: "*so there was a period of about 2-3 years were I was, constantly trying to pull back from that arrangement...I was very torn (over the parenting arrangement) because he is a very devoted father ... and that was fine but at the time it caused huge amount of upset for my daughter in particular. Five is a very sensitive age group for parents to separate, and it hit her very hard.*" These mothers' narratives resonated more closely with research evidence that suggests that the mothers were not against contact but attempted to reduce it based on insensitive parenting by the father (Day Sclater & Kaganas, 2003; Trinder, 2008).

Discussion: Asymmetrical Collaboration

Research evidence is demonstrating how fathers are slowly beginning to increase the amount of time they spend caring for their children (Coltrane, 1990; Schwartz, 1994) and the findings demonstrate that the fathers in the involved but constrained category are more involved after the separation than during the marriage. However, in order to examine a more overall view of the father's renegotiated role in the child's life, researchers argue that it is important to look beyond the dyadic relationship and examine the triadic relationship (Fagan and Barnett, 2003; Trinder, 2008).

The findings here suggest that mothers have adopted gatekeeping behaviour that influences father involvement and a collaborative effort in parenting, a finding that resonates with research evidence in the UK (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Trinder, 2008). Research evidence suggests that gateclosing behaviour was found to be more prevalent in separated families (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Wolchick et al., found that gateclosing behaviour was found in between a quarter and a third of non-

resident fathers who reported various forms of interference with visitation (Wolchik, Fenaughty & Braver, 1996).

The two approaches to gateclosing reported by resident and non-resident parents in this group represent gender-specific perspectives of the same account. Although the parents gave different accounts for the reason for gateclosing, both resident mothers and non-resident fathers recognised that gateclosing was happening. Within this group, mothers perceived fathers were lacking awareness of children's emotional needs and perceived the father as insensitive. The idea that maternal perceptions of paternal competence were important contextual factors in determining the level of gatekeeping have been found in other studies (McBride et al., 1998; Trinder, 2008). Mothers appear to facilitate access, particularly midweek access but appear to assert an authority over how much the father can get involved. These findings resonate with research findings in the UK which found that while mothers were facilitating fathers' involvement (in temporal terms) to the children they retained primary responsibility for family management (Trinder: 2008:1319). This is a reflection of the continuation of the sexual division of labour during the marriage. Mothers who were responsible for caring during the marriage, continue to do so upon separation.

The findings in this chapter echoes research evidence that parents continue to exert a 'bidirectional and reciprocal influence on each other' (Trinder, 2008; 1321), while mothers still provide the lion's share of childcare in return for maintenance or the award of the family home. This finding highlights the weakness in Giddens's democratisation theory, which claims that relationships between men and women are becoming more equal.

Conclusion

As I have commented throughout this thesis, recent theorising about contemporary family life is focused on individualisation and democratisation. The accounts presented by the involved but constrained parents both support and challenge Giddens's (1992) or Beck

and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) thesis of a shift to completely new forms of individualised intimate relationships.

Firstly there is evidence that some of the involved but constrained parents acted as reflexive agents who were seeking to work on the 'project of the self', as individuals who were seeking a 'pure relationship' as Giddens's theory might predict (Giddens, 1995). These parents were seeking to exit the marital relationship which was no longer compatible with the sense of self. They turned to alternatives that supplied the self-validation they were seeking, whether it was an activity or a transitional person.

Further support to Giddens's thesis was found in the desire for open discussions about the conflicting matters in the relationship. Giddens (1992) talks about the emergence of a new kind of unstable but democratic 'pure relationship' in which two equal individuals are able to negotiate how they live together. A reluctance to tolerate a traditional style of parenting was evidence that one individual was seeking a more democratic approach to intimate relationships and favoured her husband to do so too – in the past women would not have questioned such traditional authoritative fathering – but now it is less accepted. In parallel with the emergence of the democratic intimate relationships, there have been changes in broader cultural/ideologies of gender, and especially in the types of partnerships couples are choosing, which together raise new questions about the ways in which couples reconcile parenting styles. The mother was seeking elements of the pure relationship, in which she attempted to negotiate and discuss how the couple could work together to form a more democratic parenting approach.

Additionally there was evidence that some of the children were becoming active actors/agents. As the contact arrangement involved children to carry them out, the children became actors or agents who grew increasingly able to determine their own movements. Such findings confirm that children's voices did count in developing and constructing their own intimate relationships. In such instances they may be regarded as the 'putative equal of the adult' (1992:191).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argue that people are increasingly forced into charting their biographies and making their own decisions. However this argument fails to take into consideration contextual and gendered constraints with which divorcing parents in Ireland are regularly challenged. Participants' accounts of the transition from parenting inside the marriage to parenting beyond the marriage reinforce the notion of constraint at various levels. Legal preferences and legal action (including the serving of *ex parte* barring orders) curtailed parents' choices in their movements into their post-separated life. What is significant here is that far from structural constraints such as the law being unimportant, it remains critical in shaping the fathers initial transition into post-separated parenting.

In addition to legal constraints, the fathers in this group encountered many challenges from an obdurate parent, who were forceful actors in determining how fathers experienced the re-negotiation of parenting, post separation. Fathers in this group were not so much free to pursue their own path or way out of the family home and into a renegotiated parenting role but were shaped by the actions of others.

Further challenges to the democratisation thesis were found in the experiences that recount a picture of relationships of unequal power and access to resources. The strong gender difference in our interviewees in terms of division of labour are many aspects of deep-rooted gender division evident in the data, leading us to question the extent to which individualisation and democratisation have taken hold in contemporary society in relation to how separating parents renegotiate parenting roles post separation. Gender equality and equal sharing in theory became, in practice, a traditional division of labour and responsibility, as well as an unequal balance of power regarding decision-making and control. The gendered images of moral responsibility in parenting reflect widespread gender divisions in parenting roles within Irish families generally.

Women in this group, who were more financially dependent on their former husbands than the egalitarians, were not able to implement the changes they desired post separation. Instead, women remained dependent on their former spouses for maintenance. Although the parents attempt to discontinue gendered approaches to parenting and family

practices, it is still visible as a basis for the distribution of power and responsibilities in the recreation of new parenting practices after the separation. The data in this chapter indicates that crucial issues of gender, financial dependency and the law still shape and construct the meaning in how the involved but constrained parents understand and experience the transition into post-separation parenting.

The next chapter explores the changing personal relationship of a group with a very different set of experiences. The stories are all drawn from interviews with a subsample of ten men and women (five couples) that were separating/divorcing each other at the time of the interview, and in which both partners participated. The couples were characterised by high levels of conflict, which was highly gendered, and were still involved in ongoing disputes about the amount and form of access. Given that parental conflict is most frequent and intense during the first two years after separation (Hetherington et al., 1982) the subsample is a good means to explore inter-parental conflict. While considering the same issues as the present chapter, the relative structural (legal and gender) differences of these involved but constrained parents enables us to test Giddens's (1992) theory on individuals as 'agents of change' and Beck's (2000) argument that there is a decline in the capacity of social institutions to dictate people's biographies.

Chapter 7: The Involved but Stressed Couples

My daughter was in a terrible state. He (father) literally pulled her off me and said, 'if you have any humanity you would let her stay' and she was roaring crying when I turned around, calling me, tears pouring down her face, saying 'mummy, one more hug, one more kiss, mummy I don't want to go.' It is like this every single time, three times a week [she is tearful], and there is nothing I can do about it. He (ex-husband) says, 'this is all your fault, you did all this are you happy now'

Noelle, 35 years of age, separated two years

Who are the Involved but Stressed Couples?

This chapter explores the experiences of the involved but stressed couples who maintained a high level of parent-child contact with a high level of ongoing conflict. Both parents are involved in parenting post separation, due to the high level and frequency of contact. However contact is 'stressed' due to the animosity between the two parents. Given that parental conflict is most frequent and intense during the first two years after separation (Hetherington et al., 1982) and these couples are only recently separated, the subsample is a good means to explore inter-parental conflict. From the first day of the announcement, the couples were characterised by high levels of conflict and at the time of the separation, they were still in dispute about the amount and form of access (although not about the principle of contact). The inclusion of triangulated accounts from former couples allows us to gain more insight not just into what the respondents say they do but how that corresponds with the perceptions of the other parent.

Although the relationship between the separated parents is a key determinant for contact (Ahrons and Miller, 1993; Gibson, 1992; Smyth et al., 2001; Lund, 1987; Simpson et al., 1995) Wolchik and Fenaughty (1996) outlined how high levels of conflict are not necessarily associated with low frequency of contact. These parents represent a group of separated parents who continue a high level of regular but rigid contact, despite the high level of conflict. These parents, when faced with the renegotiation of their roles and behaviour at a time of separation, attempted to discontinue their gendered approach to parenting and family practices. However, these families were faced with many contextual barriers and elements of a gendered approach to parenting still remain as the basis for the

distribution of power and responsibilities in the recreation of their new parenting practices after the separation.

A unique feature of this chapter is the possibility it creates for analysing the perspectives of non-resident fathers and resident mothers about difficulties they encountered in renegotiating parental roles and practices post separation. Trinder et al. (2002) research findings highlighted that there is no single ingredient or individual responsible for making contact work or not work. Instead Trinder et al (2002:25) outlined a host of factors, including attitudes, actions and interactions of all family members that shaped parenting roles and family practices post separation. By exploring the role that these factors play on respondents' experiences of changing family practices post separation, this chapter reveals some of the systematic properties that underlie and structure the discontinuity of parental roles and relationships post separation.

The chapter draws attention to some of the consequences of leaving out discussions of the contextual (including the incidence of conflict and the co-parental relationship) aspects of society and people's lives, for the application of Giddens's theory and its ability to understand the connection between autonomy and choice. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how concepts that take account of context and structure as well as individual agency create a better understanding for this group of parents.

Profile of the Involved but Stressed Couples

The involved but stressed couples share many of the same characteristics as the involved but constrained parents. These respondents are all drawn from interviews with a subsample of ten men and women (five couples) that were separating/divorcing each other at the time of the interview, and in which both partners participated. The common features which define the involved but constrained couples are outlined in Table 8 below. This group of separating parents ranged in age from their mid-thirties to their mid-fifties. They have at least one young child, who was younger than ten years old at the time of the separation. They have separated recently, i.e. within the last three years. While three of the marriages lasted over fifteen years, two of the marriages were shorter in duration,

lasting less than ten years. The former couples were largely part of dual or one-and-a-half-income households. All but one of the couples had received third level education.

Table 8: Profile of Involved but Stressed Couples

Name	Ages	Age of Children	Length of Marriage (Years)	Time Since Separation (Years)	Household Type	Settlement
Jay & Niamh	34, 35	5, 3	8	2	Dual	Court Based
Mark & Kathryn	45, 41	5, 4, 2	4	2	One and a Half	Court Based
Philip & Stacey	44, 43	11	20	2	One and a Half	Solicitors
Allan & Paula	56, 55	19, 17, 15, 8	20	3	Dual	Solicitors
Edward & Georgia	54, 51	22, 19, 13	18	3	Single	Court Based

The former couples were unable to settle disputes and had a contested hearing for the parenting and financial arrangements. In all cases there is frequent contact taking place between the children and both spouses but the mothers are the primary carers. The defining feature of the group was that they had only recently separated, had a young child, were still involved in separation and/or divorce proceedings and were unable to agree a satisfactory parenting arrangement for the children.

Similar to the egalitarians and the involved but constrained parents, there is a high level of contact taking place in this group. Both parents are involved in parenting the child. However, unlike the egalitarian parents, the involved but stressed couples do not coparent or share the time with the child equally. They engage in separate parenting practices due to the level of parental hostility. The level of conflict prevents the parents from discussing matters and they all contested the financial and parenting arrangement in court. The women in this group are similar in some respects to the women in the egalitarian groups, i.e. they are independent, they have their own income and they initiated the separation.

Overall the involved but stressed couples tended to have an extensive involvement in childrearing with complex parenting arrangements. The women in this group were the

initiators of the separation. Only one of the five women in this group was a dependent spouse, compared to four of the six women in the aggrieved parents. The women in this group were overall less dependent on their ex-spouses for financial support.

The couples were interviewed separately and each spouse presented different versions of their post-separation period. These separate accounts represent gender-specific perspectives of his-and-hers accounts, of the same phenomenon (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2002). The separate interview allowed the two spouses to discuss how they experienced the behaviour of the other spouse and this makes the composite story much richer. These accounts highlight different issues which apply more widely to all the parents in the involved but constrained group and are elaborated on in the discussion that follows. Gabb (2010:468) described how it is “extremely difficult to conceal the identity of someone from those around them – those who know their story”. Family research has outlined that the most obvious way is to avoid producing family case studies (Mauthner, 1997). It is for that reason, that this chapter will follow a different layout than the previous chapters. Instead of outlining three case studies, the chapter will focus on the generation of thematic connections across marital sets rather than pulling together the individual threads of a couple’s story. In doing so, I feel that I am honouring the research relationship and protecting the identity and confidentiality of the respondents. In addition, in this chapter, I will, at times, refrain from directly naming the source of the quote. I believe that this will make it more difficult for research participants to identify the responses of others.

Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

The typical pattern found in this research, similar to the research evidence (Ahrons, 1994; Gray and Silver, 1990; Spanier & Thompson, 1987), was that women ended the marriages and men have them ended. In examining the marital complaints of the involved but stressed couples, several factors appeared to contribute to the breakdown of the relationship including: 1) escaping abuse 2) lack of mutual support and 3) impact of parenthood on marital quality.

Escaping Abuse

Problems caused by abuse, (albeit physical abuse, substance abuse or psychological abuse) contributed to the breakdown of the relationship in each of the couples. These findings replicate other findings that demonstrate how former wives are more likely than former husbands to refer to a cluster of negative partner behaviours including physical, emotional and substance abuse (Kitson, 1992). The women in each couple described how they were driven out of the marriage by their husband's abuse. Georgia described the final year of her marriage as *"the most horrific year he was just horrible to live with and a lot of yelling and screaming and tantrums and breaking things and drinking."* Similar to other research evidence (Ahrons, 1987), the women in this study framed their decision to end the marriages as a last resort to the men's poor behaviour as Paula described *"he was drinking and that was a major problem, one of the main reasons we split up was that he'd get drunk and I couldn't reason with him because he'd been drinking...he was very aggressive and angry, very aggressive and violent, so then I knew it was over."* In these cases, the victimised women in the aggrieved couples decided to take control and end the marriage.⁶⁸

However, abuse did not end at the point of physical separation. Similar to findings in Smart's research on divorce, the violence continued throughout the post-divorce period (1999:145) as Paula described *"he was coming into the house and stopping a lot of things...he would barge his way and he is very big and he would sort of stand in front of me and the door and sort of tirade me and push me around a bit or follow me around the house."* After the announcement was made, all but one of the male non-initiators (Edward) in this group harassed their former spouse with frequent phone calls or violent outbursts, as Noelle described: *"It is very debilitating trying to live with someone who is trying to control your movements and everything you do. He was ringing all the time, ringing incessantly, ringing, ringing all the time. It is his way of checking up on me."* According to Ahrons (1994:104), when faced with the anguish of rejection it is normal to retaliate. However retaliation was not always a physical threat. Several of the mothers felt

⁶⁸ It is important to state that when I sampled the respondents I was not looking for violence nor was the sampling methodology structured in such a way that I was likely to find cases of violence over-represented.

they were being psychologically abused through constant observation: *"he watches the house, he drives past the house. He keeps tabs on me when I am out. At the moment he is paying the phone bill, he checks the phone records to see who I am ringing and how long I am on the phone for"*. At this stage it is difficult to get even and revenge can ignite a war that will damage the parental relationship as well as the children. This study observed such findings and the level of hostility between the couple increased.

Lack of Mutual Support

The findings in this study confirm other research evidence which highlight the tensions in a marital relationship that arise with competing demands of work and family relationships (Walker et al. 2010). The couple were trying to find time to build their careers and rear the children and had consequently little time for each other. Allan and Mark spoke of how hard they had found it to meet the demands of the children, workplace and the marriage, and to meet their need for support and recognition, as Allan described: *"We were loading pressures on ourselves, she had a very high position professionally and I had I'd say an equally demanding situation for myself and there was no mutual support there and the support was eroding as time went on"*. Research evidence indicates that well-educated individuals like the professionals in this group, hold high standards for marriage and expect a substantial level of emotional support (Amato and Previti, 2003:606).

Parenthood and Marriage

The transition to parenthood is one of the most challenging and difficult transitions of the family life cycle, with a high potential for both personal and marital change (Michaels & Goldberg, 1988). Tensions in the marital relationship were associated with decisions to have another child or trying to cope with parenting several young children. One father described the pressure he felt with having three young children: *"we had three children within a short space of time so lots of pressure and what happened was that I think that the build-up of that pressure obviously led to things being strained."*

Research evidence outlines how having a child or children can alter the spousal relationship (Ahlborg and Strandmark, 2006). Although this research evidence relates to first time parents, this study found that men mourn the lack of time available to the couple relationship when deciding on having more children. One father in study believed that the decision to have another child had a negative impact on the marital relationship: *"I didn't want the third child, on the basis of I didn't think we could manage, and then my wife interpreted that in a very personal way that I didn't want the child, but that wasn't what I intended, so anyway, when the child came, the whole thing (marriage) fell apart"*.

The findings in this study echo research evidence which suggest that bringing up children can put pressure on parents for many years and that couple relationships can be put under serious strain (Belsky et al., 1985; Cowan, et al., 1985; Mansfield and Collard, 1988; Walker et al., 2010:37). Mark spoke of how hard he had found it to meet the demands of their children and workplace and there was a lack of time, lack of sleep and lack of energy in the early years. Consequently, one of the most consistent findings in the literature is that there is a slight, but reliable, decrease in marital quality for first-time parents (Belsky et al., 1985; Cowan & Cowan, 1988).

Gender roles also become more traditional after the birth of the child as women become more physically and psychologically involved in their parental role than men (Crohan, 1996). Research has found that men feel excluded by a new baby and felt jealous of a new baby and resentful of the amount of time that the mother devotes to caring (Mansfield and Collard, 1988). One father described how he experienced exclusion from his wife after the birth of their first child: *"the minute our daughter came along, onto the earth, she took the attitude that my job was done and she ignored me and put all her energy into looking after our daughter. I might as well have not been on the planet. I wasn't acknowledged"*. Research evidence demonstrates that conflicts over decisions and roles, primarily over who does what, may be the most common source of tension (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986; Ruble, Hackel, Fleming, & Stagnor, 1988). One mother recalled how she enjoyed doing various activities with her daughter but the father did not

join them: *“there were activities on a Saturday. She (daughter) would go swimming until 1.45p.m. We might then go and do some shopping. He (father) wanted to know where we were at any given hour and time, why we weren’t there with him, he couldn’t see there were activities to be done.”*

Children were a major factor in discussions about the decision to separate. Long delays in ending a relationship that had failed were often attributed to a concern that to split up would be damaging for the children. Edward stressed that he had stayed in an unsatisfactory relationship because of the commitment he made to being a parent and in a family: *“We probably should of separated, it could even be ten years, but it was complicated, I wasn’t keen to leave the house or the kids.”* Such sentiments have appeared in the ‘divorce problem’ literature, especially Wallerstein’s⁶⁹ work (2000:307) which suggests that in the absence of overt violence or other parental psychopathology, parents should stay married no matter what for the sake of the children (as cited in Coltrane and Adams, 2003).

Discussion: Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

The list of marital complaints presented by the respondents in this group appears highly gendered. The women in the couples reported levels of abuse as the reason for wanting out of the relationship. This form of gendered power appears to be present in marital relationship and continues into the post-separation period. Although Giddens argues that violence and coercion need to be stopped in order for intimate relationships to be democratic, it is not apparent to what degree continuing gendered power relations are examined beyond the intimate relationship. As will be further elaborated on later in this chapter, my evidence does not suggest that violence or abuse stops at the end of the marriage.

It appears that men, who had been oppressive during the marriage, continue to be so after the separation. The accounts presented by the mothers in the ‘involved but stressed’

⁶⁹ Wallerstein, J., Lewis, J., & Blakeslee, S. (2000). *The unexpected legacy of divorce: A 25-year landmark study*. New York: Hyperion

couples are full of incidents where the former spouse continues to exert a form of power (controlling/surveillance) over the mothers' lives. Research on domestic violence in the 1990s outlined how the role of control in intimate relationships focused on a 'compensatory model' in which it is assumed that individuals act to maintain a reasonable level of control in their lives, becoming more controlling of their partner when their level of control is threatened within the relationship itself (Stets, 1993 as cited in Johnson and Ferraro, 2000:956). Therefore the quest for democracy goes beyond the marital relationship and into the post-divorce relationship, a failure to examine this roll neglects the context of post-divorce family practices.

The findings in this section also highlight the negative impact of children on an intimate relationship. Our data has indicated that children can play a crucial role in a) creating tensions within an intimate relationship and/or b) influencing the parents' choices in remaining in an intimate relationship. A thesis which focuses purely on the intimate couple without examining any contextual factors, such as the presence of children, takes on a very narrow view of intimate relations. The intimate relationship that Giddens and Beck refer to fails to take into account (parent-child) obligations and commitments that these individuals have as parents. By focusing solely on the couple, the thesis fails to examine other aspects of separating parents' everyday life and practices.

Fight Over the Marital Home

The movement out of the family home was more involuntary and related to the subsequent and anticipated home owner. The movements were influenced by a host of factors including 1) temporary situation 2) legal force and 3) financial reasons.

Temporary Separation

The need for "*some space*" in an attempt to reconcile was a method for removing one person from the family home. As discussed in Eoin's story in the last chapter, mothers were accused of manipulating their former spouse as they declared a desire to work at their marriage and needed '*some time apart*'. During the interviews, several of the fathers

recalled how the request for 'some space' had been a manipulative way of removing the father from the home: *"In retrospect it became quite clear to me that my wife had decided on a course of action that she wanted to implement, and so it was kind of a drip , drip , drip , so six months, we will separate for six months, so after six months we will know, so now we are going to separate for good, and so then, and this was all communicated around and then the next thing is well we are going to get a separation."* As the stressed couples separated and moved out of the family home, the level of hostility grew as one father's quote implies: *"It is my house. I bought it in 1995 and, after a three-month period, which I had negotiated in writing with her. So I have never officially left the house. I have been removed from the house under false pretences and I have been trying to grapple with that since then."*

These fathers weren't allowed to re-enter the family home and felt like they had been tricked into leaving the family home: *"There was no barring order against me or anything like that, I still have a lot of my clothes in that house, my post is still delivered there, I have kept a lot of contact with the house."* Morgan (1996:140) described how the family home is used as a place of social and domestic space. The mother in this instance requires some social space away from the former husband. In this context, the boundaries of the house act as personal and social boundaries for the former wife. The family home however, for the father, is invested with meanings developed over the course of the relationships. These two separate meanings conflict at the point of separation. Smart (2007:164) explains how home points to gender and gender relationships which are often in conflict and is caught up in relationships.

Legal Force

Previous research has also found that many women who raise the issue of domestic violence or risk of harm to children are met with scepticism by the courts (e.g., Hester *et al.*, as cited in Smart *et al.*, 2003; Kaganas, 1999). There was one incidence of such an occurrence when one female respondent contacted her solicitor and attempted to get a protection order but she was advised by her solicitor that it would not work, as she

described: *"I know he is a bully and I know he is being obnoxious but actually the courts won't act, because there are no broken windows or broken bones, so you are just going to have to be patient."* A more common occurrence in this study however was an application for a barring order as a method to remove one spouse from the family home. Niamh described how she applied for a barring order as *"basically it allowed him to get the hell out of the way as such, as he abused me and interfered with me."*

Similar to the last chapter, several fathers felt that the ex parte application was an unfair method of removing them from the family home. Jay described the barring order application as the following: *"They (the solicitors) say it is a bullet that is used in many cases to have a first sort of movement advantage when it gets to a judicial separation"*. As we saw with the involved but constrained parents, several fathers were removed (claims of physical violence) from the marital home at this crucial time. Inflated claims of violence have been reported by fathers in other studies in the UK (Smart, 2003). This sense of powerlessness and freedom to act, in the face of real legal constraint, impairs the fathers' ability to be with their children during a crucial transition.

Waiting for Adjudication

The matrimonial home is practically very important as it is the main and sole asset that is up for grabs at time of separation (Smart et al:2003:81). The family home was the sole asset in two of the cases and the couple could not agree the division of the proceeds of the sale of the family home. The discrepancies over their accounts related to the financial input each spouse had made to the purchase and upkeep of the family home. In one case, the ex-husband had provided the down payment for the house but the ex-wife had paid the mortgage repayments (over 15 years) and on-going maintenance costs for the house. The down payment was just under fifty per cent of the value of the house in the late 80s however the house had increased massively in value and the mother felt that her mortgage repayments and the cost of the extension were worth more than half of the value of the house in the mid-2000s. As such, the move out of the family home was more gradual as the couple waited up to two years for the judge to decide on the division. During this time, conflict escalated as each spouse fought for a greater share in the asset.

The sale of the family home and the division of the proceeds on a 60-40 basis in favour of the wife further increased the level of resentment and conflict between former husbands and wives, as neither parent was left satisfied.

Discussion: Moving Out of the Family Home

Morgan (1996) described the home both as an address and as a site for domesticity. Accordingly it is a key element of the construction of the self. For the respondents, particularly those who were out of the marital home, the home was a site for intimacy and had strong links with the ideas of the family and parenting. The marital home was the space in which parents developed their sense of identity as a person and parent. Once out of the home, links from the past to the future became unclear. Kruk (1993) described that being out of the home, the realisation of what it is to lose 'home' and 'family' begins to dawn.

In being 'legally forced' or 'manipulated' out of the marital home, it doesn't appear as if personal choices about moving out of the family home are more autonomous. In fact, it suggests that they are more closely connected to legal and social conditions that produce tensions. The data suggests that the kind of choices that separating parents have to make (or are subjected to) and the ways in which they have to make them are informed by context and are less inclined to 'choice biography' as depicted by the individualisation thesis. Understandably the methods used for applying for and serving barring orders are designed to protect, however this thesis will not debate the principles behind such issues. What is significant here is that far from structural constraints such as the law being unimportant, it remains critical in shaping the fathers' initial transition into post-separated parenting.

Negotiating a Settlement

The Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 under Section 2 gives priority to the welfare of the child.⁷⁰ In so doing, the Irish courts were attempting to focus parents' intentions towards

⁷⁰ This principle is defined in the legislation under section 2 of the 1964 Act and incorporates the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social welfare of the child.

the children and transmit the message that to persist in adult-focused arguments is to engage in behaviour that is harmful to children (Kaganas and Day Sclater, 2000). However, the parents in the involved but stressed couples struggled to do so. Each couple resolved at least one matter (financial and/or childcare arrangements) through the courts. This section outlines the role the courts played in resolving disputes and making financial and parenting orders.

Court Rules

This subgroup of involved but stressed couples had started off with a high degree of conflict and at the time of the interviews, four of the five couples were still embroiled in court battles. As other research evidence indicates in cases of continuing conflict, the parents remained hostile to each other and were usually not on speaking terms (Trinder, 2002:6). Stacey described: *"I don't see how we could agree anything. We can't even sit in the same room which is terrible."* Solicitors and the courts became the main agents in steering the separation, as the couple were unable to communicate or agree, as one father stated: *"It was all done through solicitors, from the very beginning, as she was extremely uncooperative... and the only way I could ever make any headway was to bring her to the courts. I had to bring her to the courts every three months."*

In common with research evidence in the UK, respondents felt solicitors and the courts had both positive and negative effects (Trinder, Beek & Connolly, 2002; Smart, 2005:68). On the one hand Mark considered the courts *"a life line"* however, on the other hand he also saw how they played a hostile role in the proceedings: *"What I object to is the ease at which a solicitor will take what is a trivial issue and heighten it to be a letter which is then sent to me which I then have to respond to – I can't re-send anything without sending them to my solicitor, as they all have hooks in them, you can band them, 'obstructing the child's future', 'not treating the child properly', 'lack of disclosure of information' and that is entirely without foundation...as a result I have huge legal bills."* As Trinder (2002:43) discovered, the animosity between the parents increased as the parties went through the courts and the legal system did resolve the conflict.

Disputes over Finances

Non-residential fathers' financial contributions often became a source of much conflict between the parents (Amato, 1999). Working or not working, most of the mothers were finding it difficult to cope financially post separation. Disputes over child maintenance were often entangled with arguments about the father's commitment to the child. Mark, whose ex-wife was working part-time, believed that his willingness to pay for extra classes for his daughter was a test of his willingness to provide as a father: *"I got four solicitors' letters about the payment for singing classes that she goes to and she wanted me to pay the fees. I don't have a problem with money. I am prepared to pay for it."* Stacey, who was working full-time, questioned Phillip's commitment to his children as he stopped paying maintenance and she was forced to go back to the court: *"I had to bring him back to court for that (maintenance) because he stopped paying it. It was about eighteen weeks he had stopped paying and I went back to the solicitor and proceedings had to start, and then he started paying but it was only because he was ordered"*. What the mothers in these cases are pointing to was that the fathers had little real commitment to their children, as they were not properly providing for them (Buchanan *et al*, 2001: 90). It is important to note that these complaints were filed during the interim period, i.e. before a settlement had been reached. As such, a poor record of maintenance payment was recorded on the court file for the time of the hearing. The fathers believed that the mothers were not considering the welfare of the children as they enmeshed contact with maintenance (Smart and May, 2003: 352).

Mark, who was working full-time as a financial consultant, on the other hand felt that he paid for a greater share of the outgoings (including crèche fees, and mortgage). His account of the division of expenses was linked to the fact that Kathryn (who worked part-time) received the children's allowance and other tax credits while he had to pay for these expenses *"out of my (his) own money"*. The sense of comparison between parents was evident in Mark's account who stated: *"She drives an 07 car which she bought last year, I drive a 93 car but she has no money, flat broke?"* Mark felt that his ex-wife was benefiting from the separation and he felt aggravated that he was losing out despite the fact that he never wanted to

separate. As Horgan (2001:1) stated ‘The human reality is that the mistrust and attrition which frequently accompanies relationship breakdown makes it harder for the couple to face the reality of adjusting to a lower standard of living than previously enjoyed or even perhaps aspired to.’

Disputes over Contact

Disputes over contact were believed to be a hidden way for gaining revenge or recriminating past behaviour. In several cases, the disputes about contact appeared to be about conflict between the parties rather than the child’s welfare, as Stacey indicated: “*I knew what was behind it. What was behind it was that he wants more access, because he knows it’s to curtail my involvement with my daughter, he didn’t particularly want my daughter, he was doing it to get back at me.*” Phillip’s account adds further weight to this argument as he commented: “*She is sick as a parrot now that I am getting this time with my daughter.*” His intention of going through the courts was to vindicate himself and punish his former spouse rather than focus on the welfare of his daughter.

Similarly Kathryn felt that the court process focused the attention on the parents needs rather than tackling what was in the best interests of the children: “*I would like more account of things being taken of what the children need rather than what the parents need. I find that the hardest thing, because I am constantly looking at the kids and seeing what they need*”. Her account displayed the need for someone or somebody to be more attentive to the needs of the child. The couple separate from each other but not the children.

Finding Children’s Voices

Similar to the UK, children in Ireland are rarely directly involved or independently represented in private law cases. The way children’s voices are usually heard in court cases involving contact is through reports (James & Hay, 1993; Shannon, 2000:141).

Section 47 reports⁷¹ provided the only access this study has to understanding the role of children in legal disputes. Similar to Buchanen et al. (2001) report on parents and perspectives of the family court welfare service, parents' experiences of the assessment were largely negative. As Jay explained *"a Section 47 report here, it is rudimentary and unsophisticated and basically it is complicated. A Section 47 assessment should be not just the family in their environments but talking to teachers you know, people who have a good view about how the family are getting on."*

The findings in this study support research evidence in the UK which suggests that complaints about the preparation of Section 47 reports were highly gendered (Buchanen et al, 2001:43). Resident mothers felt that the assessment was *"staged"* and did not take into account the father's past failure to nurture the child: *"I found it very hard because when we are there, he would try and fake it."* Kathryn described how the children were upset attending the assessment: *"So coming in the car each time they were upset, particularly my daughter (aged 7) who twigged what was going on."* Kathryn felt that they were unable to understand the implications of what they said: *"It is very hard to see the children to have, them being asked the questions, to have them not really understand what is going on and them answering, in some cases not understanding the implications of what they are answering."* As such, resident mothers felt that the child's needs were ignored: *"I just feel like the children's own needs rather than the parents need to be taken account of so I end up standing there trying to fight for what I think the children want, but then I am called an over-protective mother and every mother is called a protective mother, and every mother is protective of their children but it is trying to strike a balance between protecting them and making sure they are heard, so I don't think the legal process is very good at listening to the kids."*

Overall, such assessments were not seen by resident mothers as fulfilling the function of assessing the child's best interests. The resident mothers in this group could not

⁷¹ The role of social reports in family law proceedings is dealt with in the 1995 Act, Section 47. The powers of the courts to procure such reports was first sought out in the 1989 Act and have since become widely used as tools in the solution of child access disputes. The parties may agree that a social report is necessary to aid in the resolution of a dispute or the court may, of its own motion, direct that such a report be furnished to it. The courts are not bound by the recommendations contained in such reports but are strongly influenced by them.

understand how sending a highly anxious and upset child on contact was in the child's best interests, as one mother described: *"she didn't want to go, she was crying, she still cries occasionally when she doesn't want to go, but she knows she has to go, and she is afraid to say no, she doesn't want to go in case there is an argument over her."*

Fathers on the whole saw the welfare report as an opportunity to put forward their side of the case. They wanted someone else to see what was going on, as Mark indicated: *"I have a battle now to have the therapist see that in fact I am telling the truth."* Fathers did not believe they could sustain a relationship with their child unless the child spent a substantial amount of time in their company: *"I actually thought, I have to be honest, I thought the report was very weak, because my daughter said that she asked for a number of Saturdays and I didn't get one, it was recommended that I get one."* The research also revealed that fathers believed that the child had been heavily influenced by the mother prior to the assessment *"I think my daughter was got to by Stacey and her sister and I don't think she copped on this year how important this meeting was."*

Discussion: Awaiting Adjudication

This section has focused on the part the court plays in the parents' narrative accounts of the conflicts they have experienced in trying to negotiate a settlement. Some respondents directed almost as much frustration at the courts and solicitors as at their former spouses, and some fathers were critical of the legal system that must be overcome. Fathers were alleged to have withheld income and mothers were alleged to have withheld the children from access. The court became the main agent in settling the dispute and paved the way for a post-separation agreement.

Legal disputes dealing with the parenting arrangements post separation involved a welfare and rights principle. The welfare principle described the duty of the judiciary to reach a decision in accordance with the child's best interests. According to the rights principle, a child who is 'capable of forming his or her own views' should be heard. It appeared as if none of the parents were in dispute about these principles, but they were critical of the process used to determine these issues. The respondents in our study

depicted the assessment as *'artificial'*, *'not thorough'*, and *'staged'*. As Day Sclater & Kaganas (2003:157) argued, it appears the legal process is ill-equipped to address the profound emotions involved in disputes over children. The contextual setting of Irish legislation provides an unsatisfactory constraint in assessing the best interests of the children and leaves many parents facing little choice in having their children's voices heard.

Parent Child Litigated Contact

Mothers from this subgroup blamed fathers for being insensitive and causing further distress to the child's needs at handovers: *"The youngest wouldn't want to go with him and the more he was raging the more she wouldn't want to go with him and she would get very upset so it got to the point that I was carrying an absolutely hysterical child out."* Kathryn described how her three year old son *"hates having to go off with him (father) as it is against his will"* and described how distressed he gets *"he is screaming and shouting. He is holding on to me. He will run the opposite direction. You have to go and dig him out of the house. He is just distraught."* These findings resonate with research evidence that suggests that female resident parents are dissatisfied with contact arrangements on child welfare grounds based on allegations of poor, insensitive and abusive parenting and the children's wishes to reduce contact (Kaganas & Day Sclater, 2004).

In contrast, none of the fathers accepted that the mother's actions at handovers were justifiable and instead argued that mothers were purposely discouraging access in order to maintain control. Such findings have been found on studies of non-resident fathers after divorce in the UK (Simpson et al, 1995; Bradshaw et al, 1999). Allan described how he viewed handovers: *"Well I come to the house every weekend to pick her up and most of the time she won't come out with me, so she will come to the door with the wife and then my wife will make out that it is nothing to do with her and that it is, for me to negotiate with my daughter, I see it as an abdication of responsibility by my wife in the first instance and I think it is partly to do with an underlying resentment that my wife has*

against me". Such inaction on the part of the mother has been referred to by Trinder (2008:1310) as passive gatekeeping. Such action did not encourage or block contact but the strategy was one of detachment. From the father's perspective, the original family home had become a site of conflict.

In a similar example, Mark described how the mother was partly to blame for the distressing encounter at handovers: "*My son unfortunately is proving very difficult to leave his mother. My own opinion is that she is actually playing on that, I think it is a forced situation*". There is considerable research reporting the views of non-resident fathers that their contact has been obstructed by their former spouse (Lund, 1987; Kruk, 1993; Simpson et al, 1995; Bradshaw et al, 1999; Wikeley, 2000; Trinder, 2002; Trinder 2008).

There is extensive research evidence in the UK that post-separation parental conflict has a negative effect on children's self esteem, adjustment, emotional, behavioural difficulties and significant unhappiness (Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Lund, 1987, Buchanen et al, 2001 and Smart et al, 2001). Buchanen et al. (2001) argued that it is not conflict per se which affects the children but more specifically the extent to which the child feels caught up in the conflict that is significant. Additionally, Hogan et al (2002:74) described how children who witness frequent conflict (e.g. at handovers) continued to feel distressed. Such research evidence suggests the harmful effects that continuing conflict at handovers creates, sustains the children's level of distress. A report investigating the need for contact centres in Ireland found that parents were requesting a handover service to prevent the children from experiencing such conflict (Murphy and Caffrey, 2009:99).

Enforcement

The enforcement of a contact arrangement is a source of distress for non-resident parents. Murphy and Caffrey (2009:124) also highlighted non-resident parents' dissatisfaction with their inability to enforce their contact rights when contact orders were breached by the other parent. Some of the fathers mentioned how they frequently gave up on contact as it was proving too distressing for the child. Mark described how his three year-old son

was not willing to come on contact despite his efforts to reassure him he so: *"I just gave up after the hour (of trying to persuade him). I went in and she (ex-wife) called to my son, who was in the back garden, and she said to him, it is your daddy again, and I heard him saying, 'oh no, not again' – that was very weird – that is a very adult thing to say. So my aim is to call and wait for 10 minutes and if he doesn't come out we will just go."* Unfortunately this research did not follow up on how contact was progressing six to twelve months after the interview, however, Buchanaen et al (2001) found that twelve months after the granting of an access order, only two-fifths of the families were still operating the contact arrangements in force and less than one-quarter were doing so without disruption or attempts to change.

Similar to our findings, Wallerstein and Lewis (1998) found that insisting on contact in such high conflict cases was distressing for children. This was quite clear from the parents accounts, as Niamh described: *My daughter (5 year-old) was in a terrible state, Jay literally pulled her off me, and I said, Jay, if you have any humanity you would let her stay and they were both roaring crying when I turned around and when I went back into the house and looked out the curtains my daughter was still roaring her head off, calling me, tears pouring down her face."* However, Jay explained how the mother is resistant to contact and tries to prevent it but as soon as he drives off with the children, the children are fine: *"It was about five minutes, 'I don't want to go mommy' and then Niamh does this thing as well as saying 'take her off me' so I said, 'no', you put her in the car, so she did that, she (my daughter) is crying and we drive off and by the time we get to the end of the road, all is well again."* These findings support research evidence which found that there is no empirical justification for arguing that enforcing contact will be more harmful to the child than not doing so, even if the resident parent finds it difficult (Pruett and Pruett, 1998).

Non-resident fathers felt constrained by the lack of legal enforcement or support in tackling obdurate resident mothers. Mark talked about the options he had for demonstrating his commitment to his children and her obstruction of access: *"The remedies have to be passive, you can't do anything active. I can't have a camera, I can't prove anything to anybody so all I can do is to try and show in some other way, how*

serious I am about this." Rhoades's (2002) study of denial of contact found that the picture of obdurate parent was more complicated and that 'the one-sided unreasonableness hallmark of the hostile mother stories was noticeably absent.' Only nine out of one hundred cases found that an order had been breached.

Discussion: Litigated Contact

The fathers in these cases attempted to reconcile their caring and providing responsibilities more evenly after the separation. Upon separation they sought to get involved in parenting by taking the children overnight, mid-week and at weekends. Although not all parents had their own place to ensure contact, several of the parents moved in with their parents to ensure good quality contact. The distance between the two households was in most situations (all but one) nearby. Despite some factors being similar to the egalitarians, these fathers encountered several barriers to adopting an egalitarian approach to post-separation parenting. Despite the high level of contact taking place, there was no collaboration across the households. Fathers felt powerless in agreeing contact and enforcing contact.

Parental Involvement Post Separation

Cooperative coparenting has been defined in the literature as the ability of mothers and non-resident fathers to actively engage with one another in order to share childrearing responsibilities (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Sobolewski and King, 2005). The couples in this group described their inability to engage in parenting tasks with each other. The factors that affected such collaboration were 1) parental relationship 2) maternal discouragement and 3) maternal perceptions of paternal competence.

Parental Relationship

In common with other research findings, this low level of cooperative parenting hinders the ability of non-resident fathers to be involved in their children's lives (Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Sobolewski and King, 2005). Many of the mothers believed that the

fathers did not prioritise their parenting role post separation which further aggravated the parental relationship. One mother felt that the father's relocation, far away from the family home, symbolised his detachment from the children. Paula did not think that Allan was prioritising his parenting role as he wasn't able to honour the parenting arrangement of access every second weekend as he had moved so far away from the children's home and school. She felt she was left with a larger share of the burden: "*So basically I was a single mother. I couldn't go out on a Saturday night, because I had to pick them up from wherever they were. I went to my solicitor about that and he said, well you know, he has moved house, it is not reasonable for him to look after the kids, it is not practical but he was breaching the order.*"

Research evidence suggests that parental relationship factors trigger gateclosing behaviour (Trinder, 2008:1303). In one example one father talked about how he is often denied indirect contact with his daughter: "*You see my ex-wife plays, I hate to say it, she takes my daughter's mobile off her so I can't get through to her...as I say my ex-wife still hates me with a passion, therefore she won't let me get through to my daughter.*" This example demonstrates, similar to the research evidence, that contact issues are related to the residential parents' anger about the divorce (Wolchik et al., 1996). Trinder et al (2008) found that the relationship and the nature of its ending affected the contact arrangement, particularly through the quality of the relationship.

Encouraging Contact

Custodial mothers can play an important role in either facilitating or hindering non-resident father's involvement (Sobolewski and King, 2005). Much of the research has focused on maternal gatekeeping examining the ways mothers support or undermine fathers' involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Trinder, 2008). Maternal gatekeeping was defined by Allen & Hawkins (1999) as mothers' reluctance to relinquish family responsibility by setting rigid standards, seeking to affirm a maternal identity and maintaining a differentiated conception of family roles. Our data indicated

that several fathers believed their former spouses were actively discouraging contact with their daughter.

Philip talked about how he was often denied indirect contact with his daughter. As has been found in other studies, Phillip believed that Stacey's actions of restricting contact were due to vindictiveness (Braver and O'Connell, 1998). Stacey on the other hand talked about her daughter's unwillingness to talk to her father, rather than her restricting communication between them. Her account tells a different story. Stacey believed that she often encouraged the daughter to ring the father but the daughter didn't have the urge to talk to her father as often as she would to her mother. In doing so, Stacey reasserted and reinforces her image as the primary parent. It appeared as if both parents were competing for the child and, as found in previous research, the respective roles of each parent were disputed (Trinder et al, 2002).

One mother reflected on her role of encouraging contact. She described how she realised that the children needed to develop a relationship with the father so she refrained from bad mouthing their father: "*The natural tendency is to use your kids as weapons and I suppose everybody has that temptation but I try really hard not to do it actually*". She also encouraged them to see their father: "*I tried to allow each of them to develop a relationship with their father, as best as I could, I tried to support him (son) in providing support for his relationship with his father.*"

Similar to the fathers' beliefs about encouraging contact, the fathers in this group felt that mothers who did not actively encourage contact were discouraging it: "*They are young children, they need to know that this is something quite trivial, it is just daddy time, no big deal, it is not a separation, just go off and have a good time.*" Mark identified Kathryn's use of sentiment as a fairly emotional method of discouraging contact: "*I have asked her to say that you will have a good time with daddy. Daddy is going to look after you. Don't worry, mummy wants you to go with daddy. She won't say those things to the children.*"

Leaving young children to make up their own mind, about whether contact should occur was perceived by fathers as indirectly discouraging contact, as Allan described: *“My wife gives my daughter the power to make the decision whether she is to come over or not, so it is kind of a difficult situation”*. Such behaviour has been referred to in the literature as passive gatekeeping, i.e. mothers are neither blocking nor encouraging contact, leaving fathers and children to sustain their own contact (Trinder, 2008:1310).

Maternal Perceptions of Paternal Competence

Mothers’ perception of paternal competence was a key feature underlying their dissatisfaction with contact arrangements. Niamh described her concerns about Jay’s ability to parent: *“He has been on parenting courses, but you know, when I found that out, the same week he was attending one he slapped my daughter across the face so what is the point, there is not point, he doesn’t have the ability to say, these are good parenting behaviours, these are my behaviours, reflect on them both and see what I need to change.”* Scepticism about a father’s ability to parent was also grounded in the commitment they had demonstrated to parenting whilst in the marriage: *“I have issues with Jay as a father. Once the kids were born and when our first was a baby, he did nothing with her, really, then Mary came along and he had nothing to do with her, she cried a lot and all he did was cursed any time she started crying.”* Similar to findings in the UK, mothers who were actively gateclosing perceived the other parent as insensitive and incompetent (Trinder, 2008:1314).

Based on what the father did with the child during contact, the mothers in this group did not consider the fathers to be highly involved in their child’s life, nor did they think that the fathers were genuinely attempting to re-ignite the father-child relationship post separation. Paula described how Allan spent his time with his daughter: *“So what happens on a Thursday, he drops my daughter down to the former nanny and goes off then. He either goes back to his office or goes off with the eldest son and that is his access time with his youngest daughter, so it is not building a relationship with her.”* Mothers explained how some fathers knew little about the children’s lives during the

marriage and are unsure of what to do with the child while on contact, as Stacey described: *"She comes back and she would say, I did nothing, I was bored."* This evidence resonates with research evidence that found mothers' perceptions of the paternal role were the best predictor of fathers' involvement (McBride et al., 2005).

Women's Ideology about the role of fathers

Arendell (1997) suggested that women's ideology about the role of fathers also may have an impact on paternal involvement with children. Many of the fathers felt that their ex-wives viewed the father's role as secondary, as one father remarked *"she sees them as hers and I think she has a very low opinion of the need for a father"*. Another father described this concept in terms of the superiority of the mother-child relationship: *"the priority relationship is hers. It is fine that you have a daddy but your daddy is subordinate to our relationship now."* Feelings of being designated a subordinate position were also apparent during the marriage: *"all the way through our marriage, she was extremely possessive of the children. She reckons the child needs her for 166 of the 168 hours and my involvement could be reduced to two hours."* De Luccie's (1995) study on maternal gatekeepers revealed positive weak association between mother's beliefs about the importance of the father role to children and the level of paternal involvement. The evidence in this study appears to confirm these findings as many of the resident mothers appeared to perceive the father's involvement as secondary to their position: *"I would say, for a separated father he sees quite a lot of them. I mean he (father) has pushed and pushed and pushed for more access so that the children's leisure time is pretty limited."* McBride et al. (2005) found that mothers' beliefs about the role of the father influenced fathers' perceptions of himself and his access to his children.

Discussion: Maternal Gateclosing

The findings in this study suggest that mothers have adopted largely passive gatekeeping or gateclosing behaviour which prevents the father from being more involved in parenting. Mothers who adopted passive gatekeeping strategies were aware of child

welfare beliefs but did not feel they were suitable for their circumstances. Neither parent in the couple denied that gateclosing was taking place but the reasoning for it differed. Maternal perceptions of paternal competence, commitment and the poor co-parental relationship dictated their behaviour.

Trinder's (2008) description of the gateway as a 'dynamic transactional process where parents exert a continual, bidirectional, and reciprocal influence on each other' was also found in this research. Mothers' gateclosing behaviour was closely linked to the behaviour of the father and fathers' actions and behaviours influenced what the mothers did and how they believed. As Trinder (2008:1320) argues, what mothers do is at least in part a response to fathers' beliefs and behaviour as well as a trigger of what fathers may or may not do." In essence, the argument discussed is that gateway has a relational aspect and is not uni-directional.

Conclusion

These accounts appear on one hand to support, and on the other hand challenge, the democratisation and individualisation thesis and its arguments that democratisation of (macro) society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within intimate relationships. Supporting the democratisation thesis it would be reasonable to assume that some of the structural changes, such as changes in education and women's participation in the labour force, have an impact on greater role equality. Many of these women and men in these relationships were autonomous within their marriages and were the initiators of the separation. Many of the involved but stressed females had access to financial resources which permitted them to make decisions about their well-being and relationship. They demonstrated how they were beginning to understand themselves and were seeking change. As Giddens (1992:75) argued, individuals place a strong emphasis on the 'project of the self' and are active agents of change. This process was demonstrated by the women that reassessed their position within the marriage.

On deeper inspection there was substantial evidence that the accounts presented in this group exemplify and support the claim that marital relationships can remain highly unequal and husband-dominated. The list of marital complaints presented by the respondents in this group appears highly gendered. The women in the couples reported levels of abuse as the reason for wanting out of the relationship. This form of gendered power appeared to be present in the marital relationship and continued into the post-separation period. Although Giddens argues that violence and coercion need to be stopped in order for intimate relationships to be democratic, it is not apparent to what degree continuing gendered power relations are examined beyond the intimate relationship. Violence or abuse did not stop at the end of the marriage. Men, who had been oppressive during the marriage continued to be so after the separation. The evidence in this chapter strongly challenges the view that intimate relationships are becoming more democratic and are in the process of becoming less segregated and more egalitarian.

This type of control over the former spouse's life and freedom after the marriage took several forms. Firstly, there were strong gender differences in the interviewees in terms of division of labour during and after the marriage, leading me to question the extent to which individualisation and democratisation have taken hold in contemporary Irish society in relation to how separating parents renegotiate parenting roles post separation. In practice, a traditional division of labour and responsibility, as well as an unequal balance of power regarding decision-making and control developed in many accounts.

Although the parents attempt to discontinue gendered approaches to parenting and family practices, it is still visible as a basis for the distribution of power and responsibilities in the recreation of new parenting practices after the separation. The other significant aspect concerns the level of gatekeeping practices which were deemed to be highly gendered practices. In all situations, women continued to be the primary carer (similar to the pre-separation primary carer status) and were able to control the father's access to the children. Some of the women's attitudes to the gender roles reinforced traditional images of the breadwinner family and prevented the father from being more involved. The data in this chapter indicates that crucial issues of gender, financial dependency and the law

still shape and construct the meaning of how the involved but stressed couples understand and experience the transition into post-separation parenting.

The reciprocal influence that Trinder (2008:1320) refers to occurs at both a caring and parenting level and arises from the conjugal role acquired during the marriage. Although Trinder focuses on gatework more specifically, this thesis argues that such a 'bidirectional and reciprocal influence' could also be used as a way of examining gender role behaviour and exchange, both before and after the separation.

The couples in the last three chapters were all attempting to change the traditional gender roles that were adopted during the marriage. In the next chapter, we look at the aggrieved mothers, who had a patriarchal, traditional division of paid and unpaid work relationship (segregated conjugal role) during the marriage, who had no income upon separation and were left to carry the entire childcare burden after the separation. While considering the same issues as the present chapter, the relative structural (economic and class) differences of these mothers enables us to test Giddens's (1992) theory that intimate relationships are increasingly characterised by equality of power and authority.

Chapter 8: Aggrieved Parents

So if I do a compare and contrast with what I have and what my husband has, it's extraordinary, I'm here today. My son will be here at two o'clock. I can't go out really unless I've got some cover. I can't go away. I can't work full-time therefore I don't have a career, therefore I have no pension. I don't have that social network that he (ex-husband) has got his from his career. He is a very high earner, pension, lifestyle and his new relationship. So I got nothing and that's what he got. He got that freedom and I didn't. There is nothing in that decree that works as a reward system for what I did.

Celine, 55 years old, 5 years separated

Who are the aggrieved parents?

This chapter focuses on the fourth group of separated parents, the 'aggrieved parents'. The majority of 'aggrieved parents' were female primary carers. These women had been dependent spouses during the marriage and had largely segregated conjugal roles. Aggrieved parents still felt angry every time they communicated with their ex-spouse. The aggrieved mothers, who had a patriarchal, traditional division of paid and unpaid work relationship (segregated conjugal role) during the marriage and who had no income upon separation, were left to carry the entire childcare burden after the separation. At the time of the separation the fathers in these cases did not choose to reconstruct their parental role and continued to be largely absent from their children's lives. Additionally the breadwinner income was no longer shared and the mothers experienced an impoverished state. The mother after the separation had no money, all of the childcare responsibility and the husband was no longer providing for them.

This chapter allows us to analyse the experience of dependent spouses at the time of the separation and how they renegotiate their role upon separation. The literature has indicated that women suffer financially after divorce, i.e. the greater a woman's dependency, the greater her potential loss of income should she lose her spouse by divorce (Sorenson and McLanahan, 1987:662). They argue that since divorce has become more common and since economic support is conditional on staying married, the risk of future loss in economic status would appear to be an important component of women's life chances (Smock, 1993; Sorenson and McLanahan, 1987). Such findings are not

surprising, given the wide array of evidence on the economic toll of marital disruption (Smock, 1993: 353). By exploring the role that socio-demographic factors play on dependent spouse's experience of changing family practices post separation, this chapter reveals the grave inequalities that may arise.

Interestingly, this chapter also allows us to examine the changing socio-economic context on women's experience of changing family practices. Increased labour force participation rates among women, especially married women in Ireland, would suggest a decline in the economic dependency of Irish women. Giddens's theory on the democratisation of intimate relationships would suggest that women's increasing economic independence would reduce the economic disruption that women historically experience upon divorce. This chapter seeks to explore how concepts that take account of context and structure (educational attainment) as well as agency create a better understanding for exploring the experiences of these dependent homemakers.

Profile of the Aggrieved Parents

The majority of these parents were in their mid-fifties, had been separated for several years and were female primary carers. Although there were exceptions, aggrieved parents had lengthy marriages (10+ years) and older children. Aggrieved parents had been part of either single or one-and-a-half income households and the majority of the women in this group had been dependent spouses during the marriage (although this changed post separation). All of the aggrieved parents had their case heard in court as the parents were unable to agree a settlement. A common feature amongst the aggrieved parents was the experience of being abandoned in the marriage and having to carry an unequal share of the financial and parenting burden. Aggrieved parents, who were deserted, tended to blame their ex-partner for the problems they encountered in parenting post separation. The non-resident parent spent only a few hours a week (day-only contact) with the children and aggrieved parents compared themselves to 'single parents' post separation. Due to the high level of conflict and hostility, the aggrieved parents had to use the courts to negotiate a financial and parenting arrangement.

Table 9: Profile of Aggrieved Parents

Name	Age	Age of Children	Length of Marriage	Time Since Separation	Household Type	Settlement
Celine	55	31, 27, 23*	20	7	Single	Court Based
Sally	54	17, 15, 12, 10, 10	20	6	Single	Court Based
Margaret	55	24, 18	18	9	Single	Court Based
Michelle	56	24, 21, 17	20	5	Dual Income	Court Based
Joanne	54	15, 18	12	10	Single	Court Based
Jackie	52	22, 20	18	7	One and a Half	Court Based
Daisy	54	16, 14	12	6	Single	Court Based
Warren	54	25, 23, 18	18	7	One and a Half	Court Based

* This child had intellectual disabilities and was full-time dependent. He required full-time care

In comparison to the 'egalitarians' and the 'involved' groups, the aggrieved parents were older, had older children and had been suddenly abandoned by their spouses'. There was much less contact taking place and they had less financial means. Consequently, they have been raising their children with little spousal support for a longer period and with less financial means than either the egalitarians or the 'constrained' parents. The aggrieved parents experienced a higher level of conflict and their separation was highly litigious. The aggrieved parents, unlike the egalitarians, contested the parenting and financial arrangements post separation. The profiles of the aggrieved parents and the excluded parents were quite similar in regards to the age of the respondent, length of marriage, age of children and time since separation but there were two major differences. Firstly, aggrieved parents were mainly women while excluded fathers were men and secondly, there was more contact taking place between the non-resident parent and child in the aggrieved parents group.

Sally's Story

Segregated Conjugal Roles

Sally and Paul were married for twenty years and separated six years ago. Paul worked in the bank and grew up in the same neighbourhood as Sally. Sally's father had passed away when Sally was in her late teens and she had been left some inheritance. Sally bought a house with the money and the couple moved into this house when they married in 1982. Sally had worked as a sales assistant during the earlier years of the marriage but gave it up three years into the marriage when the couple had their first child. Over the next five years, the couple had another two children and Sally remained a stay at home mother and dependent spouse. Over the years, Sally grew annoyed that Paul spent little time with the children and described how Paul was disengaged from parenting: *"He was not your run of the mill dad. He wouldn't be the type of dad that would go out to the green and kick a ball with them."* She was tired of the unequal division of household labour and described how Paul: *"had it easy in the marriage"* as his role was that of the male breadwinner.

Sally began to feel isolated in her caring role and described how there was very little support from Paul: *"I mean I couldn't consult with him about anything to do with the kids, it was awful"*. She described the extremity of the marked division of labour in the family when she recalled how he would say: *"if we needed a babysitter for going out, he would say 'that is your department' so some men leave it up to their wives because they haven't got they time but it is just the manner in which it was said. It became quite abusive, it was destroying us."* Sally felt that her breadwinner husband had wanted a wife who preferred domesticity to a career. By shaping his wife into the domestic worker role, Paul freed himself from domestic work. Sally felt that Paul enjoyed the traditional rights and power as the head of the household: *"He always wanted to be in control. He didn't want me to work and he didn't want me to do anything."* Sally's desire to work outside the family home was eventually sapped when, four years before the separation, Sally unexpectedly had twins. The chance of more equal sharing roles in the marriage diminished with the arrival of the two children. The couple moved into a bigger house which Sally was able to fund through the support of her mother.

Withdrawing from Family

With the increase in childcare responsibilities in the house, Paul began to withdraw from the relationship: *“bit by bit he started to withdraw, and he didn’t want to have a social life. For the last three years before we separated I did all the socialising on my own. He rarely went anywhere with me, he just withdrew. Not only did Paul withdraw from the marital relationship, but he also disengaged from family life: “He just switched off, he came home late. He didn’t feel any obligation to tell me where he was. He might have been on holidays and he wouldn’t tell me. He would just disappear for weeks. He went on holiday to Spain, he went skiing. Nobody knew where he went, he totally switched off.”*

At this stage the marital relationship was in a poor state and Sally was concerned about Paul: *“There were a lot of issues around his state of mind”*. Sally continued to try to work at the relationship which was proving very difficult as there was no communication. She attempted to set up marriage counselling: *“I forced him to that and he left after three sessions, he just doesn’t want to confront anything.”* Sally at this point described her relationship as *“poisonous”* but remained in the relationship as she felt that she *“needed to be there for the kids”*. She felt that Paul was being selfish by not confronting and discussing the problems: *“His focus was on himself and he was very difficult to live with. He would explode if you said anything to him and it got so bad that I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown and I had to go to counselling. I did everything to try and keep the marriage going but I was battling time and time again. I was swimming against the tide all the time and it went from bad to worse.”*

Desertion

After experiencing three years of erratic behaviour and withdrawal, the final straw came when Paul just suddenly left: *“He just disappeared off the radar for some time and I was there left behind, I didn’t know what happened...I thought between us we would figure it out, but I was very wrong.”* She was unaware of the father’s location for up to six months following the desertion and was solely responsible for the five children. At this stage she had little time and a reduced income. She struggled to cope and got support from her family. She described this period as *“a terrible time as I couldn’t move on with my life”*.

Sally was frustrated with how her husband abandoned her instead of working through their problems: *“He really didn’t want to discuss any problems we were having, he just didn’t want to know.”* Sally described how she eventually applied for a separation after this period of desertion: *“Something had to happen so that there was some closure to our situation. I didn’t want it to be that way, but I had to separate.”*

The Battle Begins

Sally and Paul were unable to agree a settlement and were in dispute about the ownership of the family home, the parenting schedule and other issues relating to welfare of the children. The battle became highly litigious as Paul tried *“to make things as difficult as possible, in a very subtle way, it is very belittling. He kept on the pressure, bringing me into court, time and time again.* Sally described how Paul was *“looking for an excuse to patch something”* on her. Paul brought an allegation of child abuse to the health authorities, claiming that the children were neglected. Sally described the experience of being investigated by the health authorities: *“I had to go in to see them. Now it was very upsetting as it is difficult enough trying to do everything on your own without this, so as far as the Easter Health Board goes, they didn’t pursue it. I mean the children were happy.* She described how the accusations were not based on child welfare concerns but were a mechanism for vilifying her: *“He is quite happy to sit there on the fence and vilify me and criticize me and you know, make all these accusations, he has not once offered to take the children on for a week or a month”.*

Money Matters

Sally described how the spousal maintenance was a constant source of distress and dispute: *He will talk about maintenance, about how much he was paying me. He wanted to have it (maintenance) reduced. It actually stopped for a period of time, so he said so much per child and so much for me and he stopped the portion that was for me. So he was in arrears for quite a number of months. And I had to bring that motion. I would say we were in court six or seven times and each time there were arrears.* Sally was struggling to meet the day-to-day expenses and was forced to constantly seek more

money from Paul to cover household bills. Paul felt that he had been paying the mortgage repayments for the majority of their married life in both houses, but Sally felt otherwise: *“Well my mother gave me some money for the difference between the sale price and cost price of the new house, and she funded that and then again because I wasn’t working he paid the mortgage, but again he felt, so I paid the most of house, I also funded a lot of the upgrading of the house, from savings and stuff like that, so he always made out that I was the one who has everything, the one with the money and house and he has nothing.”*

Eventually the court awarded that Sally could buy out Paul’s share of the family home for 20% of the value of the family home. The court also awarded spousal maintenance of €500 per month and child maintenance of €300 per month for each of the five children. Paul used the money to purchase a holiday home abroad: *“I mean he could have afforded a mortgage on a house or an apartment at the time. He spent the money on an apartment abroad, so he could escape to, so it wasn’t a practical decision. He didn’t take the children’s needs into account in that respect.* Paul now lives in a rented flat about twenty minutes away from the original family home.

Day Only Contact

After the first year of separation, the parenting arrangement eventually settled down: *“It’s every Sunday now that he (the father) comes and picks up the three younger children about 2.30p.m. and he takes them out for the afternoon.”* The older children tend to go on contact when it suits them, as Sally described: *“the older boys I suppose, they could take him or leave him but I could put that down to age. They could take or leave me too. Their peers are more important than their parents but having said that I would be quite close to them. I mean a lot closer than their dad but that wouldn’t be hard.”*

Sally and Paul no longer communicate and therefore changes to the parenting arrangement were sent via the children, as Sally described: *“He has no desire to get in touch with me or make arrangements with me, he does it only through the children, so it can be hit and miss, so you know we can get timing wrong and stuff.”* Handovers took place outside the house and the former couple were unable to agree on any matters

relating to the children. Paul on the other hand complained that he had no time for contact as he was *“too busy working to pay the maintenance. He has to work all the hours god sends him to pay the maintenance.”*

Single Parenthood

Sally, who had a patriarchal, traditional division of labour (segregated conjugal role) during the marriage, and who had no income upon separation, was left to carry the entire childcare burden after the separation: *“So I am really responsible for the organisation of their lives, everything, and anything to do with them, they live with me, so therefore I am their carer and I do the shopping, I do the trips to their extracurricular activities, they need to go to rugby training and stuff like that. That’s been the ongoing situation. I have to be there when they are on mid-term and Easter and I have to hire childcare if I’m working. I have to organise all of that, so I’m basically their mother and father in the sense that I’m there twenty four seven.”* Sally felt that Paul did not invest the time with his children to develop a bond with them and that the father’s experience of post-separated life is a consequence of his intact parenting but also of his behaviour since the separation: *“He deserves what he gets. He hasn’t put a lot of effort into being a co-parent. I mean no one is a winner at the start, so you have to make the best out of a bad situation, and he hasn’t done that, so I don’t feel he has any right to complain.”* Although Sally is annoyed at Paul for how he has behaved since the separation, she still encourages contact between Paul and the children: *“I have no problem in accommodating him and he knows that but he doesn’t like to acknowledge it. He prefers to be difficult you know, throwing spanners in the works, and I mean, I went as far as planning a holiday for them, and I just got it thrown back in my face.”* Overall Sally has found life post separation very difficult, mainly due to financial difficulties incurred and the lack of support from her former spouse.

Warren's Story⁷²*Small Town Family Life*

Warren and Jessica separated seven years ago, having been married for seventeen years. They met in the small town where Warren worked as an engineer and Jessica worked in a bookshop. Warren married Jessica at the age of twenty-nine and moved into a new house in a country town (population of 5,000). The couple had their first child four years into the marriage and Jessica gave up work to look after the child and home. Over the following seven years, the couple had two more children and maintained a traditional division of labour, in which Warren boasts: *"I was like my father in the home, I never cooked or did laundry, I just came home gave her the cheque and she gave me pocket money and that was what we did."* Warren described how he provided the main income and his wife worked mainly part-time once the children were of school-going age: *"She would have done part-time work in X and as I say, she did some work in some of the clothes shops, selling over the counter, and then, ended up working as a secretary for a law firm in town."* Warren and Jessica were largely preoccupied with their respective roles both inside and outside the home and worked hard to create a comfortable family home.

Once Jessica returned to part-time employment, seven years after the birth of her last son, the couple spent less and less time together. Jessica began spending more time with her colleagues from work and would socialise with them late into the evening. Warren was concerned about the state of their marriage and decided to go to counselling about two years before the separation: *"The counsellor chatted to the two of us and asked us this, that and the other thing and he reckoned that I was being too possessive. She had her own life to live and if she wanted to go out or come back late at night that was her own business. She was entitled to do that. So as far as she was concerned, she was given the freedom to come and go as she pleased. I still find it hard to accept that, and it is not the way I want to live my life."* Around this time, Jessica had been complaining about not

⁷² 'Equal fathers are rare because it takes rare circumstances for them to emerge' (Gerson, 1993:240). For this reason Warren's story is used as a deviant case analysis as he was the only male primary carer in this group. The use of deviant case analysis can sometimes lead to theoretical revisions of the typology and it is for this reason that the researcher chose to outline his story.

wanting to have more children. Warren described how *“she wanted to get her tubes tied but our family doctor called me up and said this is a major operation for a woman, and he said to me, it would be better off if you went off and got a vasectomy. It would be a lot easier. So I went off and got a vasectomy but it didn’t dawn on me at the time what the rationale behind getting her tubes tied was.”*

The Secret

Warren described how Jessica was *“going off for weekends and disappearing at bank holiday weekends, and I would say where are you going and leaving me with the kids? She just went, and didn’t say where she was going.”* Looking back, Warren realised that it was clear that Jessica had met someone else and was having an affair. However he described how he denied it to himself in the beginning: *“When it happened, it was happening over a period and you are actually the last person to find out about it. I probably knew beforehand but you say to yourself you are imagining things or whatever else. I was kind of saying, if she is working so much what is wrong with that, so I’m kind of denying it.”* Warren went on holidays with the children and Jessica had stayed behind because she had to work and when the family got back from holidays: *“that is when she pulled out all the stuff, the holiday was only over. I didn’t realise that this would happen. I was in a different world altogether, so when I got the letter which was the institution of proceedings I was devastated.”* After the announcement, neither Warren nor Jessica left the family home. The couple lived together for a short period, but the wife was spending most nights away from the home with her new partner. The couple were unable to agree a settlement as both spouses wanted a greater share of the family home and a long court battle ensued.

Allegations of Abuse

During this period, before the court hearing, Jessica made several allegations of domestic violence: *“I was accused of beating her up. I was accused of evil things but nothing ever happened. I was brought down to the barracks a number of nights and questioned about the alleged incidents.”* Warren recalled one incident, which his daughter witnessed: *“There was a particular night when my daughter actually happened to be there, and what*

I was accused of doing was totally incorrect, and my daughter said, ' you didn't touch my mother, she touched you.'" Warren was annoyed that his ex-wife would make such allegations and felt dismayed at how she behaved. He realised her intentions were to get the family home: *"But there was a game and the intention was to get me out of the house. I only think that the plan was, get a barring order, get you thrown out of the house and then you are on sticky ground, even the allegations will stick to you even if you are out of the house, your man must have done something, why is he out of the house, that is when I decided that I am not leaving the house."* 'The game' that Warren refers to is the act of constructing desertion, in which the wife would intentionally force Warren to leave the marital dwelling by alleging that the he acted in an offensive manner.

Warren described how horrified he was with the inflated claims of abuse as he explained how he was the one who was the victim of abuse: *"She assaulted me, so I went down to the police station and told them that I was assaulted by her. I met a police women down there and I explained the situation to her and she just asked was everything alright and I said no, not really, so she could see I was upset so she brought me into the back and there she checked the bruising and recorded it."* Warren described how his wife's deceitful actions led him to be more determined to fight for his place in the family home. After the unsuccessful domestic violence application was thrown out, Warren described how his ex-wife gave up the fight as she was keen to move in with her new partner: *"She left the house; she went off and did her own thing, rented her own place and the kids stayed with me as well, so I was left defending for the kids. As part of the settlement, Warren bought out Jessica's share of the family home for 50% of the value of the property: "We got a legal separation, I paid a lump sum and that was it. There was no maintenance or nothing, she has never contributed to any of the stuff for the children, I have always paid for that, she has never contributed in any way."*

Caring and Earning

Warren, an engineer, was converted from a primary breadwinner into a primary carer of three children when his wife left him for another man: *"My whole life changed at that stage, where I had to do all the home things on top of a normal day's work. I had to be*

the mother and the father. Warren described the busy schedule that he kept and the considerable parenting strain he experienced: *“I go to work at 7a.m. in the morning, come home at 8-30a.m., bring them to school and get back for 9a.m. This city is small, I am only five minutes from work, and in the evening I bring them home at 4p.m. and then back to work until 6p.m., they are not old enough to be on their own.”*

As part of the settlement, the wife was to have the children at weekends in her rented apartment: *“The wife moved into her new partner’s house but kept a rented house in order to keep up contact with the children. The children were to have weekend access with the mother but that eventually fizzled out as none of the children were keen to see the mother and she became more unreliable.”* Warren described how the children felt that this house was not a home: *“they told me it was never lived in during the week, so it was only when they were meeting her in the house and that was the only sign that it was being lived in.”* Warren explained how she would sometimes fail to turn up to collect the children: *“there were a couple of weekends they were was supposed to go and she never turned up and I found that totally unfair as I was feeling that I was hard done by in fairness, I had very little communication with her.”* The children withdrew from contact after a few weeks and the mother gave up the house and moved in permanently with her new partner. After that, contact became irregular.

The children’s willingness to go on contact with the mother was affected by the presence of the mother’s new partner. Two years after the separation, the mother had a child with her partner and the children were shocked. The eldest son had cancelled his birthday party: *“The party was cancelled because my son had found out that his mother was pregnant and that is why he didn’t have a party. So there was hassle in the early days.”*

Opting out of Responsibility

For the first few years after the separation, Warren felt that his ex-wife opted out of being a responsible parent and was unable or unwilling to set boundaries for the eldest son: *“There were a few times that she would ring me and she would say, ‘what do you do with him?’ And I would say, if he is with me, I make sure he is doing what is right and whatever, and if he is with you for the weekend, there is no point ringing me, you look*

after him, about going out to the pub, say when he was 18, and I would say you need to decide whether he can go to a pub that is your decision, don't be ringing me to say you have rung his father and he can't, it is your decision." As such, Warren decided to make all parental decisions unilaterally as: *"I just thought he (son aged 12) needed counselling. I didn't feel, I wasn't going to ask permission for this that or the other thing with her, so as I say, it was my decision."*

Second Bite of the Cherry

Seven years after the separation, and at the time of the interview, Warren had instituted divorce proceedings. The relationship between the parties was still fraught and they were unable to agree the terms of the divorce. The couple were involved in applications for discovery with each other: *"She is saying she is not happy with the settlement she got at separation, she is saying she wants more money, wants half the pensions, wants a lump sum, wants this and that."* Warren felt that the separation was supposed to be full and final and couldn't understand why she was seeking more after he was the one left with all the responsibilities: *"I think it is nonsense and silly that she is looking for money now. She has lived the last eight years, she never paid any maintenance to the children, and I have never asked for it. We will have to wait and see but as I said, she got at the time a settlement that was favourable."*

Celine's Story

Professional Husband and Dependent Spouse

Celine and Marcus were married for twenty years and separated twelve years ago. Marcus was a trainee solicitor when Celine married him in 1980. Celine had been working in office administration when they met. Celine was eager to start a family and the couple had their first child one year into their marriage. The couple had another two children in the following seven years and Celine stayed at home to look after the family and home. Marcus was spending significant amounts of time outside the family and the couple had largely segregated conjugal roles. Consequently neither of them seemed to have the inclination or time to develop interests beyond their roles as primary

breadwinner and primary homemaker. Celine felt that Marcus was very empathic as a husband and father and recalled one occasion when she asked him for help with preparing dinner: *“I was very tired and I asked him to help me prepare the food and he replied, ‘I will help you when you can do one of my cases’.”*

Children with Learning Difficulties

The couple discovered that their third child, Simon, had severe learning difficulties and Celine spent most of her time looking after his needs. Simon required a lot of attention as he had several severe physical illnesses in addition to his learning difficulty, which meant that he required extensive (almost 24-hour) care. Celine recalled how the strain of childrearing a sick child placed a significant burden on their relationship: *“Things between myself and Marcus got more difficult as Simon got older. Simon demanded more care and the father distanced himself from the family.”* In addition to looking after Simon and her two other children, Celine, for two days a week, had to look after her auntie, who had Alzheimer’s disease. The segregation of each spouse’s role was becoming more distinct as Celine was dedicating all her time and energy to caring and Marcus was dedicating all his time to his career. The couple disagreed about the extent to which Simon needed to be cared for. Celine described how Marcus thought that: *“He would say that I am totally over-protective. So by being over-protective I’m narrowing his life.”* On the other hand, Celine thought that Marcus had: *“a total lack of empathy and is not a guy who takes responsibility for caring.”*

Dwindling Intimate Relationship

The couple began arguing more and relations between them began to sour. Celine recalled how her father had had a heart attack about two years before the separation. She was present when it happened and was very concerned about her father’s well-being. Celine and Marcus were due to go on holiday at this stage but Celine decided not to go in light of the circumstances: *“We were supposed to go on holiday at this time, however, I said that I wouldn’t go on holiday as my father was dying in hospital.”* She recalled how

Marcus *“kept on persisting about when they were going to go on holidays and couldn’t empathise with her that her father was going to die.”*

Marcus appeared to have more interests outside his professional work career and towards the end of the marriage he would *“have people come and collect him and they were colleagues, friends and their wives and his friends would take him out to dinner.”* Celine suggested that the domestic role that she occupied was far more difficult to ‘escape’ from than the work role was for Marcus. The couple were living separate lives at this stage but Celine put an end to the marriage after she found out that Marcus was having an affair with a good friend: *“The relationship was with a woman who was considered to be a good friend of mine or considered to be a friend for over twenty years, or a good friend that is. She is obviously no longer a friend. That was hard, that was hard, you know. He now denies it. When something doesn’t suit him he denies it.”*

Priorities are Revealed in Court Case

Both parties were being advised by solicitors in the lead-up to the hearing. Negotiations were ongoing but the couple were unable to agree a settlement. Celine described how she received regular correspondence from Marcus’s solicitor which were part of the negotiations: *“The one letter, I called the letter of hell came and stated that all the goal posts had changed and prior to this he had offered a lump sum of €150, 000. He was now offering €60,000. A lump sum of €60 000 was an insult to 20 years of marriage. It was a dreadful letter. It’s the only time I cracked up actually. I cried that night.”* The couple were unable to agree a suitable amount of maintenance for their dependent son. Celine knew that she would be solely responsible for Simon and could not believe how tight-fisted Marcus was during the negotiation process: *“What he wanted to do was knock off €240 off the child’s maintenance. He is one of the highest earning professionals in Ireland and my daughter would say that, that is four bottles of Chablis to him in a restaurant. It would be nothing for him to spend €60 on a bottle of wine.”*

They found themselves in the family law courts on the day of the hearing. Celine described how Simon received disability allowance, and that this disability allowance appeared for his sole maintenance in the negotiation papers and Celine was outraged at

this: *“And that nearly killed me. This man wants the state to pay for his child to avoid maintenance. That threw me, that was just so filthy and it has been clear, more than clear, since that time that he will do it. He has been very successful in making sure that I do not benefit in any shape or form from my care of his son. There is a level of vindictiveness that I just cannot believe.”* Under the terms of the judicial separation, Celine was awarded the family home (which was unencumbered and valued at €1.2 million), she received €60,000 as a lump sum (in lieu of maintenance) and received child maintenance of €1,000 per month for the one dependent child.

As part of the proceedings, Celine also found out that her husband was not away for business as often as he claimed. This discovery underlined the fact that the father’s involvement in caring for the son was minimal: *“Yet I had assumed when Marcus left here he was working abroad one week in three, but at court on the Friday I found that he was working abroad one week in five. I had kept a log of the nights he had kept Simon. So it was more than clear that his input was minimum, more than clear.”*

As part of the court order, the father got an access order to see Simon for twenty minutes on a Monday night (drive by visit on his way home from work), for four hours on a Tuesday afternoon and for four hours on a Sunday. In addition to this, the father had Andrew every third weekend. The mother felt that the twenty minute ‘drive by’ contact was not helping Simon, as he was upset if the father didn’t come or came late – it led him to be quite anxious. The Tuesday visits were also inconsistent. Sometimes Andrew would not want to go and sometimes the father would be working late – the duration of these visits varied and became less frequent as time went on. After three or four months after the settlement, contact between Simon and Marcus settled down into: *“Every Sunday for a few hours when he picks him up from the family home and brings him out for a few hours, usually to a restaurant or the cinema.”* Celine was annoyed that contact only took place for two or three hours which was not long enough to give her an adequate break from full-time caring: *“But what I found was that the arrangements were all last minute stuff of shorter duration so they were of sod all use to me. So for like two and a half hours maybe, they would be like gone.”* She also felt that extra caution was needed when the

son went into town or into an environment that he was unfamiliar with and the father did not supervise Simon properly.

Sole Carer

Celine, described how there was a “*fatigue element*” in being the primary carer, especially when her ex-husband offered very little support even at times when she was sick: “*I did my back in two weeks ago (whilst caring for the son) and I couldn’t move, and he (ex-husband) never offered to take him (dependent son). He never offered to even see if I needed to be checked on, I couldn’t even drive*”. Celine described her experience, as the primary carer, of arrangements being changed last minute by the non-resident father: “*He was going away and when I looked at the calendar I saw that he was taking one of my weekends and I rang him and I said you didn’t negotiate this with me. You just cannot take a weekend like that...*”

At the time of the interview, Celine and Marcus were embroiled in divorce proceedings and were re-visiting the terms that were set out in the judicial separation. The value of the family home had increased substantially over the eight-year period between the judicial separation (2001) and the time when the divorce proceedings were initiated (2007). According to Celine, the father now felt that Celine had benefited over and above from the increased price in the house value: “*He wanted to claw back on the house if I sold the house over a certain level. It had been agreed that the house is worth X but he said that if I sell it for Y, he wants half of the difference between X and Y.*” As will be discussed further below, Irish legislation under Section 14 of the Divorce Act prevents finality from being guaranteed. Each spouse has a right to apply for a revision of the agreement previously agreed on.

Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

Unlike the egalitarians or involved but constrained parents who described a long period of dwindling intimacy in their relationship, the aggrieved parents told us that their relationship had been ended by their partner ‘*out of the blue*’. Some respondents maintained that they had been unaware of any underlying problems prompting their

partner's departure. While others were aware that there had been problems but saw those problems as resolvable. The following factors appeared to contribute to the breakdown of the relationship 1) segregated conjugal roles 2) lack of emotional reciprocity and 3) infidelity.

Segregated Conjugal Roles

The data indicated the clear division of labour that operated in these respondents' long marriages prevented them from developing a shared conjugal life in which interests and activities were shared. The working lives of these respondents tend to separate them from their former spouse for longer periods. Similar to findings of studies in the UK, the respondents specialised and identified with 'traditional' sex roles which resulted in their conjugal roles being highly segregated (Edgwell, 1980; Bott, 1971). None of the fathers had tried to combine work commitments with caring for a baby and the mothers spoke about having felt very isolated with several children to care for and all the domestic responsibility. This was particularly difficult for Celine who described how the demands of caring for a child who had had been diagnosed with a learning disorder put a severe strain on a relationship. These findings are supported in the literature which outlines how caring for children with special needs can be particularly stressful on relationships (Walker et al., 2010:37).

Intimate Strangers

The lack of emotional reciprocity in their relationships affected the development of conjugal shared life with joint interests and mutual understanding. Duncombe and Marsden (1995) argued that men's role as breadwinner becomes their central life interest, while women are left with emotional responsibility for the private sphere, including the performance of the emotion work necessary to maintain the couple relationship. While the women accepted inequality in domestic division of labour, given the financial provider role from their spouses, they expressed disappointment with the lack of emotional reciprocity in their relationships. Sally described how her former husband: *"just didn't want to communicate with me and that was just the rock that we perished on because he really didn't want to discuss any problems we were having, he just didn't*

want to know.” Male inexpressiveness was a considerable source of distress for the respondent, who recognised that she could no longer sustain the relationship on her own. Duncombe and Marsden (1995:165) argue that the heterosexual masculine identity (as adopted by the respondents’ ex-spouses in this group) has traditionally been bound up with maintaining emotional distance as a defence against intimacy which leaves women responsible for all the emotional work of the marriage.

Infidelity

The data suggests that infidelity was a common cause of marriage breakdown within this group. Research indicates that infidelity is one of the most frequently cited marital problems and was prominent in eight of the nine studies summarised by Kitson, making it the most commonly cited cause of marital dissolution (Treas and Giesen, 2000; Kitson, 1992). As discussed in the previous chapter, dissatisfaction with the marital relationship itself is associated with extra-marital affairs (Vaughan, 1986). Research evidence in the US indicates that those who engage in adultery are less likely to report happy marriages (Treas and Giesen, 2000:49). Warren and Celine’s experience of infidelity by their respective spouses appeared to have been an ‘out the door’ affair. This term was coined by Brown (1991) to refer to an extramarital relationship that is pursued to force a mate to end an unhappy marriage.

Discussion: Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

Contrary to some of the research findings that suggest that divorcing people are keenly aware of their marital problems for a long time (Riessman, 1990 Vaughan, 1986), this study found that the majority of the aggrieved parents were shocked at the sudden nature of the end of their spousal relationship. However, the main findings highlighted how conjugal role relationships remain segregated and there was little evidence of more joint/egalitarian relationships developing. The material presented in this section supports the claim that marital relationships remain highly segregated, unequal and husband-dominated. Among the professional workers and their dependent wives, the wives described how they performed all domestic and child-rearing tasks. The findings also provided evidence that gender differences in emotional expression appear to be an important feature of marital relationships. Women in this study complained that their

former spouses were unable or unwilling to express intimate emotion and they were left to carry the emotional responsibility in the private sphere. The lack of emotional reciprocity in their relationships affected the development of conjugal shared life with joint interests and mutual understanding.

Moving Out of the Family Home

Although there were financial disputes about how the home should be divvied up, there was no argument in these cases about who should retain the family home. The anticipated division of childcare responsibilities determined who would keep the family home. In all instances the family home was retained by the primary carer. The movement out of the family home was less contested in this group, as those who wanted out of the marriage, willingly left the former home. Therefore the movements were influenced by the following factors 1) desertion 2) dispute over ownership and 3) new relationships.

Desertion⁷³

Five of the respondents in this category were deserted. In such instances, a spouse left suddenly and abandoned their marriage and spouse. Joanie described how her husband left her and the children: *"It was very dramatic, I mean he just announced one day he was going and the next day he was gone. The departure, the physical departure was very sudden."* Similar to Sally's and Celine's story, the father in this case abandoned the family and the mother was left to look after young children with no income: *"I still would find it difficult to forgive the way he did it because his son was four-and-a-half and he was hanging on to his leg and saying 'don't go daddy, don't go daddy'. He left at seven o' clock from the house, so that was hugely dramatic for my son, my daughter was a baby. That was rough."*

⁷³ Desertion was a method of contracting out of marriage prior to the arrival of divorce and separation in Ireland. The Social Welfare Bill 1970 introduced the Deserted Wife's Allowance on the basis that it was believed that about 1,000 women would qualify for the allowance. Deserted Wife's Benefit and Deserted Wife's Allowance were two social welfare payments made to women in Ireland who were deserted by their husbands. Entitlement to the payment was based on social insurance contributions paid by the woman or her husband. Both of these payments were closed to new applications in January 1997, when the One-Parent Family Payment was introduced. Some women have continued to get Deserted Wife's Benefit or Deserted Wife's Allowance because they qualified for the payment before 2 January 1997 and have continued to meet the qualifying criteria.

Married men, who had largely segregated conjugal roles in this group, had the 'power' to choose between staying and leaving. Women on the other hand, who may have been equally unhappy in the marriage, suggested that the domestic role that they occupied was far more difficult to 'escape' from than the work role of their husbands. Edgwell (1980) argued that this may have something to do with the spatial separation of home from work for most men and the lack of spatial separation of home from domestic work for women and the ascription of child-care responsibilities to the wives. Our findings from this group seem to replicate findings from studies conducted throughout the 70s in the UK which suggests that marriage and family roles were generally more significant to married women than men (Edgwell, 1980).

Dispute over Ownership

Disputes over the ownership of the family home were a common source of problems when a marriage broke down. In long marriages, where one spouse paid the mortgage for over fifteen years and the other spouse cared for the children, the couple often disagreed over how the family home should be split. Unlike family law legislation in the UK (Smart, 1984:78) that suggested that married women could only claim a share in the matrimonial home if they had made a substantial financial contribution to its purchase, Irish family law legislation was more appreciative of non-financial contributions.⁷⁴

Buckley (2004) outlined the Irish judiciary's opinion on non-economic contributions by examining the Supreme Court decision in *T v T*, (*Unreported, Supreme Court, October 14, 2002*). As part of the judgement Buckley outlined how Murray J. commented that: "*The courts should, in principle, attribute the same value to the contribution of a spouse who works primarily in the home as it does to that of a spouse who works primarily*

⁷⁴ Section 20 of the Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act 1989, which was replaced by Section 16 of the Family Law Act 1995, set the parameters for the court's discretion in the context of separation. Section 20 of the Family Law (Divorce Act) 1996 laid down similar parameters in the context of divorce. These sections provide the 'statutory guidelines' for the exercise of discretion under the acts. The court is bound, before deciding whether to exercise its powers to make ancillary relief orders, and if so in what manner, to have regard to all of the circumstances of the case, including the specific matters set out in those sections, including Section 20 2 (*f*) the contributions which each of the spouses has made or is likely in the foreseeable future to make to the welfare of the family, including any contribution made by each of them to the income, earning capacity, property and financial resources of the other spouse and any contribution made by either of them by looking after the home or caring for the family.

outside the home as the principal earner”, (*ibid.*, at para. 170.) and Denham J. stated that [*a*] *long lasting marriage, especially in the primary childbearing and rearing years of a woman's life, carries significant weight, especially if the wife has been the major home and family carer*’(*ibid.*, at para. 95.). Buckley (2004) highlighted that despite the court's concern to deny that Irish legislation requires the “distribution” or “division” of assets, particularly one of prescribed proportions, the clear subtext is one of partnership, respect for equals, justice, fairness and the justification of moral claims.

Where there were young dependent children in the family, the courts were slow to order a sale of the family home, if it could be prevented as argued in ‘children need familiar location for welfare’. Horgan (2001) outlined in the case *C.O'R. v. M. O'R* that the Judge Donovan noted that: ‘when there is a breakdown of a marriage and there are children of that marriage, the better interests of the children demand that they should not have to leave the home which they have known all their lives unless the financial position of their parents requires that the family home be sold.’⁷⁵

New Relationships

Individuals, who left a marriage to pursue another relationship, willingly left the family home to be with their new partner. Although there were disagreements about the division of the home based on financial claims, the transition out of the family home was easier as the departing spouse no longer wanted to remain living in the home. In Warren’s case, the decision to remain in the family home was made for him, as his wife moved out. There is extensive research that suggests that contact is less likely if the non-resident parent re-partners and lives with the new partner (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Seltzer, 1991). The impact of re-partnering on contact will be discussed below.

Discussion: Moving out of the Family Home

The movement out of the family home is related to the anticipated care-giving status of each parent, i.e. who will be minding the children? As we outlined, this is not always the mother. As other research on property disputes at divorce have found, the matrimonial

⁷⁵ *C.O'R. v. M. O'R* [unreported, H.C., O'Donovan J., September 19, 2000]

home is both practically and emotionally very important as it ensures a sense of continuity for children and at least one parent (Smart et al, 2003:89). Although there are exceptions, the findings here suggest that retaining the family home was associated with the division of labour that existed during the marriage. As such, homes still speak of gender and the gendered practices of work within marriages both before and after separation.

Husbands that deserted their wives with young children and little money demonstrated how powerless many of the women were during and after the marriage. In view of these findings doubt must be cast on the view that marriage and post-separated relationships are anything but an egalitarian relationship. The extent to which many of the female respondents complained about the burden of responsibilities they were left with when their husband deserted them is a good indication of their relative powerlessness. Among this group of breadwinning husbands and dependent spouses, it is the husband who wields most power. As Edgwell (1980:69) stated 'the power to control one's own life and the lives of others, even against their will, accrues 'automatically to the husband-breadwinner.'

Legal conditions appear to be key structural features of understanding respondents' experiences and are relevant to understanding how matrimonial property is understood within Irish law. The sharing and partnership principles that operate in Irish family law, in respect of matrimonial property and the significance of the family home to the child's welfare, provides a unique (particularly in comparison to property provision in the UK) context in which to locate divorcees and in particular, dependent spouses' experiences of moving out of the family home.

Going to Court

The aggrieved parents were part of hotly contested and litigious battles, with each respondent being part of a full hearing. Bay and Braver (1990) argue that a woman's disadvantage, such as resource differentials may exacerbate conflict. The section outlines

the role the courts played in resolving mostly financial matters what were fiercely contested.

Hidden Assets and Lies

The aggrieved parents felt further deceived by their partners in the manner in which their former spouses acted deceitfully once they separated. This manifested itself in many different ways such as hiding assets, not paying maintenance, seeking a barring order or making an allegation of abuse or neglect against the former spouse. At the time of the separation Joanne, for example, struggled to obtain a true reflection of the father's assets as "*he has quite a lot of money, but it's all hidden*". Horgan (2001) outlined how it has been made clear by the courts that the duty to make full disclosure will be enforced by the courts and where there is a failure to do so, the court will penalise the errant party. Husbands had power and access to money and at the point of separation, money was withheld from the children and former wife. In a web of deceit, betrayal and dishonesty, the respondents grew increasingly suspicious of their ex-spouses' intentions. Such actions were perceived as failing to honour marital commitments and parental responsibility and highlight the realities regarding inequalities of power post separation.

Ongoing Maintenance Ongoing Dependency

One of the main arguments of the opponents' to removing the ban on divorce was the argument that divorce would oppress women economically (Burley and Regan, 2002; Darcy & Laver, 1990; James 1997, Mahon, 1987; O'Higgins, 1986). In my findings, the dependent homemakers in the marriage continued to be dependent after the separation as they received ongoing maintenance post separation as Sally described: "*I didn't want to bleed the man. I just wanted an end to the situation I was in and I felt that the court was the only way in my situation.*" The principle of maintenance and 'proper provision' that was set out in the legislation provided an element of compensation to the wife for her unpaid care work. As Lewis (2001:114) outlined, many women were restricted in their capacity to earn, as women tended to take responsibility for the day-to-day care of children. This had implication for their financial welfare so Irish legislation attempted to put women in the financial position they would have been in had the marriage not ended.

Some legal academics claim that ‘the proposal that spousal support obligations continue completely unaltered despite the termination of the legal status of marriage is indefensible’ (Ward, 1993).

The 1996 Act, by virtue of Section 5(1) (c), states that the court must be satisfied that ‘such provision as the court considers proper having regard to the circumstances exists or will be made for the spouses and any dependent members of the family’.⁷⁶ This requirement projects the message that divorced spouses, as stated by Murray J, ‘continue to respect and fulfil certain obligations deriving from their dissolved marriage for their mutual protection and welfare, usually of a financial nature’.⁷⁷ This provision is understandable given the constitutional directive to uphold the family in Article 41.

Second Bite of the Cherry⁷⁸

The data also highlighted the difficulties facing Irish divorcees who seek to divorce several years after obtaining a separation. Although the respondents obtained a ‘full and final’ settlement at the time of separation, former husbands or wives were able to revisit the settlement and seek changes at the time of divorce (Monaghan, 1999). This, as Power (1998) indicated leaves the former matrimonial doors open to claims possibly long after the occupant has separated. One of the clear features of the 1996 Act is that there is no provision for a ‘clean break’ in the legislation. If there are changes in either parties circumstances after the date of the decree, either party can seek variations to orders at any time after the divorce.

⁷⁶ Before the court makes any ancillary relief orders, the court is required to examine all factors set out in Section 20 of the 1996 Act which enables the court to decide whether to make an order and/or the provision of the order.

⁷⁷ DT v CT [2003] 1 ILRM 321

⁷⁸ Cases in which one of the parties is seeking a better financial or other arrangement following on from an earlier separation agreement or judicial separation have are known colloquially as ‘second bite of the cherry’ cases. Although a court, in the context of a divorce application, will look at all of the circumstances of a case including any earlier settlement or court order, it must have regard to the respective financial positions of the parties as at the date of the hearing of the divorce application and not as at the date of a separation agreement or earlier court proceedings (Monaghan, 1999).

Discussion: Going To Court

While there is an expectation that the male breadwinner model is being swept away by a generation of more equal individuals and relationship, our findings do not support this notion and in fact there was strong evidence to assume that women were far from being individualised within and beyond marriage. The financial difficulties experienced by the female respondents (dependent spouses) in this group highlighted the inequalities between men and women both during and after marriage. Their need for on-going maintenance and financial provision post separation highlights the social reality in which men and women are not fully individualised in the sense of being self-sufficient. The unequal gender division of labour continues post separation and women can't be assumed to be in an 'employable' position after separation as long as they are the primary carers for dependent children.

Parent Child Contact

There was very little contact taking place between the non-resident parent and the children. It appears that there were two patterns of contact for the aggrieved parents: 1) 'day only' contact which was conflicted and 2) irregular non-established contact which 'fizzled out' over time. The aggrieved parents were dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of contact taking place and blamed the non-resident parent for their faltering commitment to their child.

'Day Only' Contact

Contact between non-resident parents and their children was limited in the accounts of aggrieved parents. Similar to contact patterns found in, Bradshaw et al. (1999) study which indicated that half of the sample did not have overnight stay, the non-resident parents in this group had day only contact with no overnight stays. Non-resident fathers would take the children to a neutral venue on access visits, such as the cinema or a restaurant or a museum for a few hours. Simpson et al (2003) highlighted the difficulties faced by non-resident parents in finding suitable accommodation for contact. Contact was

unable to happen at their own residences either because it was inadequate (too small) or they had a new partner (see below for discussion on new partners).

Contact Fizzled Out

A strong theme in the research literature on contact between non-resident parents and their children is the fading away of contact (Simpson, et al., 1995). In four of the stories (Warren, Joanne, Margaret and Michelle), contact had been on and off since the separation and in some cases it had decreased to the point where only minimal contact occurred. Despite the agreed parenting arrangement, contact was never regular and “*fizzled out*” after the first few weeks. Joanne described how their parenting agreement was supposed to ensure that: “*he (the father) would have access to the children every second weekend but he would take them to supper at least once a week, and for a couple of week’s holidays but it never happened. He took them away once when they were seven and eleven or younger but never any other time.*” Trinder’s study referred to this form of contact as ‘sporadic’ as contact was irregular, infrequent and there were failed attempts to establish a predictable pattern of arrangements (Trinder, 2002). In comparison to the egalitarians and the involved but constrained groups, contact in the aggrieved parents group was problematic from the start and remained problematic throughout the period or continued to decline.

The aggrieved mothers described how the former spouse did not attend birthday parties, Christmas dinners or graduations. There was very little direct or indirect contact or evidence that the father tried to re-engage with the children. The aggrieved parents, as resident parents, had initially facilitated contact, however, they gave up on the contact parent and waited for the non-resident parent to contact the children: “*He (the ex-husband) has done nothing to reconcile it (father-child relationship) or to rekindle it*”.

Last Minute Changes

The parenting relationships were antagonistic and the aggrieved parents were further aggrieved when contact was cancelled or changed at the last minute, with inadequate notice. Studies on post-separation families suggest that negotiating and managing contact

is affected by the nature of the spousal relationship (Ahrons and Rogers, 1987; Emery, 1994). Joanne described how her “*son would always be waiting for him in the window and he would come late, he messed up my evening too. If I had planned to go to the cinema it had to be scrapped because he would come late and bring them back late and bring them back without their clothes being done or their homework being done or whatever*”. Non-resident parents’ unreliability with access arrangements and inadequate notice with changes to access, highlight the aggrieved parents’ position of powerlessness. They lacked control over their parenting arrangement and resented the former spouses for not carrying more of the childcare burden. Such parenting strains are significant in understanding mothers’ concerns with boundary ambiguity (Madden-Derdich, Leonard & Christopher, 2003).

New Partner and Contact

Research evidence indicates that contact is less likely if the non-resident parent re-partners, particularly if they remarry (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Seltzer, 1991; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992). More specifically, Wallerstein and Lewis (1998) identified pressure from new commitments and relationships as a contributing factor to fathers ceasing contact of their own violation. In six out of the eight accounts in this group, the non-resident parent had re-partnered, and contact took place in a neutral venue as the children were unwilling to have contact with the non-resident parent in their new home. In Warren and Jessica’s story, the presence of children in the new household further reduced the likelihood of contact. These findings echo research findings which found that this was especially the case if the children were born to the new partnership (Manning and Smock, 1999; Cooksey and Craig, 1998). Wade and Smart (2002:12) outlined that children who saw the non-resident parent developing a new life in which the children themselves played little part, felt that the non-resident parents’ attention was shifting away to the new family.

Discussion: Parent Child Contact

The highly segregated conjugal role developed in the marriage appears to affect the ability of fathers to re-engage with their children upon separation. The non-resident

fathers in this group had all been career-orientated fathers who operated a sexual division of labour during the marriage. At the time of the separation, contact between the non-resident father and child continued in the same pattern as before, 'sporadic' (Trinder, 2002). But after the separation, the common residence was removed and so fathers had to proactively arrange to see their children. It appeared that these fathers failed to do so.

From the aggrieved mothers' reports it was suggested that children struggled initially to manage the changes brought about by the separation but over time they began to question the strength of the fathers' commitment when arrangements were not kept. As children grew older, they may have found it easier to live without a parent than to be repeatedly faced with dashed expectations. The findings in this section support the notion that children are autonomous individuals and decide for themselves how they should approach contact. Wade and Smart (2002:11) described how children, who felt that commitment of one parent had diminished with the separation, opted out of contact.

Life as a Single Parent

As Sobolewski and King (2005:1199) have found, not sharing a residence with children makes it difficult for men (or non-resident parents) to enact the parental role. As such, the contact arrangement adopted by the aggrieved parents and the non-resident parents directly influenced the parental division of labour in which aggrieved parents continued to carry an unequal share of the day-to-day responsibilities of childcare. The resident parents are overburdened and they describe how they have to adjust to the role of being a single parent (Madden-Derdich et al., 1999:57). Unlike the egalitarians and constrained parents, it appears that the aggrieved parents are solely responsible for decision-making and discipline.

Sole Carer

With minimal involvement from the non-resident parent, the aggrieved parents described how they felt over-burdened and tired with the level of care and responsibility they had in acting as single parents. Margaret described how she "*got tired of the responsibility, driving around, doing the school runs, doing the work.*" The inequitable division of

labour persisted beyond the marriage but this time it was happening in an environment where there was less financial returns. Aggrieved mothers felt aggravated that they were doing all the caring in an environment where fathers were pulling back from financial provision and maintenance.

Sole Decision-Maker

Some studies have revealed that single parents can feel stressed about making decisions without a partner (Fassinger, 1989). Newcomers to a status (single mother) may find that their initial experience in the role causes them stress and anxiety, as Sally indicated: *"I had to make the decisions. It was quite hard because it was a toss up between the two schools. I was on my own. I'd already processed all their applications years before and I had them down for three schools, and then I narrowed it down to two and I really couldn't make up my mind which one. And I wrote to him and asked to meet him in order to discuss it and when I arrived at the venue he didn't show up that evening."* Aggrieved mothers felt doubtful about whether they could handle being a sole householder and they spoke about how it affected their overall well-being. In exploring the division of labour, Fassinger (1989) examined the impact of gender and past marital experiences on heading a household alone. The findings suggested that mothers from segregated marriages (traditional marriages in which husband and wives have separated, non-overlapping spheres), experienced the most dramatic changes in their sense of family responsibility (Fassinger, 1989). The findings from this group of aggrieved mothers, in which most women were dependent wives and were part of traditional marriages, would resonate with this research evidence.

Managing Dual Roles

All of the mothers attempted to return to the labour force after the separation. Many of them incurred significant barriers in managing the dual role of earning and caring. As a result of carrying sole responsibility for the children after the separation (just as they had done during the marriage), mothers were unable to engage fully in the workforce, as Celine described: *"I was offered a part-time job before Simon got sick. I had to turn it down, it was one that I wanted and I had to turn it down because it was afternoon work. I*

would have needed somebody in here to look after him and I certainly couldn't be away every afternoon till 7'o clock in the evening with Simon here on his own. That's a non-runner. No point in going to his father, that's a non-runner". The fact that mothers saw themselves as primary carers contrasted greatly to how fathers were always breadwinners. Fathers therefore had more freedom to opt in and out of parenting and caring.

Mothers, who had made motherhood a central part of their lives, found it difficult to return to employment and still attend to the needs of the children. Margaret also struggled to gain appropriate employment as she was the main carer for her son who was in primary school: "*I plucked up the courage and I walked into this delicatessen and I said right, so I started working there and my son was only in school around the way so I would try and finish the same time as him and I stayed with them for three years*". As the son got older, Margaret felt that he needed more supervision after school: "*He was going to do his Junior Certificate⁷⁹ at that stage, so I decided I needed to get home for him, because he wasn't good at getting down to study and do his homework, plus the meals were too late for him and he was exhausted. So I was on the dole for that year and at the end of that I started taking in students and I also went to work. I got a job as a receptionist in a doctor's practice. It drove me nuts.*" As Smart (1999:54) found, many women's maternal identity was more significant than identities they gained from paid employment.

Discussion: Parental Isolation

It emerges that gender shapes post-separation parenting for the aggrieved parents. The sexual division of labour post separation for the aggrieved parents seems to follow the traditional male breadwinner household that existed during the marriage. The persistent inequitable division of labour and childcare responsibilities reflects the same division. The aggrieved parents conceptualised gender roles as problematic and attributed them as a core reason for the difficulties in their parental relationship. The issue of gender equity

⁷⁹ The Junior Certificate examination is an Irish state examination held at the end of the junior cycle in post-primary schools. Students normally sit for the examinations at the age of 14 or 15, after three years of post-primary education.

in post-separation parenting requires a more even distribution of caring (childcare responsibilities) between the sexes. Warren's case made it clear that when circumstances demand, men are equally capable of carrying the double burden. However, Warren was an exception and he became the primary carer post separation because his wife was absent. Warren moved from being a traditional father during the marriage to becoming the predominant parent. It took such circumstances to overcome the heavy social and ideological barriers to equal participation.

Conclusion

The evidence in this chapter strongly challenges the view that intimate relationships are becoming more democratic and are in the process of becoming less segregated and more egalitarian. The stories of the aggrieved parents and their former spouses' relationship both before and after the separation place severe doubts on the democratisation thesis. The accounts presented above exemplify and support the claim that marital relationships can remain highly segregated, unequal and husband-dominated. The aggrieved parents, who were part of traditional marriages, where the father had a profession and the wife stayed at home, described how the wife performed all the child-rearing tasks both before and after the separation. The minor exception of such behaviour in this group was evident in Warren's case which seemed to be due to the behaviour and choice of his former spouse and less to do with his willingness to engage in domestic tasks. Warren was the only male who took on the caring role post separation. In the sample it was more common that women do this. It became evident from the data that conjugal role behaviour heavily influenced the arrangement and division of tasks post separation.

It was also evident that the division of unpaid work seemed to continue even in the face of changes to the division of paid work. The sexual division of labour, whereby the husband had primary responsibility for paid work, presented him with an opportunity to avoid childcare and economic provision post separation if he chose. In doing so, it was clear that he dominated family life both before and after separation. The wife on the other hand, by virtue of her relative exclusion from paid work and responsibilities for the

children, continued to be economically dependent upon her former husband beyond the separation. This pattern of traditional roles fed into the continuation of dependency.

Aggrieved mothers, who attempted to join the labour force during the marriage, had to ask permission from their husbands. Their tasks during the marriage were clearly defined by their husbands, as we saw in Sally and Celine's example when they requested help with preparing the dinner and the husband responded: "*that is your department*". Domestic tasks were regarded as "*her*" job. Upon separation, aggrieved mothers decided to return to the labour force. However, they were restricted by their absence from the labour market and qualifications. Unlike the egalitarians, these women couldn't offer employers the same commitment as men as they still had caring responsibilities that restricted their flexibility. Low paid, part-time employment did not alleviate their economic dependence on their former spouse. The husband's position in the home is thought to be one of power. Irish legislation, on the other hand, attempts to remove that reinforcement by valuing non-economic contributions upon divorce and awarding ongoing maintenance post separation. Despite this piece of legislation designed to equalise the economic position of men and women in society, there is considerable evidence that women's role in society has not changed dramatically as a result.

The fathers in these cases were traditional breadwinners. The men were working long hours and did not get involved in family life either during or after the marriage. In the context of marriage, men's role was to provide and were largely excluded from a major family role. In the next chapter, we look at this group of fathers in more detail. The excluded fathers, who were also careerist fathers during the marriage, felt marginalised from their children upon separation. While considering the same issues as the present chapter, the relative structural (economic, legal and class) differences of these fathers enables us to test Giddens's (1992) theory that intimate relationships are increasingly characterised by equality of power and authority.

Chapter 9: Excluded Fathers

*I have been completely isolated, it is quite extraordinary and she is happy to do that.
Cathal, 55 years old, separated 5 years*

Who are the Excluded Fathers?

This chapter explores the experiences of 'excluded fathers' who have almost no contact with their children despite their wish for contact. Although this group of fathers comprises of only three men, this typology represent a very significant group of men in Irish society. 'Deadbeat Dads' and 'McDonalds Dads' are the terms used in heated public debates to depict the absent separated father (Gillis, 2000). Several US commentators have depicted the serious social problems which are assumed to arise from the conditions associated with a father's absence (Blackenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996) but there is much disagreement over the meaning and consequences of father absence (Marsiglio et al, 2000; Simpson et al.,2003:215).

The excluded fathers, who had segregated conjugal roles during the marriage and were largely career focused, experienced a fall out of contact with their child upon separation. In these cases there was a strict division of labour among the men and women as men's roles were restricted to the paid labour force, while women's roles were restricted to the domestic sphere. Upon separation, these parents were unable to/or did not seek to re-negotiate their roles away from traditional gender roles. Fathers who had dedicated their lives to their careers had little involvement in their children's lives during the marriage and the children gave little thought to the parent they never knew. At the time of the separation, all contact between the fathers and children ceased. These children who were older and were able to decide for themselves acted as a third force in deciding the fate of the parent-child relationship and largely rejected it. Some of the fathers argued that they had been marginalised by the resident mother's gateclosing behaviour. It appears as if the continuation of the parenting role post separation was involuntary for some of these fathers. The highly gendered division of labour during the marriage continued after the separation.

This chapter investigates the challenges that exist for some fathers in creating a relationship with their children post separation. Lewis and O'Brien (1987) argue that in traditional family settings fathers had a physical closeness to the children but their role was likely to leave them emotionally distant from them. Divorce therefore results in some fathers being physically separated at a time when they are trying to renegotiate formerly emotionally distant relationships with their children. The new role is far less clearcut than 'in house traditional fathering' and these fathers struggle to develop such a relationship. By exploring the role that structural (legal, gender and demographic constraints) factors play on respondents' experiences of changing family practices post separation, this chapter reveals some of the properties that underlie and structure the continuity of over time where there are reverse effects after marriage.

In accordance with the democratisation or individualisation thesis, we might predict that the advances in the area of gender equality and women's increased economic independence has brought with it a standardisation of experiences regarding access to money and parenting in the family post separation. We would expect that despite the division of roles during the intact marriage, fathers, as 'creative biographers', could re-engage with their children and become active fathers. However, as we shall see, the reality is more complex and varies according to a host of factors, including structural barriers, interpersonal conflict and enduring power struggles.

Profile of the Excluded Fathers

As table 10 below indicates the excluded fathers in this study comprise of three fathers who are all in their mid-fifties. All of the fathers have been married for seventeen or more years. They have separated within the last four years and contact has not improved with time. In all cases, the couple was unable to agree a settlement and each respondent had only recently obtained a judicial separation. The children in this group are older and were mainly teenagers at the time of the separation. They were old enough to have direct contact with the father but did not wish to do so. The fathers in this group were part of a single-income household. They were the sole breadwinners during the marriage. In all instances the wives of the excluded fathers gave up their career when they married and became dependent stay-at-home mothers.

Table 10: Profile of Excluded Fathers

Name	Age	Age of Children	Length of Marriage	Times Since	Household Type	Settlement
Cathal	55	20, 18, 17, 14	17	4	Single	Court Based
Joseph	54	18, 16, 14	20	2	Single	Court Based
Richard	55	22, 17	27	3	Single	Court Based

In comparison to the egalitarians and the involved but constrained parents, these parents are older in age (average mid-fifties) and reflect a more 'traditional' generation. They have older children and have been married for longer than either the egalitarians or the involved but constrained parents. The excluded fathers share some of the same features as the aggrieved parents, who are approximately the same age and have been married for a similar length of time. In both cases the majority of the respondents are also part of a single income household. Additionally the excluded fathers, just like the aggrieved parents have been unable to agree a settlement and have been involved in a contested court hearing. However, unlike the aggrieved parents, there is almost no contact taking place between the excluded fathers and the children. Teenage children can agree or not to contact with the father and it is not part of a hearing/agreement/negotiations if the child is over twelve or thirteen years old.⁸⁰

In the following sections we outline the stories of three fathers which illustrate how different combinations of factors play a part in the emergence of the father's exclusion from their children's lives. These accounts highlight different issues which allow the research to draw out several analytical points about the way in which fathers perceive themselves to be marginalised following the breakdown of their marriage.

⁸⁰ As such, these cases or types of fathers and families were not included in the study on parenting and access arrangements conducted by Mahon and Moore (2011). Due to the age of the child, such matters did not come before the courts as the child determined what contact took place by 'voting with his feet.' Therefore this follow-up study, together with the information gleaned from the court study, provides a more inclusive array of post-separated arrangements for families in Ireland.

Cathal's Story*Conflict with In-Laws*

Cathal is a fifty-five year-old man who was married for seventeen years. Cathal separated from Barbara four years ago but only obtained a judicial separation one year ago. Cathal's four children were aged twenty, eighteen, seventeen and fourteen at the time of the interview. Cathal and Barbara had both graduated from university and were from very affluent backgrounds. Cathal and Barbara had been going out with each other for nine years prior to their marriage in 1987. Cathal was working in the family business (high-income generating) and Barbara had just finished her training as a solicitor when they met. He now looks back on the marriage as being somewhat pressured upon him as he commented wryly: *"I was a bit slow to say I would marry her"*. They moved into their marital home which was located on a demesne, in which the family business was run by the paternal grandparents. Cathal's parents also lived on the same estate.

They immediately started a family and Barbara became a stay-at-home mother. Cathal was very busy with the family business while Barbara was looking after the children. All four children were sent to boarding school (approx 300km away) from the age of four. Marital life was far from happy while residing in the family house. Relations between the married couple and the in-laws became fraught six years into the marriage and the couple did not speak to the paternal grandparents for the following nine years: *"The whole thing fell apart in 1993 when we had a meal up in the main house with my parents and sister and my sister said something and my ex-wife walked, stormed out of dinner and never went near the house again."* Cathal highlighted one of the *"undercurrents"* to the break up as Barbara's dislike of his parents: *"She didn't like my parents, I think as people and living in the same place"*. Legal action was taken by Cathal against his father over a business matter and the state of the relationship between the couple and the in laws was further tarnished.

Struggling in the marriage

Cathal described how their relationship had been “*pretty fiery*” for two or three years prior to the separation: “*I mean, there were times when I had to lock myself into the room. There were nights when she used to get so drunk that she would drive up and down the driveway. There was another night were she knifed me and she was removed to the police station.*” He remembered how Barbara was eager to move to the main residence on the manor but he was happy to stay in the smaller farmhouse. He recalled how he tried to hide the fights from the children and he was keen to remain in the marriage until the children were older: “*I suppose my idea was that if I could get them through to the end of their schooling that they would get to university.*” Barbara, however, was drinking heavily at this stage and was also interfering in the running of the business. Cathal recalled how he needed to seek help from the courts to prevent his wife from taking money out of the business.

Shortly afterwards Barbara unilaterally decided to move out of the family home and rent an apartment close to the younger children’s boarding school, which was 300km away from the family home. This arrangement was not agreed upon between the couple but the relief in acrimony was welcomed. Cathal continued to have occasional contact with his children and wife and attended events in the boarding school (once every two months). The children also spent most of their holidays with the mother back on the estate. However, the spousal relationship remained extremely difficult. The level of hostility at this stage did not allow for much family time and Cathal spent very little one-on-one time with the children.

Divided Families

During the last year of the marriage, Cathal’s father died and Cathal’s mother moved abroad. The departure of the in-laws from the estate, far from having the anticipated effect of creating more space for the marital couple and bringing the couple closer together, forced them further apart. Barbara continued to reside 300km away and did not appear to sympathise with the death of the parent. According to Cathal, Barbara became

increasingly impatient to move into the main residence. Cathal felt very isolated and started drinking to cope with the loneliness. Parental tension increased when Barbara returned to the family home with the children during the school holidays and resided in the larger house without Cathal's approval. Barbara prevented Cathal from seeing his children whilst they were there, which added further distance to the already emotionally distant father-child relationship. By the end of the year, Cathal was drinking heavily and felt he could no longer cope on his own. He got in contact with an old friend and later developed a relationship with this lady. Shortly afterwards, she moved in with him into the marital home. The mother and children returned from their Christmas holidays to find Cathal residing with a new woman. From this account, we see how conflict with in laws and increasing level of mistrust contributed to the breakup of the marriage.

Conflict Escalates in 'Big Asset' Case

Following this period, Cathal instituted judicial separation proceedings and the following months were extremely difficult. Both of them wished to obtain custody of the children and neither of them were prepared to relinquish their interest in the matrimonial home. The judge felt that the couple was unable to live on the same manor/land and awarded the family home (and business) to the father. While Barbara was paid a significant lump sum (€1.5 million) and received €10,000 per month in maintenance (inclusive of child and spousal maintenance) there was no agreement reached over the parenting schedule as Cathal was advised by his solicitors not to fight for access as it would be too difficult to obtain: *"I had about a four-page report slating me from top to bottom on drink and really the fundamental problem was drink and my barrister said, there is no point disputing the children in court because you are going to be torn apart."* The relationship between Cathal and his children rapidly deteriorated and Cathal was only permitted to see the children on four occasions in the year following the judicial separation. Cathal felt marginalised and excluded from his children and described how his ex-wife depicted the separation: *"She maintained ever since that I abandoned the children, left them desolate without a house at Christmas, so she made me look as if I was the worst possible villain."* Some of the key issues to arise in this story were the patriarchal nature of the family, the manner in which Cathal was 'constructively deserted', the level of antagonism, conflict

and blame between the parents, Cathal's conduct in the period leading up to the separation and father-child contact as the children were in boarding school. These factors all contributed to the poisoned father-child relationship.

Joseph's Story

Supporting One Career

Joseph and Sinead had been married for twenty years before they separated two years ago. The couple had three children who were eighteen, sixteen and fourteen at the time of the interview. Joseph was a health professional, who worked in excess of sixty hours a week. Both parents had obtained a university degree and came from a middle-class background. As part of his profession, Joseph was required to spend substantial time abroad gaining experience. Sinead gave up her career in the health profession to support Joseph's career and travel with him. While living abroad, the couple had three children within the first seven years of their marriage and lived for a period in the UK and the US. Sinead was the sole carer for the children throughout this time as Joseph was working long hours in the hospital.

The couple returned to Ireland in 2000 and the division of labour continued in the same manner with Joseph working long hours in the hospital and Sinead working long hours in the home. Joseph and Sinead started to talk about the problems in their relationship over the next four or five years after returning to Ireland. At this stage Sinead suggested that they approach Joseph's parents for help: *"When Sinead and I started to have the conversation, if you want to call it that, at an early stage, she felt we needed to talk to someone else and she said, maybe your parents, and I said, yeah, let's go down and talk to them, I said yeah, that is a great idea, they are very fair, they know us through all the years."* But Joseph felt that it was pre-planned and construed as a means of slating him as it became: *"A bit of a hatching session for me, she kind of tried to use it as an assassination for me; of course my father went on the defensive."* The couple continued to discuss their relationship and Joseph described how Sinead wanted to work at the marriage and attend counselling. Joseph, as the initiator of the separation, was at a different stage and was sure that the couple could not rescue their relationship. He refused

to go to counselling as he did not want to stay in the marriage: *"I think we were down past the point of counselling. You could argue about that. I didn't think so, because of the way we had been going down ourselves."* Perhaps mediation or counselling would have helped but Joseph was opposed to the idea.

United Front but Unilateral Decision

Eventually the couple reluctantly agreed that they would separate and sought advice on how best to approach the matter: *"We got advice online from this family mediation service. We tried to get involved with them. We both agreed we would do that but it is a long waiting list and it didn't pan out."* Joseph was keen to present a united front to the children when explaining the separation and not to undermine or lay fault with either parent. However, unexpectedly, Sinead unilaterally decided to tell the children without Joseph: *"My wife told my two boys one evening. I think on very adversarial terms, your dad, has decided he is leaving us. I don't agree with it and he is just going to leave."* Joseph was shocked that his wife had broken their agreement and this became an extremely bitter point and one which Joseph could not forgive. The children were very upset by the news and questioned Joseph as to why he was leaving them. Joseph's experience of the punishing separation began at this point: *"From that day forward to this day, I have never had a meal with my children. Whenever I come into the house she would leave with the kids."*

Joseph experienced a very long and difficult period of co-residence following this incident. He described how Sinead developed an *"enormous level of bitterness"* and all events and interactions became what Joseph described as *"tribal"*. Sinead felt deserted and a highly contested judicial separation ensued. The solicitors advised Joseph to remain in the family home until a settlement was reached. However, he described how upsetting it was to live like that with his children: *"I was living in a jail, or a Russian concentration camp were you come, they go, and there is no interaction at all. I had a very hostile wife."* After a while and several legal letters, Joseph agreed to move out of the family home. The period following his move out of the marital home was particularly difficult. As he saw it, Sinead was intent on punishing him for having left her and the children.

Loss of Control

At this stage, there were no formal or informal arrangements made for Joseph to see the children. The couple did not get a judicial separation hearing until much later. Joseph moved into an apartment about thirty minutes (drive) away from the family home. He recalled how he tried to renew contact with his children by ringing them directly and organising when he could call over to the family home. He explained that his wife refused to cooperate with him and how calling over to the family home was extremely difficult. "*Psychological warfare*" was the term Joseph used to describe how Sinead used the children to get back at him for separating from her. Joseph feared for the survival of his relationship with his children.

Another important factor during this interim period was the financial difficulties that Joseph experienced in trying to meet the costs of two households. He described how he had to take financial control of matters after Sinead spent all the money on his credit card. He withdrew all credit card privileges. Joseph's solicitor wrote to Sinead and informed her that all credit cards would be withdrawn, at which point Sinead immediately contacted Joseph in a rage. At this point, the relationship between the couple was deteriorating even further and these financial matters exacerbated the level of conflict. Here again we see that some fathers need to protect themselves from financial difficulties by controlling the flow of money to their former wives. A father's control over money gave them the upper hand whilst negotiating a settlement and is discussed in more detail the section that follows. The couple were compelled to take their case to a court hearing as the parents were unwilling to agree a settlement. During the hearing Joseph described the gruelling process of being cross-examined. He described how his ex-wife portrayed him as a self-centred husband during the marriage: "*Her barristers tried to portray me as the selfish bastard who had steered my career, dragged her around the world where she didn't need to be, ruined her career and had no interest in his children and was only interested in himself.*" Sinead also made allegations of financial impropriety against Joseph which were denied and unfounded.

Finally, after four days in court, the judge awarded that the house be sold and that the proceeds of the sale divided 70 per cent – 30 percent in favour of Sinead. The judicial separation also ordered Joseph to pay maintenance of €500 per child per month and €500 per month to Sinead as ongoing spousal maintenance. Such a settlement reflected the ongoing dependent nature of the wife and the traditional sexual division of labour in the marriage. The court was unable to make any orders in relation to the children. At his point, the youngest child was fourteen and although the judge commented on the serious problems that Joseph was encountering with contact, he was unwilling to force the child to have contact with the father. Arrangements to see the children continued to be difficult and Joseph felt that the children were given false information about him which led to them rejecting him. At the time of the interview all contact had ceased and Joseph was in a constant state of anxiety about his continued relationship with his children. We again see that blame is a significant factor and contributor for the damaged father-child relationship as excluded fathers feel that the former spouses have deliberately excluded the father from their children's lives.

Richard's Story

Being Cut Off

Richard and Carla had been married for twenty seven years, when they separated three years prior to the interview. The couple had two dependent teenage girls who were aged eighteen and fourteen at the time of the break up. Richard had a demanding career as an engineer and his wife, who had a second level education, stayed at home and cared for the children. For twenty-two years, the couple had been part of a traditional family, with a male breadwinner who worked over fifty hours a week and a dependent spouse who cared for the two children and home. The couple were a middle class couple who lived in a comfortable three bedroom house in Dublin. Richard talked about how the couple had enjoyed twenty-two wonderful years together and that things had only started going wrong in the latter four or five years of the marriage. As the children got older and more independent, Carla decided to go to college. In looking back at the marriage, Richard recalled how it was at this stage that he began to feel “*cut off*” from Carla. He described

how the change occurred gradually and gave examples of how he was excluded from her new life, including the discovery of a brief affair.

Richard however did not confront Carla about the affair and according to Richard, Carla did not realise that he knew about it. At this stage in their marriage, their son was quite ill and Richard decided not to deal with his wife's affair at that particular time: "*There were a lot of things going on in the house.*" He believed that "*if there's an affair in the marriage, it's not necessarily the end of the marriage.*" Eventually when Richard was keen to discuss her affair their son died tragically, so he let it go. However, things got worse following the death of their son. Richard described the son's illness and death as "*the elephant in the room*" and explained how the couple never discussed openly "*this shattering experience*". Two years after the death of their son, Carla left the family home with the two daughters and rented accommodation about thirty minutes away from the family home.

The separation came as a shock to Richard and he struggled to understand what had gone wrong in the relationship. There was very poor communication between the couple and Richard described Carla's explanation for leaving him as follows: "*If I don't do this now I might come to regret it in years to come.*" Carla had started the process of uncoupling long before she physically separated from Richard.

Cutting a Deal

Carla instituted proceedings and was looking for a substantial financial settlement. Carla who had the primary care of a dependent sixteen and nineteen year-old (at the time of the separation) needed enough money to re-house herself and the children. At this stage Carla had returned to part-time, low paid employment. The couple, who were not communicating with each other, were unable to agree a settlement. The couple's case was heard in court and a judgement was made in which the family home was ordered to be sold, with 65 per cent of the proceeds awarded to Carla. Richard was also ordered to pay a lump sum of €40,000 to Carla and ongoing maintenance for the two daughters and Carla of €500 each per month. Given the ages of the daughters and the various

experiences they had incurred over the past three years, Richard did not seek any order in relation to access: "*My poor younger daughter, she was sixteen and having lost her brother a few short years previously it was a tough year for her and there was no sort of sit down and 'I will get my solicitor, I want to see them on Tuesdays.'*" Richard felt that he could contact the children directly due to their age and did not extend their time in the courts to get an access order.

At the time of the interview, Richard had limited contact with his daughters and was unable to play a parental role. He felt that he was drifting away from his daughters since the separation as he was deprived of the opportunity to be a parent. He felt that his ex-wife proactively excluded him from their lives during the latter stages of the marriage and this continued into the earlier months of the separation. Blame emerges as a strong theme throughout Richard's account.

Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

In examining the accounts of separated individuals several factors appeared to contribute to the breakdown of the relationship between the excluded fathers and their ex-wives including: 1) segregated conjugal relationships 2) protection and abuse 3) emotional abandonment and 4) relationship with in-laws.

Segregated Conjugal Roles

The development of separate gender-specific spheres and separate identities within long marriages appears to contribute to the spouses in this group becoming estranged from each other. Similar to findings to studies in the UK, the respondents specialised and identified with 'traditional' sex roles which resulted in their conjugal roles being highly segregated (Edgwell, 1980; Bott, 1971). The data suggests that gender stratification within these households appears relatively untouched by the changes that have taken place in patterns of household formation and dissolution over the last two decades. In all three accounts, mothers were dependent homemakers and fathers were exclusively responsible for breadwinning. Sinead described how Joseph: "*had no interest in his children and was only interested in himself.*" This echoes findings in the literature that

suggest there is no change in the way that fathers are practising their parenting or contribution to household labour (Hobson, 1990; Gillies et al. 2000; Kiely, 1996).

Amato and Previti (2003) suggest that couples in longer marriages face challenges such as boredom with the relationship and gradually diverging interests. In accordance with these findings, respondents in this group described how they and their partner had grown apart, which was clear now that their children were older. Joseph and his ex-wife, who separated after twenty years of marriage, experienced a typical mid-life divorce. Joseph, who had invested all his time and energy into his demanding career, had never invested as much time into his marital or parental relationship. Joseph described how they had “*drifted apart*”. Joseph, who had been leading a separate life through his career, eventually became “*lost*” in the marital relationship. Bott (1971:55) described how ‘by the time the children were adolescent, most husbands and wives do not return to a joint conjugal relationship, even when the necessity for differentiation produced by the presence of young children is no longer so great.’

Protection and Abuse

Research evidence suggests that alcoholism or heavy drinking especially drinking that compromises the safety of children, is a significant source of relationship problems and can result in the ending of a relationship (Walker, et al., 2010). Our data suggests that subjecting a spouse and child to a wide range of violence, including physical and verbal abuse, contributed to the breakdown of the marital relationship. Heavy drinking by both spouses had an effect on the marriage as Cathal’s account illustrated. Research evidence also suggests that women leave marriages in large part, because of conditions and behaviour associated with the conventional male role (Kurz, 1995; Riessman 1990; Walzer and Oles, 2003). Similar to our research findings in this group, the majority of Kurz’s representative sample of divorced women cited husbands’ violence, infidelities, and ‘hard living’ (alcoholism, absenteeism, and other negative behaviours) as reasons for their divorces as opposed to personal dissatisfaction per se. There was no evidence to suggest that the couple supported each other or undertook any form of joint external recreational activities.

Protecting financial interests, particularly in these one-income families, can also be of utmost importance upon separation. Cathal for example, needed to protect the business from unjustifiable interference from his ex-wife. Similarly, Joseph had to protect himself from financial ruin by removing all credit cards and controlling the flow of money. There is considerable research evidence which indicates that money is used to strengthen the gendered nature of the relationship, particularly in one-income households (Nyman and Dema, 2007; Pahl, 1989; Stocks et al., 2007). Priority is given to diffusing the couple's joint pool, while the risks and problems that might arise from having a communal pool are protected. The couple's relationship is terminated by the beginning of separate lives in which having shared money no longer exists. Diaz et al. (2009:140) examination of the role of money in intimate relationships revealed that common money and common family resources during an intact marriage hide gender inequalities that are present⁸¹.

Emotional Abandonment

The lack of emotional spousal support at a time of crises also contributed to the breakdown in the marriage for some of the excluded fathers. The experience of losing a family member was devastating for both Cathal and Richard. The Walker et al. (2010:42) study on understanding the needs of parents regarding relationship support found that the loss of a loved one caused a serious strain on a relationship and was considered as being a difficult time for the couple or for the family. The absence of spousal support at this vulnerable time, in retrospect, created feelings of abandonment and desertion. The relationship was already in decline and Carla had gone back to college, had had an affair and did not behave as if she was in a conjugal relationship.

One can feel equally vulnerable at a time of loss even if a spouse is physically present but emotionally distant or withdrawn. The Walker et al. (2010) study found similar evidence that the loss of a loved one led some people to become withdrawn or to change their behaviour. Richard, who had experienced the death of a son, felt abandoned and isolated

⁸¹ Although this research is based on Spanish couples, the findings would have relevance in Ireland given the similarities between the two countries in terms of the 'familist' welfare state regimes and high 'familisation', in which the principle of subsidiarity is dominant. In Ireland as in Spain, the link between a couple and its money is very strong since the legal marriage agreement by default is a system where marital property is jointly owned.

from his wife. An inability to discuss the “*shattering experience*” was the last straw for the relationship. These findings echo research evidence that negative life events suffered by people in the past have negative effects on their marriages (Broman et al., 1996).

Relationship with In-Laws

Wider family hostility in which a mother perceives her ex-husband’s parents as asserting an excessive and negative influence over her and her children can contribute to the breakdown in the marital relationship. Similar marital complaints have been observed in previous studies of fathers in the US and UK (Kitson, 1992; Simpson, 1995). Bryant et al. (2001) examined the connection between social network influence, particularly the influence of in-laws, and marital success among people involved in long-term marriages. With the exception of husbands’ discord with fathers-in-law predicting husbands’ marital success, they found that the quality of the in-law relationship did predict the stability, satisfaction, and commitment expressed by the spouses in the study (Bryant, 2001:624).

Equally Bott (1971:60) argued that the degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family’s social network. Cathal’s life had always been enmeshed with his parents’ work and life. According to Bott (1971) the more connected the network, i.e. Cathal’s family of origin, the greater degree of segregation between the roles of husband and wife. Living and working so closely beside her in-laws created difficulties for Barbara. The couple were unable to create their own separate life as they incurred difficulties in reconciling their family life and business interests with their extended family. Barbara grew increasingly impatient with his attachment to his parents. She wanted to create their own family, separate from his family of origin but found it difficult to do in such a confined environment. Bryant et al. (2001:615) discussed how the new family has the task of forming a stronger, autonomous bond than the two from which the partners originated. If partners are unable to accomplish this task, like Cathal and Barbara, their union may be threatened.

Bott (1971) described this as the marriage being ‘superimposed’ on these pre-existing relationships. Cathal, as we saw in his account, was constantly drawn into activities with people outside his own elementary family. By applying Bott’s argument to the given

case, Cathal appeared to have got emotional satisfaction from external relationships and was less likely to draw on support from his wife. The severance of the extended family relationship was seen as an unforgivable act by Cathal, who regretfully highlighted: "*I was not allowed to let my children see my parents and she (ex-wife) cut off all links between me and my own family (siblings) which I think is slightly unforgivable.*" The insensitivity towards his relationship with his parents and family contributed to the breakdown of the relationship. O'Connor's (2001) qualitative analysis of distressed marriages in Ireland outlined how 'in law wars' was a common source of distress for couples (2001:56).

Discussion: Breakdown of the Marital Relationship

The accounts presented by the excluded fathers seem to support and challenge the democratisation and individualisation theses. Firstly supporting Giddens's understanding of the 'pure relationship', the findings suggest that the respondents were in pursuit for the 'pure relationship'. The descriptions of the perceived causes (or as Hopper (1993) described 'post hoc reconstructions of events') of separation highlighted how the men attributed the cause of the breakdown of the marriage to relationship-centred factors such as emotional abandonment, lack of communication and a change in interests. The complaints suggest that the respondents were seeking relationship in which there was an emotional egalitarianism, mutual disclosure and shared understanding. These findings confirm Giddens's thesis that there is a core shift in our understanding of intimacy, which causes more individuals to exit relationships that are no longer fulfilling.

On the other hand there was substantial evidence which challenged the democratisation thesis. There was strong evidence to suggest that gender was the basis for organising pre and post marital roles and responsibilities. The gender contract that existed during the marriage created different spheres for the husband (public sphere) and the wife (private sphere). The revolution of women entering the paid workforce in the last two decades did not result in a shift in the division of work in these couples. There is strong evidence of continuing gender relations in the division of labour post separation. The data challenges Giddens's thesis which claims there is a democratisation of intimate relationships. The

traditional marriages do not lend themselves to equality in intimate relationships in terms of joint division in paid and unpaid work.

One factor influencing the power and task allocation within the household continued to be the differential earning power of men and women. In our research the sharing of money during the marriage acted as a hindrance to women being able to achieve independence and individuality post separation. Common money and common family resources with joint management during the intact marriage hid further gender inequalities that exist at the point of separation. When issues became difficult in the marriage, and there was mistrust of each other's spending, it became quite clear where the money came from and whose income it was. In these one income households, husbands had ultimately retained control over the money, despite pooling it during the marriage. The women in these couples did not earn in over fifteen years and remained comprised due to ongoing dependency on their former husbands. Whereas Beck and Beck Gernsheim argue that personal choice and individualisation have overtaken the old certainties rooted in traditional gender contracts, the data here suggests that women are constrained in their agency due to lack of financial resources because of the long absence from the workplace.

Moving Out of the Marital Home

Moving home is frequently identified as one of the major sources of stress in modern society, not least when the move is due to the end of the marital relationship. Morgan (1996:176) described how a move provides an occasion when a whole host of assumptions about property, family and domestic relationships are reassessed. The move out of the marital home differed quite extensively across the three respondents' stories and was a sign that the marriage had ended. While some fathers experienced a long period of co-residence during which time the marriage was coming to an end, others incurred a more sudden form of physical abandonment. The following themes describe the move out of the marital home: 1) need for some space 2) escaping from jail and 3) sudden abandonment.

Need Some Space

The process of 'uncoupling' i.e. how people make transitions out of intimate relationships has been explored by Vaughan (1986:4). Vaughan (1986:120) described how in the process of uncoupling, a temporary separation can be seen as a means of drawing attention to the state of the marital relationship. In Cathal's story for example, the initial move out of the marital home took place in order to create "*some space*" between all parties who were residing on a large estate. The return of the wife to the marital home only took place when the in laws no longer resided there. Instead of returning to the family home and attempting to reconcile the marriage or attend counselling, the mother moved away again shortly afterwards when the children returned to school. This move, the second phase of leaving the family home, was an act which displayed the mother's unrelenting discontent with the relationship and signalled the end of the marriage for Cathal. She no longer needed "*space*" as the in-laws had moved away but she sought to move away from the marital relationship rather than working on it.

While the children were away in boarding school they knew that their mother and father resided apart. The separate residences at this stage were perceived as a non-permanent form of separation. However, Cathal's re-engagement with an old friend and subsequent co-residence with this woman, made the separation more permanent in the eyes of the mother and children. The children took a different angle, as research evidence indicates children may only become aware of the finality of the marriage when the father has formed a new relationship with another woman (Hogan et al., 2002:48).

Escaping from Jail

It appears that living in the same house as the ex-wives, albeit separately and apart, was even more agonising for fathers in this group compared to the fathers in the involved but constrained group. Fathers in this group were subjected however, to a more extreme "*deliberate exclusion campaign*" by the resident mother. Deliberate marginalisation from the children, while still co-residing, was perceived "*as a stick to beat me (the father) up.*" The level of conflict between the parents increased during this period of co-residence and interactions became what Joseph for example, described as "*tribal*". The atmosphere in

the family home was hostile and was compared to “*living in a jail, or a Russian concentration camp, were you come, they go, and there is no interaction at all.*” Within this environment, the relationship between the spouses deteriorated and the father’s presence in the household was emotionally agonising. This echoes similar findings in the UK which describe the mother’s gateclosing in high conflict cases, as being overt, deliberate and unjustified (Trinder; 2008:1313).

Sudden Abandonment

A sudden and unannounced physical move out of the marital home before the finalisation of a separation was a clear signal that the marriage was over for Richard. Unable by other methods to bring the partner to agreement that the marriage was over, Richard’s wife abandoned the idea of trying: “*there was no let’s sit down what’s going to happen here, she just left*”. Carla did not directly confront Richard about the separation but simply announced that she was leaving him one afternoon. This lack of mutual disclosure, the fact that the couple did not “*open up*” to each other suggests a strong deviation away from the purported ‘pure relationship’. The nature of the departure therefore reflects the level of communication between the couple and the disintegration of their relationship.

Discussion: Moving out of the Marital Home

The move out of the marital home appeared to exacerbate the level of hostility between the couple. In all cases, the children moved with the parent whom they had had most contact during the marriage, i.e. the nurturing parent. The respondents in this group did not plan or discuss how the couple would physically separate and how it would impact the children. Mothers appeared to punish fathers by removing the children from not only the family home but more importantly from the father’s life. It became very difficult to disentangle family and domestic relations from the property relationship. Children were used as pawns by the mother and were used as a means of exerting control over the father. For the fathers in this group, ‘home’ was perceived as part of the trilogy consisting of ‘family’, ‘household’ and ‘home’ (Morgan, 1996:172). The mother’s punitive reaction of excluding the father physically from the children had wider implications on the father’s exclusion from his children’s lives. Research in the UK has found that the critical

relationship for setting the framework for contact is that between resident and non-resident parent (Dunn and Deater Deckard, 2001; Trinder, 2003:396). The move out of the family home was therefore another way in which the child-non-resident parent relationship was affected by the quality of the parent-parent relationship.

Marginalisation was a means of retaliation and revenge and fathers resented their wives for it. Issues surrounding the physical separation of the spouses was closely connected to fault and served as a means for correcting who wronged whom and who owed whom. Legal advice which placed fathers in this environment further exacerbated the fathers' sense of exclusion and powerlessness. These findings challenge Beck's notion of individualisation as it neglects these key social aspects of men's experience of the ceasing to be an 'in house' father.⁸² Moving out of the family home for the excluded fathers involved certain conditions (obdurate mothers and legal constraints) where their ability to move/choose freely was limited and largely outside of their control.

Negotiating a Settlement

In this section the study takes a closer look at how a settlement was negotiated. Following on from the announcement of the separation and the physical departure of a spouse, the parents set about dividing up three major aspects of their married lives, i.e. joint property, assets and access to the children. The four themes to emerge from the interviews that impacted on the negotiations of a settlement were 1) 'bargaining chip' 2) marital fault 3) financial dependency and 4) conflict.

Bargaining Chip

A strong theme that emerged from the interviews with the excluded fathers, similar to the parents in the involved but constrained group, reflected the unequal balance of power within the relationship. Women controlled access to the children and men had financial control over the household's resources. As a result, women used the children as a bargaining chip to get what they wanted from their husbands and men used money as a

⁸² This term was used by Simpson et al. (2002:210) in their research on fathers after divorce.

means of restricting what the women wanted. On the other hand, fathers were able to use their control over the household finances as their “*bargaining chip*”. By restricting maintenance or refusing to pay bills the fathers made their wives feel more economically vulnerable and attempted to shift the “*balance of power*”. One factor influencing the power and task allocation within the household continued to be the division of labour both before and after separation.

The fathers were unable to apply for access orders, despite their expressed preference for such, due to either the age of the child or their own poor behaviour. The presence of older children created a difficulty of imposing an order on them as older children were given the freedom to “*decide with their feet*.” Some fathers, like Richard and Joseph, appeared to have “given up the fight” relatively early as they assumed that access would take place without great difficulty. They did not imagine that their ex-wives would use the children against them. However, this assumption may well have reflected a poor decision and understanding of the level of resolve and effort necessary to sustain a significant role in their children’s lives.

Marital Fault

It appeared that marital fault was used by the mothers when applying for a judicial separation.⁸³ It emerged from the interviews that the spouse, who was to blame for the separation, held a weaker position in the negotiations. Desertion, infidelity and alcoholism were used by mothers to show that they had been abandoned and mistreated by their husbands, as Cathal demonstrated: “*she maintained ever since that I abandoned the children, left them desolate without a house at Christmas, so she made me look as if I was the worst possible villain.*” In all cases, ‘fault’ was a strong negotiating tool that the mothers used in swaying the balance in their favour. As revealed in other studies, preoccupation with blame and recrimination steered the parents’ focus away from children (Smart, 2005:21).

⁸³ In s. 16(3)(a) of the 1995 Act. Under s. 16(2) (i) other conduct of the spouses can be regarded by the court where it is unjust to disregard it. Equally, the 1989 Judicial Separation Act (hereafter referred to as the 1989 Act) specifies six grounds upon which the court may grant a decree of judicial separation. Section 2 (1) (a) refers to applications based on the grounds that the respondent has committed adultery while Section 2 (1) (b) refers to applications based on the grounds of behaviour.

Financial Dependency

The future earning power of each spouse was an important factor that contributed to the type of financial ancillary relief orders that were made at the time of the separation. The excluded fathers were part of long marriages in which they were the sole breadwinners. Despite the wives in these cases being qualified to work in various professions, they had been out of employment for close to twenty years and their ability to re-enter the workforce had been compromised due to this long absence. Ongoing spousal maintenance was awarded in all three cases as the wife remained dependent on the husband after the separation.

Despite the wives' wishes to retain the family home, none of them were able to do so. In two cases, the family home was the sole asset and the court ordered the house to be sold. The dependent mother received the bulk of the proceeds of the sale (approximately 70 per cent) while the father was left with enough capital to re-house himself in adequate accommodation. Although there were not enough assets to buy out the other party, the father's high earning power was a decisive factor in each case as he had the ability to maintain the wife and children into the future. It becomes clear that employment has a strong effect on the redistribution of assets and power within the household at a time of separation.

Conflict

The existence of extreme hostility between the two parents prevented the parents from negotiating a settlement. Both parents were unwilling to compromise and all respondents went to a full court hearing. It appears that the longer and more difficult the legal proceedings, the more suffering they were likely to cause and the more negative emotions were evoked. Baum (2003) argued that the level of conflict that is increased during this period is likely to spill over into the co-parental relationship and cause further conflict. Bay and Braver (1990) reported that parents' distress about perceived lack of control over certain aspects of the divorce settlement is predictive of more conflict. Difficult and lengthy legal proceedings undermine parents' ability to cooperate and collaborate over parenting functions in the future.

Discussion: Negotiating a Settlement

The accounts presented by the excluded fathers seem to support and challenge the democratisation and individualisation theses. Firstly supporting Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualisation thesis, the respondents in this group attempted to maximise their advantage in the negotiations. Each parent therefore prioritised individual choices and preferences rather than the traditional way of putting the collective project of the family first. Thylefors (1996 as cited in Björnberg and Kollind, 2005:34) refers to such a negotiation style as competitive as there is great consideration for one's own interest and little consideration for the others' interest. Similar practices were observed in Maccoby and Mnookin's (1992) study of 1,100 divorcing families in California. In these situations, divorce cases were seen in purely competitive adversarial terms, i.e. with a winner and a loser.

However, the overall majority of the research evidence challenges Giddens's democratisation thesis. The disagreements that arose during negotiations between the parents in this group reflected traditional gender conflicts. Discontent with the division of assets post separation in this group, can be seen as an expression of women's subordination to a male power while the division of childcare post separation can be seen as women's situational (due to her primary status position both before and after separation) power (Smart, 1999:146). Björnberg and Kollind (2005) argue that such power, whether from the man's or woman's perspective can be understood as control over their former spouse and a capacity to govern their behaviour. Ongoing gendered complaints highlight the non-democratic nature of these intimate relationships which provides evidence to challenge Giddens's democratisation theory. The research evidence indicates that these individuals are not, as Beck (1995) argued, free to produce their own biographies, but are severely constrained by their former spouses' demands.

Secondly legal conditions are key structural features of understanding respondents' experiences and are relevant to how parents moved from parenting in one household to parenting across two households. Although fault has been removed from divorce legislation, the application of a judicial separation can still be sought on the grounds of

fault.⁸⁴ Fault-based reasons (spousal behaviour) and matrimonial guilt featured prominently in the parents' accounts. Cathal's account of Barbara's evidence during the divorce hearing indicated how his character had been discredited. Cathal was advised not to fight access arrangements due to such poor behaviour which seems to contradict issues of child welfare being separated from issues of the moral rights and wrongs of marriage in the no-fault approach adopted under the Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996. Individualisation as an ideology can thus disempower those whose lives are more at the mercy of such structural constraints (such as fathers acting in the Irish legal arena).

Fathers' ongoing attachment to their ex-wives is another example that challenges the underlying structures of the 'pure relationship' model and the ability to leave unsatisfactory relationships. The accounts of the fathers depict a scenario whereby both spouses felt they were 'wronged' by the other parent. Laying blame with the other spouse and avoiding responsibility has resulted in a higher level of conflict as demonstrated by other research findings (Stewart et al., 1997). The attribution of blame to the former spouse or external events created a relatively high level of anger and resentment, making it more difficult for the respondents to let go of the former spouse. Masheter (1997) argued that being angry with an ex-spouse is a way to remain involved with him or her.

The same argument could be made for mothers who also demonstrated an inability to move on from the marital relationship. Resident mothers were unable to create a separate identity post separation. The dependent wives' lives and identities were strongly attached to the role of spouse and mother for close to twenty years. Many felt that they had been "*abandoned*" and that their efforts in building up a family and home had been destroyed. The use of phrases such as "*he left us*" highlights how Sinead had not separated her anger as a wife from her identity as a mother. The failure to establish relationship boundaries that clearly define the former partner as a co-parent but not as a spouse is a major source of post-divorce conflict (Madden Derdich and Arditti., 1999).

⁸⁴ Interestingly the application of a judicial separation can still be sought on the grounds of fault. The Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act, 1989, section 2 (1) a and section 2 (1) b grant orders to be made on the basis of the respondent committing adultery or if the respondent has behaved in such a way that the applicant cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent.

Contact Sliding into Absence

Contact between the excluded fathers and their children was infrequent and at the time of the interview contact had almost ceased. The excluded fathers had failed in their attempt to establish a more regular pattern of contact. According to the excluded fathers the resident mothers were opposed to contact and had encouraged the children to reject the father.

Decreasing Contact

The frequency of contact between the excluded fathers and their children was very rare. In common with other research findings, fathers reported that the frequency of contact had decreased over the three years since the separation, as Joseph painfully described: "*it is very limited, can you believe it. A whole year went by were I didn't even see them*" (Seltzer, 1991; Simpson et. al., 1995). Simpson (1995:91) referred to it as "the seemingly inexorable tendency to slide into absence. Trinder (2002) identified as one of the most striking aspects of the data the presence of a vicious cycle over time which suggested that once contact had become problematic it was extremely difficult to get it back on track. This was a common experience for these fathers.

The disruptive effect of having accommodation which is unsuitable for contact to take place has been outlined in studies of fathers after divorce (McCarthy, 1996; Mc Carthy and Simpson, 1991; Simpson et al, 2002). Dissatisfaction with the logistics of contact, such as the venue and duration, did not lend itself to a positive contact experience. Contact took place either in a neutral venue, such as a restaurant or cinema or in the resident mother's home. There is extensive research on the difficulties faced by non-resident parents in finding suitable accommodation (Lund, 1987; Mc Carthy, 1996; McCarthy and Simpson, 1991; Simpson and Jessop, 2003).

The duration and pattern of contact dictated the level of paternal involvement as Gibson (1992) outlined how contact was more likely to continue if it involved overnight stays. When contact did take place for the excluded fathers, it was for a very short duration, usually no longer than an hour, as Richard recalled: "*It was like a stage. This was not*

real. This was not real life. This was much, how should I put it, being with them for forty minutes." These formal negotiated 'meetings' created an 'artificial' environment in which neither the parent nor child could relax and settle back into the relationship (Lamb, 1999). Bradshaw et al (1999) outlined how seven per cent of his sample of fathers had visits which lasted less than two hours.

Despite difficulties in gaining access to the children (either through the children's refusal or obstruction from the mothers), the excluded fathers still persisted to remain in contact with their children by other indirect means such as sending messages via texts, letters, birthday and Christmas cards. Their efforts in maintaining contact with their children was not acknowledged and the fathers believed they were made to feel invisible, as Cathal stated: "*I don't think they are going to realise that I am there, I mean I have sent birthday presents, cards, Christmas cards. I never got a word of thanks for any of them because I have been portrayed as the monster.*" Data from the UK also found that there was a high level of indirect contact taking place even if direct contact was irregular. In their sample, 45 per cent of fathers who had contact only once every six months used indirect means to keep in touch at least once a fortnight (Bradshaw et al., 1999).

From Careerist to Excluded

Upon separation, these parents were unable to/or did not seek to re-negotiate their roles away from traditional gender roles. Fathers who had dedicated their lives to their careers had had little involvement in their children's lives during the marriage and the children gave little thought to the parent they never knew. At the time of the separation, all contact between the fathers and children ceased. These children who were older and were able to decide for themselves acted as a third force in deciding the fate of the parent-child relationship and largely rejected it.

Children's Wishes

The children in these families were older and were able to decide for themselves whether they pursued contact with the non-resident father. As such, they became a separate force as autonomous agents. Research evidence on the age of the child and its effect on contact

is inconsistent. While Maclean and Eekelaar (1997) found that children who were older when their parents separated were more likely to remain in contact, research evidence in the US found no relationship (Cooksey and Craig; 1998; Furstenberg et al., 1993; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992).

Wade and Smart (2002) outlined how parental commitment was key to understanding children's willingness to engage in contact. Considerable research evidence links father's pre-separation involvement with post-separation contact (Whiteside and Becker, 2002; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001). Wade and Smart (2002:11) outlined how some children, who were unsure if they had ever mattered to the absent parents, expressed little interest in engaging in contact with a parent whom they had had no real involvement. Hetherington and Kelly, (2002) referred to such fathers as 'divorce deactivated fathers.' Similarly, the possibility of maintaining a good relationship post separation depends on the previous emotional investment of the non-resident father towards their children during the marriage. In the stories of our respondents, in which fathers had been highly involved in the labour force for over twenty years and spent little time at home, it is feasible to expect that they had little time to develop a good parent-child relationship.

Father-child contact was also influenced by the children's wishes. Children wished for the non-resident father to change his ways, improve his behaviour and stop seeing his new partner, before they would renew contact. Disagreements about new partners took place in one case. The new partner was identified as the source of conflict and the separation. New relationships and new partners have been found to be important factors in influencing contact post separation, particularly when the father had not worked through the consequences of the demise of the previous relationship (Bradshaw et al 1999; Trinder, 2002; Simpson et al., 2002). Cathal in this case did not identify the new partner as the source of difficulty, despite his son telling him so: "*My son says that I will only go back and talk to you Dad if you give up the drink and you give up the woman, and I said I would give up the drink John but I am not giving up the woman.*"

Interfering Mothers

All the research demonstrates that the reasons for no contact are complex and not simply due to the lack of paternal commitment. Kruk (1993) argued that the reasons given by no contact fathers in his sample included: 'Discouragement or denial by the mother; their own decision; practical difficulties such as distance, finance, or work schedules; children's refusal; legal injunction; or an early pattern of no contact'. The fathers in this group also identified their former spouses as their obstacle to contact. Our findings are consistent with those of researchers such as Madden-Derdich and Leonard (2000) and Braver and O'Connell (1998) who have found that mothers have a good deal of influence over divorced fathers' family contact. The presence of the resident mother during access visits affected the quality of father-child contact. Excluded fathers felt unable to speak freely and engage with the child with the resident mother waiting in the background, as Cathal explained: "*My wife turned up, so she was ten yards away, so a very unsatisfactory meeting.*" These findings echo research evidence in the UK which suggests that these fathers identified their ex-wives as the main impediment to contact (Bradshaw, 1999; Simpson et al., 1995).

In our data, the presence of the resident mother during father-child contact made the children feel uncomfortable as arguments would often result from the high level of parental tension. As noted earlier, a conflict-filled relationship is most associated with poorer child outcomes following divorce (Johnston, 1994; Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992). Excluded fathers encountered hostile contact visits in which they often felt they caused more harm to the child than good, as Joseph described: "*She followed me into the bedroom, all the time criticising me. My son was tense, quiet and withdrawn, and I also felt no good.*" Obdurate resident mothers who constantly criticised the father, with the children present made fathers feel very uncomfortable pursuing further access. At this point, excluded fathers weighed up whether the pursuit of access was worth the distress which the children experienced as a result. This research has been found in UK studies in which there is a concern about the impact of contact on the child (Simpson et al, 1995).

The excluded fathers felt that the child's wishes were heavily influenced by the resident mother's conduct and open opposition to contact. The mother's influence on the children's wishes was described by Richard as living under a cloud: "*they live under a cloud and that cloud is my wife.*" It was believed that children were subject to deliberate and sustained rejection of the father by the resident mother, which was aimed at permanently turning the children against their father. Words such as "*de-fathering and alienating*" used by the excluded fathers bring to mind the mothers' deliberate rejection of their fathering role. These findings would support the extensive research evidence which suggests that children's contact with their non-resident father is related to their mothers' contact with her ex-spouse and the support over parenting issues (Dunn, 2002:22). In other words, supportive co-parenting is a key factor influencing father-child contact (Whiteside and Becker, 2000). The clear lack of it was evident in this group.

Discussion: Parent-Child Contact

Fathers who had dedicated their lives to their careers had had little involvement in their children's lives during the marriage and the children gave little thought to the parent they never knew. At the time of the separation, all contact between the fathers and children ceased. These children who were older and were able to decide for themselves acted as a third force in deciding the fate of the parent-child relationship and largely rejected it. However, some of the fathers argued that they had been marginalised by an obdurate parent. It appears as if the continuation of the parenting role post separation was involuntary for some of these fathers. They were facing levels of intense conflict with their former spouses which obstructed their relationship with the child.

The findings in this section both support and challenge Giddens democratisation thesis. Firstly, supporting Giddens's treatment of children as the 'putative equal of the adult' (1992:191). The children in this group demonstrated that they are autonomous individuals and have decided for themselves how they should approach contact with their fathers. However, Jamieson (1999:488) argues that there is a danger in disassociating parent-adult relationships from wider generational structures wherein parents (both mothers and fathers) as adults exert significant power over their children. Jamieson (1999) notes that

the ethos of mutuality among parents and families has been observed to be a smokescreen that masks the traditional imposition of parental control through socially sanctioned authority. Given the level of evidence in our data of mothers' interfering in contact, I wonder if the assumption that a child is the "putative equal of the adult" is misleading. There is strong research evidence that mothers are an important link to fathering post separation (Arendall, 1997) and there is extensive research evidence outlining the gate-keeping role mothers play at a time of divorce (Fagan and Barnett, 2003; Mc Bride et al., 2005; Sobolewski and King, 2005; Trinder, 2008).

Johnston (1993) in her research on understanding children who refuse contact, identified six major themes, including three reasons for resistance to contact, which were explained as being related to 'pathological parenting and family relationships', including the child's inability to extricate his/her feelings and ideas from those of an emotionally distressed residential parent. Our data indicated that the age of the child meant that children had a more adult-to-adult like relationship with the resident mothers. It appeared that many of the older children took on responsibility for the mothers' welfare. Many of the mothers appeared to have opened up emotionally with their children, so that they now felt emotionally responsible for their mothers. This research, however, did not obtain the accounts from the children or former wives of the excluded fathers and therefore cannot elaborate on this point. Further research would be necessary to explore this issue in more detail.

Parental Exclusion

Excluded fathers, who as we described had very little contact with their children, also talked about problems they encountered in engaging in decisions relating to health care, religious upbringing and education. Simpson et al (1995) have discussed how the exclusion of involvement in such matters ultimately affects their ability to influence the growth and development of their children and distances the father further from the child. This study similarly has identified four closely-related ways through which the fathers felt marginalised including: 1) deliberate alienation 2) de-fathering 3) loss of interaction and 4) loss of parental relationship with their child.

Deliberate Alienation

Speaking poorly of the father as a way of alienating the children from the father and was a common theme which emerged from the interviews with the fathers. The fathers experienced the complete dishonouring of their name, role, relationship and character through the resident mother's constant rejection of the father in front of the children, as Cathal explained: "*they get it rammed down their throats, morning, noon and night, that they are to never see their father again and that he is a complete villain.*" Joseph also upsettingly described: "*My wife has resolutely and vehemently taken every possible effort to alienate those children from me and I think it is dreadful, but she has done it.*" These fathers do not appear to be able to break through such 'alienation' and struggle to overcome it. There has been an extensive debate in the literature about such behaviour. While some academics refer to such behaviour as 'parental alienation syndrome'⁸⁵ (Johnston, 1993), others prefer to refer to such behaviour as 'implacable hostility' (Sturge and Glaser, 2000; Dunn 2002).

The lack of positive encouragement for contact by the resident mother was also seen as contributing to the loss of contact. As Trinder (2008:1311) noted, many fathers who were seeking contact, expected mothers to actively facilitate contact rather than simply stand back. It appears as if these fathers demanded a maternal obligation to encourage and facilitate contact. Changing access times at the last minute or telling the father that the children did not want to see him were deliberate ways of discouraging contact as Cathal pointed out: "*I am afraid that she has not behaved herself and she has not encouraged any liaison or communication between me and the children, I feel absolutely stranded.*" Fathers regularly complained that the resident mother deliberately interfered with contact and the resident mother was invariably in a very strong position to control contact. These findings echo findings in the UK and US literature which show that the most common reason fathers gave for losing contact was that the mother of the child had 'obstructed access' (Arditti, 1991; Arendell, 1995; Bradshaw et al. 1999; Kruk, 1993; Simpson, et al. 1995). There are rather fewer studies viewing this from the resident parents' perspective.

⁸⁵ Gardener (1987) first coined the term 'parental alienation syndrome' and it is said to describe a phenomenon by which children are turned against one parent by the behaviour and attitude of the other parent.

Braver et al (1991) found that 25 per cent of resident parents admitted to undermining or denying contact. In the UK, Smart (Smart et al, 1997) also noted the instances of obstruction.

De-Fathering

In accordance with other research evidence, our data found that fathers regularly complained about not being informed about important events concerning the children (Simpson et al., 1995). The lack of information fathers received from the resident mother about their children was a major source of distress, as Joseph described: *"I would have been in fact very hurt when the children were involved like the school plays that I wouldn't be told about and didn't know or like the school reports that I didn't get and I felt sorry for myself because I didn't know what was going on."*

Feelings of exclusion from the children's lives were closely bound up with their displacement of their parental control, power and authority. Fathers experienced a lack of control over everyday matters and on goings as Cathal highlighted: *"I didn't even know where they were living, when they left the house, I wasn't even told by her or by her lawyers where they were living"*. More importantly fathers experienced a lack of control over decisions relating to education as Cathal described: *"In terms of where my youngest child went to school my wife would have made that decision. I had no choice on that. I just shut up and agreed."* Whether this account indicates a lack of will or strength on the father's behalf, it demonstrates a lack of awareness of the lengths one must go to gain respect and be allowed to be involved.

The exclusion from decision-making or general discussions about the children was distressing for the fathers. Joseph described the process as *"de-fathering"* while Richard compared his role to that of a father who is in prison: *"I might as well have been in jail."* The father's forced absence denied him the power to control many aspects of the children's lives. The sense of marginalisation with regard to decision making highlighted his vulnerability and powerlessness.

Loss of Interaction

In accordance with the research evidence, full realisation of what it is to lose their home and family occurred most strongly when outside the family home (Kruk, 1993, Simpson et al., 2003). During the interviews the fathers measured their current involvement in their children's lives against memories and recollections of their fathering during the marriage. With the move out of the home or with the children's removal from the home, fathers experienced a greater sense of separation from their children. This loss was in fact a loss of just being around the children as Cathal highlighted: *"I used to drive up every weekend and bring them down. It was a four-hour drive, and I was quite happy to do it. I used to go up on a Friday evening and take them back up on a Sunday evening and so that was quite a long trip and I never complained about it because I always enjoyed having the children in the car with me. We had a great time going up and down."* Cathal, who was a careerist father, describes the extent of his fathering as the *"driver"*. It appears as if this is what Cathal understands as *"involvement."*

Loss of Parental Relationship

The fathers described how their children had become strangers to them. Similar to studies on absent fathers in the UK, fathers felt emotionally distant from their children when they did see them (Simpson et al. 2003:213). In one instance, Joseph explained: *"For the first time in his life he called me Joseph. I couldn't believe it. He never called me Joseph before. He said Joseph I am not comfortable with this situation. You make me feel uncomfortable and I want mom to be here. He never spoke to me in that kind of language before. He didn't have that language before. All the time he wouldn't sit at the table, he was sitting opposite me, out of my line and no eye contact"*. The new relationship which had developed since the separation was challenging and difficult to understand.

Fathers were angry that the resident mother had removed not only contact but the regular intimacy that the father once had with the children. The sense of exclusion from the children and the deterioration of their relationship with the children was, in the fathers' eyes, caused by the mother. Joseph described how there was no room for any emotional relationship as the mother controlled it: *"I think the mother has drawn them in, instead of*

being in between us as our children collectively, she has drawn them very much close to herself in this kind of tribal thing and I don't think there is much room for them to move back and forth".

Discussion: Parental Exclusion

The excluded fathers believed that their father-child relationship had suffered as a result of becoming a non-residential father. Fathers who no longer lived with their children experienced a profound sense of loss: loss of intimacy and a day-to-day relationship (Simpson *et al*, 1995: 55-61; Lewis *et al*, 2002: 33). This research supports findings in the US that found that a father's lack of contact simply reinforces the ambiguity about his role as a parent after separation (Arendell, 1997, Sobolewski and King, 2005). Father-child contact appears to be the key mediator in non-resident father's involvement. Not sharing a house with the children and limited contact made it difficult for fathers to have a day-to-day parental role. Paternal involvement during the marriage may have been defined as co-residence and common meal times, as fathers sense of engagement and responsibility for the children is lacking in their accounts.

Women and men do not appear to be free to make or break intimate connections as they desire. Many aspects of gendered power relations impact on fathers having democratic relationships with their children post separation. An individualisation model (according to Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) would assert that in effect, men decide for themselves in relation to parenting issues and aren't tied into having pre-determined gender roles, which suggest that men have a greater degree of freedom to develop their own biography. However, our data suggests that the gendered division of labour during the marriage (father's inability to develop an emotional relationship with the children during the marriage due to long hours of work) appears to hinder fathers' ability to create intimate relationships with their children post separation.

Conclusion

The accounts of the excluded fathers indicated that poor contact after the separation, whether voluntary or involuntary, reflected the father's absence from the child's life

during the marriage. Furthermore it appears that the highly gendered division of labour during the marriage continued after the separation. The excluded parents demonstrated traditional notions of gender and family practices but the power of gender in shaping the experience of post-separation contact was striking. Entry into post-divorce family life, particularly fathering, concerned the creation of a direct relationship with the children. The fathers who didn't develop a one-on-one relationship with their children during the marriage now sought to do and met several barriers along the way. Contact was accessed through the mother. Her identity was largely wrapped up with the children as she gave up her career to devote herself to mothering and family life. The children, who were older, acted as a third force in deciding the fate of the parent-child relationship and gave little thought to the parent they never knew.

The accounts given by these fathers appear to largely challenge the democratisation and individualisation thesis and its arguments that democratisation of (macro) society has led to egalitarianism among men and women, which has thus led to gender equality within intimate relationships. There is some evidence supporting the democratisation and individualisation theses but the evidence strongly underlines the structural barriers that constrain fathers from re-negotiating more intimate relationships with their children post separation.

Supporting firstly the democratisation thesis, our research found that the fathers in this group demonstrated a desire for a 'pure relationship'. The nature of their marital complaints suggests that there is a core shift in their understanding of intimacy which is causing more individuals to exit relationships that are no longer fulfilling. Further support to the democratisation thesis relates to how Giddens's treats children as the 'putative equal of the adult'. The children in this group demonstrated that they are autonomous individuals and have decided for themselves how they should approach contact with their fathers. Although there is strong evidence in our data that this decision cannot be accepted without including wider structural forces e.g. adults significant power over their children. Given the level of evidence in our data that mothers' interfere in contact (albeit from fathers' accounts only), an understanding that children can make decisions

independently may disregard the level of parental control mothers may have over their children.

On the other hand there was substantial evidence that challenges both the democratisation and individualisation thesis. Firstly there was strong evidence to suggest that gender was the basis for organising pre and post-marital roles and responsibilities. The gender contract that existed during the marriage created different worlds/spheres for the husband (public sphere) and the wife (private sphere). The women in these families were also not active in the labour market and the revolution of women entering the paid work force in the last two decades did not result in a shift in the division of work in these couples. The findings challenges Giddens' democratisation thesis which claims that the democratisation has led to egalitarianism within intimate relationships.

Secondly an individualisation model (according to Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) would assert that in effect, men decide for themselves in relationship to parenting issues and aren't tied into having pre-determined gender roles, which suggest that men have a greater degree of freedom to develop their own biography. However, our data suggests that the gendered division of labour during the marriage (father's inability to develop an emotional relationship with the children during the marriage due to long hours of work) appears to hinder fathers' ability to create intimate relationships with their children post separation. So the weakness of the individualisation theory is that it neglects key social and gendered aspects of fathering.

Thirdly our data suggests that legal structures and constraints shape perceptions and outcomes in separation and divorce cases, particularly for non-resident fathers. The use of fault and blame in judicial separation applications provides a unique context for non-resident fathers in Ireland. The ability to contest access arrangements is compromised when child welfare issues are not separated from issues of the moral rights and wrongs of marriage. Individualisation as an ideology can thus disempower those whose lives are more at the mercy of such structural constraints than others (such as fathers acting in a legal arena).

Finally our data provided detailed accounts of mothers' and fathers' ongoing attachment to their former spouses (through intense conflict). The level of attachment that remains despite the termination of the marriage is another example that challenges the underlying structures of the 'pure relationship' model and the ability to leave unsatisfactory relationships behind, especially when there is a child present.

Having analysed the experiences of the research participants regarding their changing personal relationships and family practices, the following chapter will discuss differences between these experiences. The final chapter reiterates the main empirical findings of the thesis and discusses these in the light of the research questions set out at the beginning of the thesis.

Chapter 10: Towards a Typology of Post-Separated Family Practices

In the previous chapters I have described the very different ways in which marital breakdown and the transition to post-separated life has been experienced amongst the different respondents. At the start of the thesis I posed several questions about separating couples and their relationship to family life more generally in Irish society. In the chapters that followed, the discussions of the lives and understandings of the separating parents interviewed who were involved in re-shaping their lives and personal relationships shone some light on these questions. Their individual accounts of their marital life, the separation, their life since the separation and their changing personal relationships were all unique. Each account had its own complexity and individuality. However, as I demonstrated throughout the findings chapters, there have been overlapping themes around gender, conjugal roles, employment, income and parental involvement in how these parents understood and experienced their lives.

In this final chapter I review and explore these issues by developing a typology of post-separated roles to explain and illustrate these issues. The typologies indicate a variety of experiences of the post-separated renegotiated practices but I do not claim that the typology is exhaustive. Analyses of the findings suggest that the post-separation role adopted by an individual is best understood by looking at the gender segregation of the family during the marriage. In developing the typology, I plot each respondent's movement from the role they acquired during the marriage to the role they acquired after separation. The structural factors that are being examined here are largely the division of labour during and after the marriage and the resources respondents have available to them. This chapter then follows on and maps out some of the key theoretical implications from the evidence that has been presented on how people themselves understand and experienced their family practices during a time of changing personal relationships.

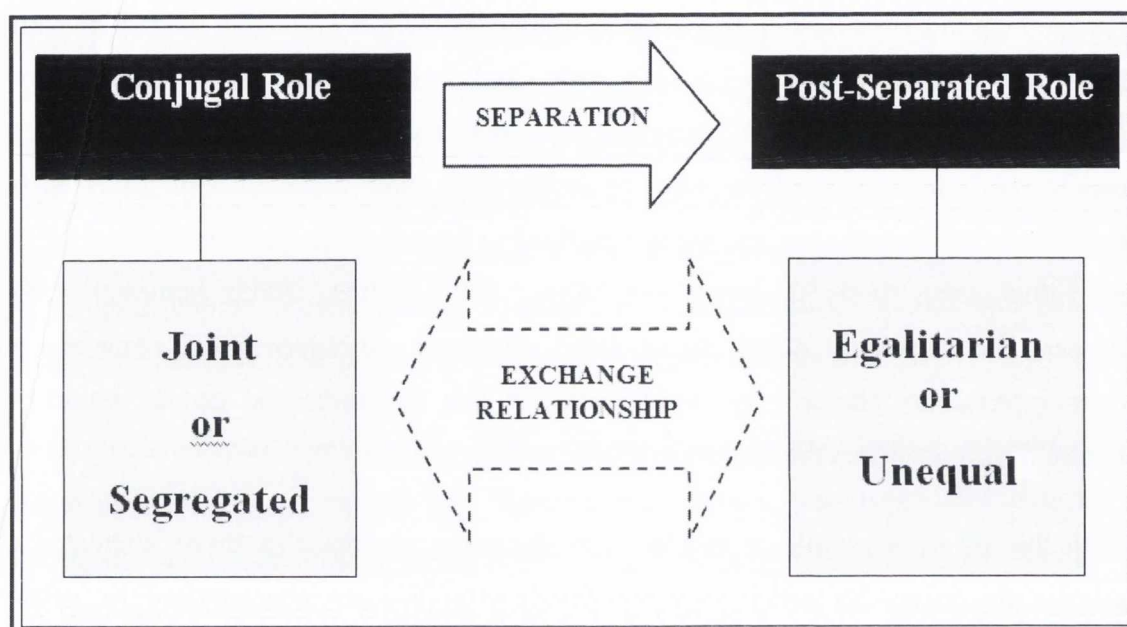
How can we understand post-separated lives?

As discussed in Chapter 3, models of changing family practices have been long debated. Some sociologists have argued that families have become more egalitarian, and are characterised by greater role jointness (Bott, 1971; Young and Wilmott, 1975), yet many empirical studies showed that marital relationships remained highly segregated, unequal and husband dominated (Edgwell, 1980; Duncombe and Marsden, 1993; Hertz, 1986; Pahl, 1989). In recent years, the debate has taken a new turn. Attention has changed to focus on the individualisation and democratisation theses that argue that the radical shifts in personal relations represent a transformation and decisive break away from traditional family relationships. However, feminists more recently argue that the kind of choices couples have to make and the ways in which they make them are still informed by tradition to varying degrees and are less inclined to ‘choice biography’ as depicted by the individualisation thesis (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Gillies, 2003; Jamieson, 1998; Ribbens Mc Carty et al., 2003; Smart, 1999). Brannen and Nilsen (2005) argue that an over-emphasis on choice may obscure the fact that structures and gender within the family itself may affect the choices available to individuals.

With the aid of a sample of middle class divorcing parents, this thesis attempted to explore the extent to which changing family practices are characterised by gender equality and are individualised. The following model has been developed in order to understand more fully how respondents experienced and understood their post-separated roles. Figure 3 below outlines the type of conjugal role that a respondent had and examines how that leads to a particular type of renegotiated post-separation role. Within the conjugal role, there is a system of transaction with very different meanings and rules, i.e. during the marriage one partner may earn all the money and the other provides all the care for the family, this is the kind of exchange (reciprocal agreement) or mutual transfer of resources which they both benefit from equally during the marriage. However upon separation, that mutual transfer of resources may get ruptured, things may seem to belong to either party or certain acts may not be as mutually beneficial as they once seemed and the exchange relationship breaks down. The research has found that different conjugal roles lead onto different types of renegotiated post-separation roles. As we saw in

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, the experiences of the post separated 'renegotiated' role appear to be reflective or extensions of the deep-rooted gender divisions within heterosexual families more widely. The findings from this research appear to highlight that gender relations within marriage widely impact on changes to personal relationships upon separation.

Figure 3: Conceptual Model for Changing Personal Relationships upon Separation



Conjugal Role During Marriage

This first section of the model is focused on a sociological review of the variation in the performance of conjugal roles for men and women in this sample. The role here means behaviour that went on between the formerly married respondents. As Bott (1971:26) outlined on conjugal roles 'in all families there was a basic division of labour, by which the husband was primarily responsible for supporting the family financially and the wife was responsible for housework and childcare...But within this division of labour there was considerable variation of detail.' This section will map out the different patterns of conjugal roles held by the respondents and how the separation produced different effects for the different types of conjugal role relationships. It is thought that an analysis of the

role and relationships held at the time of separation cannot be isolated from relationships that existed during the marriage. Therefore an approach that takes directly into account the sexual division of labour during the marriage will provide greater understanding of the roles adopted post separation.

Female Roles during the Marriage

Hakim (2000) showed that women have different preferences in choosing significant life-priorities, making a commitment to either 'career' or 'family'. Hakim envisaged three 'qualitatively different types' of women—'work-centred', 'home-centred' and 'drifters' or 'adaptive' workers (2000:164). The sample for this study included women that could be in any one of three of these classifications. Looking at the female respondents in this sample, the women were working either full-time, part-time or were full-time homemakers. Using Hakim's classification as a means of grouping the respondents, the model, outlined in Figure 4 below, classified those who worked full-time during the marriage as 'work centred', the women who worked part-time during the marriage as 'adaptive' and the women who were full-time homemakers as 'home-centred'.

'Work centred' women prioritised their career and were committed professionals who worked long hours full-time, who put considerable time and effort into their profession and organised paid childcare for their children. Hakim suggests that 'work-centred' women have children in the same way that men do: as an expression of normality, and as a weekend hobby (Hakim, 2000: 164). In some respects, there was evidence of this in the data, as these women arrived home late from work during the week and concentrated on parenting more intensively at weekends. These women had a 'joint conjugal role' relationship (Bott, 1971:52), in which husband and wife shared as many activities and tasks. Both spouses contributed equally to family income and care (although women were generally left with more of the organisation of childcare). Such reciprocal roles resembled the 'symmetrical family' (Willmott and Young, 1973).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The classical work of Young and Willmott's study on the Symmetrical Family (1973) claimed that married couples were moving towards an egalitarian partnership characterised by a relationship of sharing, mutuality and negotiation.

Women who worked part-time during the marriage were classified as the 'adaptive' workers. Hakim (2000: 165-168) argued that these women combine employment and family and switch from one priority to the other over the life course. Most of the women in this category had young children and struggled to find time to fit work, family and household tasks into their everyday lives. In these families, where fathers were the main economic role-player and the wife was the main domestic role-player, women had to do all the adjusting, particularly during the early work and family career stages of their marriage. In these marriages there was a marked lack of joint conjugal roles in domestic task behaviour. This overwhelming conjugal role segregation could be said to reflect the profound influence of the sexual division of labour in which men were typically responsible for the breadwinning role and women for homemaking.

Women who stayed at home full-time were classified as 'home centred' workers. Hakim described how 'home-centred women' (or 'grateful slaves' as Hakim has labelled them) choose at an early age to give priority to 'a marriage career' (Hakim, 1991, 2000: 159-163). The women in the sample prioritised their domestic responsibilities. They stopped working when they married and/or had children. In these marriages there was a 'segregated congregated role' in which the husband and wife carried out as many tasks as possible separately (Bott, 1971:52). There was a strict division of labour in the household. These families represented the patriarchal type of family, with its division of functions between a providing father and a home-making mother. The division of labour in these families emphasises the gendered asymmetric nature of conjugal roles.

Male Roles during the Marriage

The male respondents in the sample were gainfully employed whereby the majority were salaried professionals. The one exception came from a man who had a disability and was only able to work part-time in a junior level in the civil service. In mapping out the patterning of conjugal roles, I will concentrate on men's participation in family life, mainly childcare responsibilities. The male respondents developed different patterns of parental involvement /childcare during the marriage. The sample included men who were involved in childcare during the marriage to varying degrees. Giovanni's (1998) model of

Italian father's involvement in the family identified four types of couple relationships including the 'involved father', 'involved father in theory', 'the guest father' and the 'delegating father'. The sample for this study included men that could be three of these four classifications, as no male respondent could be classified as an 'involved father'.⁸⁷

Fathers who were classified as the 'involved father, in theory' were found in working couples, however the fathers spent so much time at work, they have no time to spend at home, even though they were willing to do so. The mother was overburdened and had to adjust her work situation. The exchange model that these men adopted in the marriage was marked by a more joint conjugal role. As Bott's (1971) description of marital equality mainly concerns norms rather than behaviour, I have classified these accordingly. Although the involved father in theory was not equally responsible for childcare, he was involved and accessible outside of working hours.

Fathers who were classified as 'the guest father' were very common in the sample and were largely part of one-and-a-half-income couples. Their spouses were employed and worked up to twenty hours per week. They were quite traditional. The mother worked at home while the father was employed, and he played with children in the evening and weekends and had a more limited contribution. The exchange model that these men adopted during the marriage varied. However, in these marriages there was a marked lack of conjugal role jointness in domestic task behaviour. This overwhelming conjugal role segregation could be said to reflect the profound influence of the sexual division of labour in which men are typically responsible for the breadwinning role and women for homemaking.

The third type of father identified in the sample was classified as the 'delegating father' or the careerist father. These men were solely devoted to their career and any responsibilities to the household or children were overshadowed by their commitment to their occupation. In these households the father delegated all household tasks to his wife

⁸⁷ According to Giovanni (1998) the involved father was found in working couples, where both parents were active in all tasks. In these couples fathers spent more time at home but mothers found it hard to accept such role reversal. Although some of the fathers in our data spent time at home, the men in the data set reflected the involved father in theory more than the involved father.

as she was a full-time dependent spouse who left the labour force when she started a family. These fathers don't familiarise themselves with their children and the achievement of fatherhood was a slow process. These families represented the patriarchal type of family, with its division of functions between a providing father and a home-making mother. These conjugal roles demonstrated the gender differences – a fundamental asymmetry – in the sexual division of household labour, particularly with regard to childcare.

Overall amongst the research respondents, there was considerable variation in the role-relationship or conjugal roles between the husband and wife, particularly in the division of paid and unpaid labour. In some cases there was a sharp division of labour while in other cases there was a more equal division of labour. It appeared that the majority of these marriages were characterised by an inequality of 'mutuality' between husband and wife. In the majority of these marriages there was a marked lack of conjugal role jointness in domestic task behaviour. This overwhelming conjugal role segregation could be said to reflect the profound influence of the sexual division of labour in which men are typically responsible for the breadwinning role and women for homemaking.

Effect of Divorcing Rupture on Role

This exchange model or division of roles existed so long as the respondents remained in the marriage. However, this exchange relationship was ruptured by separation. In some cases the exchange model may have even caused the rupture in the relationship. Either way, what will be explored in this section is the consequences of the rupture for the men and women in the sample. The rupture had different effects for men and women. The ramifications of the rupture for women and men are mapped out here and varied according to the role that they adopted during the marriage.

Effect of Rupture on Female Respondents

'Work centred' women, who had worked full-time during the marriage, continued to earn a salary after the marriage. This group of highly educated, dual career, high earning women who had kept full-time jobs during the marriage overcame typical gender barriers

to adopt a non-gendered approach to earning and caring both before and after the separation. The rupture to their exchange model changed very little. They were not dependent on their husbands for financial provision during or after the marriage. Individual incomes for each spouse during the marriage facilitated a shared approach to income distribution and organisation which continued upon separation. The employment status and access to their own money that stemmed from employment gave them the confidence and ability to move away from the relationship and separate. As such, they were active agents of change and had choices in which they created biographies which included egalitarian post separation agreements.

‘Adaptive’ women who had worked part-time during the marriage experienced a reduction in income upon separation. These women had been economically dependent on their former husbands during the marriage and continued to be dependent and required maintenance upon separation. The women’s ability to work full-time and gain economic independence was hampered by the need to mind children. This inability to get full-time employment prevented them from retaining the standard of living some of them enjoyed during the marriage. These women were constrained in their ability to ‘shape their own lives’ upon separation because of a lack of independent financial resources due to the restrictions childcare presented to their resumption of full-time employment.

‘Home centred’ women who were full-time homemakers during the marriage suddenly had no income upon separation. Their marriage deal was over and these women were left financially still dependent upon separation. Many of these mothers, who had secondary but not tertiary education, returned to part-time, low-paid employment. It appeared that those who had less education spent little time in the labour force during the marriage and incurred difficulties in obtaining well-paid positions when the marriage ended. These women were also solely responsible for the children upon separation and had little time to dedicate to re-training. As such, these women remained financially dependent on their former spouses and did not achieve economic independence post separation.

Upon separation the deal reached by many of the ‘adapters’ and ‘home centred’ wives was one in which they received the family home with none or little spousal maintenance.

However, the award of the family home, often in lieu of maintenance, did not provide women with their own income stream but saved their housing or mortgage expenditure. A deal of accommodation minus maintenance was problematic. If they had sold the family home, they might have released equity but they did not do that as the family home had more than a financial meaning to them. These women were reluctant to sell the family home (which could have created necessary funds) as they perceived it as a stable base for the children. They felt that keeping the family home guaranteed some form of consistency for the children at a time of family change. The lack of or limited amount of ongoing spousal maintenance pressed heavily upon non-earning wives. As such, the aggrieved women incurred difficulties meeting the day-to-day expenses of the family.

The 'adapters' and 'home centred' respondents operated an exchange of care for income during the marriage, i.e. during the marriage there was shared organisation and distribution of income in exchange for childcare. Upon separation they continued to fulfil their part of the exchange model, i.e. they continued to care for the children but there was a rupture in the organisation of money, which resulted in an unequal distribution of income post separation. Non-earning wives have less access to personal spending money and have less freedom to act, thereby they had no money and did not have the same conditions as the egalitarians due a lack of financial income.

Effects of Rupture on Male Respondents

As outlined above, the exchange relationship developed in the marriage was ruptured by the separation. The ramifications of the rupture for men were in stark contrast to the women but also varied according to the role that the male respondents adopted during the marriage. An individualisation model (according to Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) would assert that in effect, men decide for themselves in relation to parenting issues and aren't tied into having pre-determined gender roles, which suggest that men have a greater degree of freedom to develop their own involvement with children upon separation. The reality was played out in different ways and the patterns of paternal involvement following the separation are mapped out here.

The 'involved fathers in theory' who had been 'accessible' and involved in parenting/childcare tasks during the marriage were able to improve their involvement upon separation and become more engaged parents after the marriage. These fathers had spent considerable time with the children during the marriage and had developed a genuine strong relationship with the child which was not ruptured by the separation. During the marriage the fathers had demonstrated how they 'cared about' the children and now they were given a chance to 'care for' the children. As soon as men began to care for their children, dramatic changes occurred and they were newly engaged and active fathers. The post-separation transformation and discontinuity from their 'theoretical involvement' role only occurred when fathers actually started to do a lot of the caring.

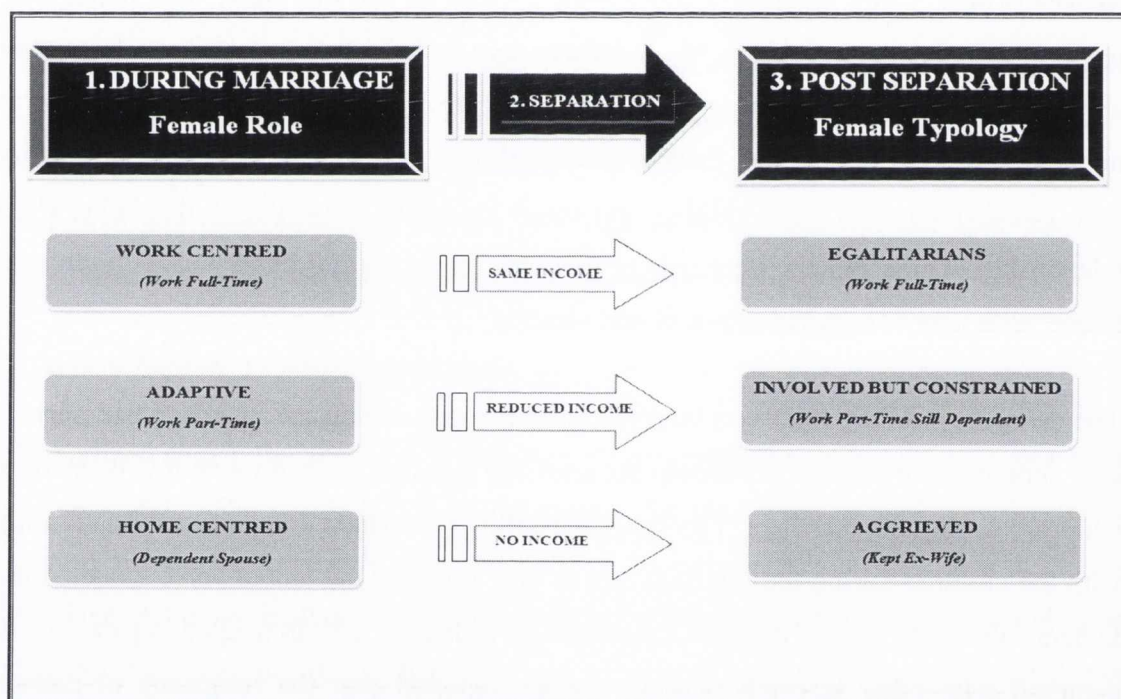
The 'guest father' who had a largely traditional fathering role during the marriage was also able to improve their involvement upon separation and became more active, albeit at weekends only. Upon separation, these fathers, often for the first time, were taking sole responsibility for their children. Many fathers only realised they were absent from their children's lives when they were removed from the family home and their relationship was no longer borne by the mother. Fathers also felt that spending exclusive chunks of quality time (weekends) with their children enhanced the overall quality of the father-child relationship. These fathers were able to overwrite their marital history as a 'traditional father' with a new 'engaged active father' identity.

The delegating father, who was largely career focused during the marriage had spent a long time in the public sphere during the marriage and had not had much involvement in childcare during the marriage. The father's inability to develop an emotional relationship with the children during the marriage due to long hours in the labour force hindered the fathers' ability to create intimate relationships with their children upon separation. In common with other research findings, fathers reported that the frequency of contact decreased and 'slid into absence' as time since the separation increased (Seltzer, 1991; Simpson et. al., 1995).

Post-Separation Renegotiated Role

The implications of exchange models (conjugal role relationship) rupturing at separation, yielded different patterns of renegotiated roles for both the men and the women after the separation. There was a tendency for one group of conjugal role relationships to transform into a certain type of post-separation relationship e.g. the egalitarians renegotiated of family practices post separation was largely similar to the conjugal role relationship (although the fathers became more actively engaged with the children after the separation). Similarly the excluded fathers renegotiated exchange model post separation was similar to their segregated conjugal role during their marriage. Figure 4 below illustrates the different patterns adopted by the female participants.

Figure 4: Conceptual Model of Changing Female Roles



From 'Work Centred' to Egalitarian

'Work centred' women, who were full-time workers during and after the marriage adopted egalitarian roles with their former spouses post separation. The women in this group shared the primary care of the children on a fifty-fifty basis with their former

husbands. Decisions about the children's welfare were made jointly and there was a great deal of overlap between the two houses. Both parents had their own source of income which was comparable and neither parent was dependent on the other for financial assistance. Additionally both parents had their own house which was comparable in size and value.

From 'Adaptive' to 'Involved but Constrained'

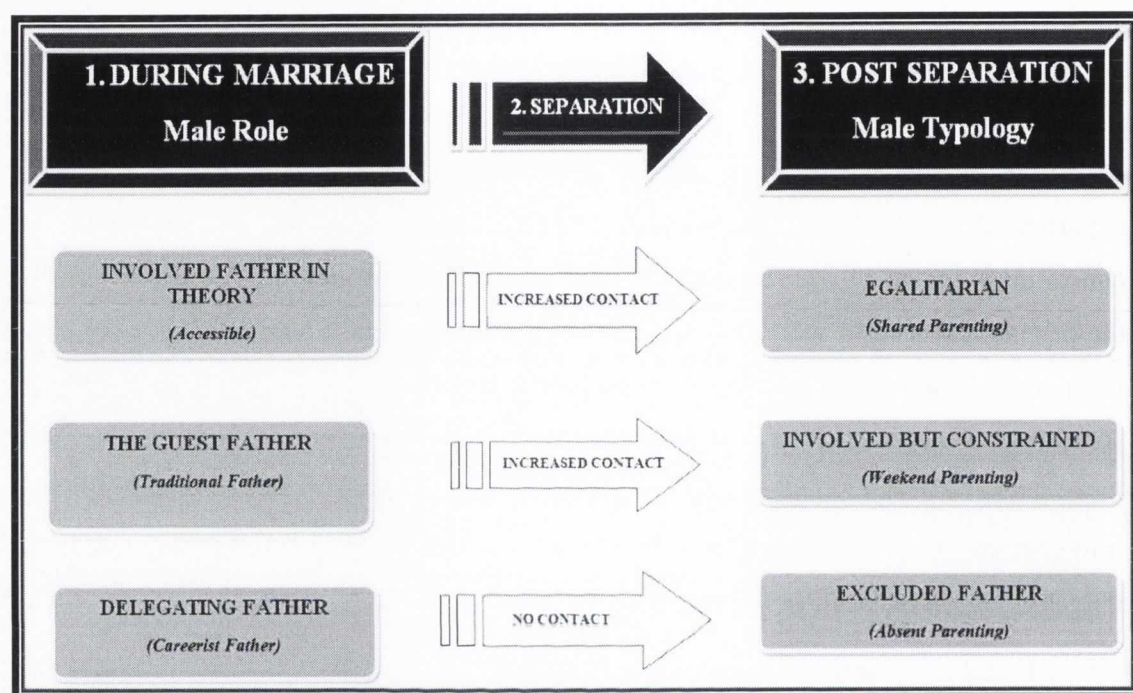
'Adaptive women', who were part-time workers during and after the marriage and experienced reduced income after separation, became part of the 'involved but constrained' group of parents after the separation. The women in these cases remained the primary carers and were primarily responsible for childcare after the separation. The unequal division of paid and unpaid work created a power imbalance between the mother and father. There was strong evidence that mothers in this group had more control over the children and used it as a means of exerting control over the father. Women differed in how they handled childcare responsibilities post separation. Women kept the children if they thought that men were holding back the money.

From 'Home Centred' to 'Aggrieved'

The aggrieved mothers, who had a patriarchal, traditional division of paid and unpaid work relationship (segregated conjugal role) during the marriage, and who had no income upon separation, were left to carry the entire childcare burden after the separation. At the time of the separation the fathers in these cases did not choose to re-construct their parental role and continued to be largely absent from their children's lives. Additionally the breadwinner income was no longer shared and the mothers experienced an impoverished state. The mother after the separation had no income, all of the childcare responsibility and the husband was no longer providing for them. These women were more than likely married to the careerist type men and these factors of economic disadvantage post separation made them aggrieved. The implications of exchange models (conjugal role relationship) rupturing at separation, yielded different patterns of re-

negotiated roles for the men after the separation. Figure 5 below illustrates the different patterns adopted by the male participants.

Figure 5: Conceptual Model of Changing Male Roles



From 'Involved Father in Theory' to 'Egalitarian'

The 'Involved Father in Theory', whose involvement in childcare tasks was described as 'accessible' during the marriage, adopted a more egalitarian role after the separation. These fathers took up more active caring responsibilities post separation and were exclusively responsible for the children 50 per cent of the time. In contrast to the conjugal role, these fathers were more involved in the active instrumental tasks of parenting post separation.

From 'Guest Father' to 'Involved but Constrained'

These women were matched by the 'guest fathers', who had been minimally engaged in childcare responsibilities during the separation but became more involved in parenting after the separation. The involved but constrained fathers also renegotiated their contract

with their wives and were given an allocated period for contact. Some of the men withdrew financial support to their wives when the terms of the contract were breached (i.e. when they were denied access to their child). The fathers in this group had more control over money and used it as a means of exerting control over the mother.

From Careerist to Excluded

The excluded fathers, who had segregated conjugal roles during the marriage and were largely career focused, experienced a fall out of contact with their child upon separation. In these cases there was a strict division of labour among the men and women as men's roles were restricted to the paid labour force, while women's roles were restricted to the domestic sphere. Upon separation, these parents were unable to/or did not seek to re-negotiate their roles away from traditional gender roles. Fathers who had dedicated their lives to their careers had had little involvement in their children's lives during the marriage and the children gave little thought to the parent they never knew. At the time of the separation, all contact between the fathers and children ceased. These children who were older and were able to decide for themselves acted as a third force in deciding the fate of the parent-child relationship and largely rejected it. Some of the fathers argued that they had been marginalised by the resident mother's gateclosing behaviour. It appears as if the continuation of the parenting role post separation was involuntary for some of these fathers. The highly gendered division of labour during the marriage continued after the separation. It appears that the aggrieved mothers and the excluded fathers' accounts were two sides of the one coin. Unfortunately the researcher did not interview the ex-spouse of the aggrieved mother or the ex-spouse of the excluded father.

The involved but stressed couples are not located in the model. These couples were in the middle of their negotiation of the transition to post separation. The unique way in which these couples were sampled, made these couples an interesting subsample to examine the process in which parents move through the process. These couples were similar to the involved but constrained parents, they were characterised by a greater level of conflict. There was a high level of contact taking place and both parents were active in the division of paid and unpaid labour post separation. Their post-separated roles were not

fully established as they were yet to obtain a judicial separation. Their accounts provide insight into the disagreements that can occur at an earlier stage of the separation.

Concluding Discussion

This thesis draws upon rich empirical accounts of parents' experience of separation and divorce in Ireland. One of its broadest conclusions is that the material presented in this study exemplifies that intimate relationships remain highly segregated and unequal. The slowness in changes towards equality of the genders in family life, and the relationship between paid and unpaid work in the creation of more equal relationships between men and women both before and after separation was evident. There were more examples of how the respondents continued to practice a sexual division of labour but there were fewer examples of changes.

From a scholarly point of view, the thesis makes an important contribution to both empirical and theoretical literatures. Among its original contributions to the empirical literature is its analysis of certain types of family practices in Ireland: for example how some separated fathers engage in active fathering once the marriage ends and they take on instrumental caring tasks for almost half of the time. These fathers reflect some of the deeper changes that are occurring in fathering and fatherhood in Ireland more widely (Ferguson, 2004). It also investigates another relatively under-researched group in Ireland – the rise of the dual career couple and the consequences for women who have a second shift (triple shift according to Duncombe and Marsden, (1993)). The origins, the working and the potential consequences of this new development remain largely unexplored in an Irish context. Do dual career couples represent ideals of sexual equality in the workplace and the family? Additionally the inclusion of 'excluded' fathers and 'aggrieved' mothers accounts in its analysis provides useful data for comparisons of parents' experiences and perceptions by gender, age and by residential status.

At a theoretical level, the thesis contributes to the wider sociological debate about the relative weighting of structure and agency in the individualisation thesis in intimate relationships. The findings in this research can best be interpreted as providing a degree

of support for Lewis's (2005) thesis which is of a partial decline in the male breadwinner model of gender, rather than for Giddens's or Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's theses of shifts to completely new forms of individualised intimate relationships. As indicated by the small declines in the use of the sexual division of labour both before and after the separation which expressed relatively traditional ideologies/discourses of breadwinning – and a slight increase in the use of egalitarian (non-gendered) division of labour, which was most likely to be used by dual career couples in which the male partner expressed less traditional ideologies of breadwinning and fathering and women were in professions with high enough incomes to facilitate separate finances.

The findings suggest, however, that in so far as women's entry into the labour force defines greater equality between men and women during the marriage, it is possible that rather than being associated with shifts to greater equality in access to money and independence, the reality is that part-time labour force participation may also be associated with marked inequalities, because it may enable gender inequalities generated in the household during the marriage to be more directly transposed to gender inequalities post separation. Despite the decline of traditional discourses of male breadwinning and the increasing importance of egalitarian ideologies of co-providing amongst the sample, many of the part time working women experienced marked inequalities post separation, largely due to the lack of equal response for joint caring amongst the men in the sample. Therefore, in common with Smart and Neale's findings the use of the self without relating it to a gendered self is a major weakness in Giddens's thesis. The individualisation model asserted that, in effect women decide for themselves in relation to work issues and aren't tied into having pre-determined gender roles. This suggests that women have a greater degree of freedom to shape their own biography (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 59). However, this theory has been challenged by the evidence in this research on the basis that equality has not in fact been achieved in the private sphere with regard to the sharing of childcare responsibilities and domestic labour.

One of the most significant features of this thesis is its demonstration of the way separating parents' biographies are shaped less by themselves and more by structural and contextual constraints that they encounter in moving from the conjugal role to their new

post-separated role. The individualisation model (according to Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) would assert that in effect, men decide for themselves in relationship to parenting issues and aren't tied into having pre-determined gender roles, which suggest that men have a greater degree of freedom to shape their own biography. However, there was evidence that the gendered division of labour during the marriage (father's inability to develop an emotional relationship with the children during the marriage due to long hours at work) appears to hinder the fathers' ability to create intimate relationships with their children post separation. So the weakness of the individualisation theory is that it neglects key social and gendered aspects of fathering.

In particular, this thesis has assessed the applicability of Giddens's democratisation thesis for the renegotiation of parenting roles post separation. This thesis has assessed whether the renegotiation of parenting roles reflects the *democratisation* of (macro) society which is purported to have led to egalitarianism among men and women, which would allow us to see gender equality within (micro) intimate relationships. The evidence here seems to indicate that Giddens's model offers a useful starting point for analysis (it appears that separating parents are seeking a 'pure relationship' exiting marriage and are, to varying degrees acting as reflexive agents). However the assumptions of the democratisation thesis concerning how intimate relationships are characterised by gender equality do not explain why gender was the more likely basis for organising pre and post marital roles and responsibilities. Structural and normative factors (as both constraints and enabling factors) appear to have a fundamental role in setting the parameters within which the renegotiation of parenting roles post separation takes place.

Factors Influencing Renegotiation of Roles

As we have introduced in this section above, the findings from the thesis strongly suggest that contrary to one of the main assertions of the democratisation and individualisation thesis, structural barriers, such as gender, socio-economic conditions (employment, education and income), processes and experiences in the separation process (obdurate parent) and family law legislation, all have a part to play in constraining personal relationships at a time of separation.

Gender Roles

The findings of this thesis suggest that gender and gender roles have a significant impact on the renegotiation of roles post separation. Gender was the basis for organising pre and post-marital roles and responsibilities, the gender contract that existed during the marriage created different spheres for the husband (public sphere) and the wife (private sphere). Inequality in the division of labour was a major marital complaint and a contributing factor to the breakdown of the marital relationship. Although many of the women willingly undertook the major share of housekeeping and childcare, they faulted their former spouses for not being more involved in parenting. The descriptions of the involved groups, the aggrieved and the excluded respondents described a gender based division of labour and the burden they felt for 'caring for' the children with little help from a husband who concerned himself solely with his profession. The expectation of equality was far from realised in the actual division of family work. These findings would seem to support the gendered approach to work in the home such as those advocated by Kiely (1990) and Hobson (1990), who emphasised how the pattern of unpaid work has not changed as quickly as the pattern of paid work.

The accounts of the participants regarding the divorce negotiations reflected traditional gender conflicts. Discontent with the division of assets post separation in this group, can be seen as an expression of women's subordination to a male power while the division of childcare post separation can be seen as women's situational (due to her primary status position both before and after separation) power (Smart, 1999:146). Björnberg and Kollind (2005) argued that such power, whether from the man's or woman's perspective can be understood as control over their former spouse and a capacity to govern their behaviour. Ongoing gendered complaints highlighted the non-democratic nature of these intimate relationships.

The findings also suggest that post separation parenting continues to act as a site for gender inequality, a lack of autonomy and a site of conflict and even violence. Violence as a form of gendered power appeared to be present in marital relationship and continued into the post separation period. The evidence from the couples demonstrated that men, who had been oppressive during the marriage, continued to do so after the separation.

The accounts presented by the mothers in the 'involved but stressed' couples are full of incidents where the former spouse continues to exert a form of power (controlling/surveillance) over the mothers' life. "Violence and abusive relationships are common between adults and children and most such violence comes from men...As an emancipator ideal of democracy, the prohibition of violence is of basic importance" (Giddens, 1992:189). Avoidance of emotional abuse is perhaps the most difficult aspect of the equalising of power in relationships. Therefore the quest for democracy goes beyond the marital relationship and into the post-divorce relationship.

Employment and Education

While a minority of relatively advantaged women have benefited from improvements in employment at the top end of the female jobs, those at the lower end have experienced deterioration in conditions post separation. There was extensive polarisation in women's employment opportunities in the sample. It was noted that there was a marked divergence in the employment rates of mothers depending on their occupational level and their level of formal education. Post separation, many of the aggrieved mothers, who had secondary but not tertiary education, returned to part-time, low-paid employment. It appeared that those who had less education spent little time in the labour force during the marriage and incurred difficulties in obtaining well-paid positions when the marriage ended. As such, these women remained financially dependent on their former spouses and did not achieve economic independence post separation. The increase in women attending third level education was a reality for the women who married in the early nineties rather than those who married in the late 70s or early 80s. The change in education qualifications of the adult female population in Ireland increased the ability of younger separating mothers to regain employment and created employment opportunities which, historically, had simply not been available to some of the older female divorcees. This created the opportunity for some of the younger women in the sample to gain a better education and gain economic independence post separation.

Distribution of Money

One of the most serious measures of gender inequality was demonstrated by the unequal appropriation of financial resources by one partner (former husbands). Although independent systems of money management were evident in the egalitarians, most couples had serious disagreements about money. The organisation of money, including the system of pooling and management before the separation highlighted the gender inequalities that existed in the dominant male breadwinner model both before and after the separation. Non-earning wives had less access to personal spending money and had less freedom for personal consumption, particularly after the separation. There was evidence that women whose husbands did not make proper provision for them and their children suffered economically upon separation. Lewis (2005:164) highlighted that during a marriage 'selfish individualism in respect of the division of money has serious implications for the welfare of other members of the households', however it is equally true after the marriage has ended. The research revealed how many couples adopted a whole wage and allowance system during the marriage which was typical of a male breadwinner family pattern. In such instances, the norm of sharing and equality in spending was overridden by a conflicting norm which gave the earner the right to control and own their income. The research found that most male breadwinners, as earners, were more in control of the money. This situation left women in a relatively weak bargaining position when things started to go wrong and a power imbalance became more prevalent at the point of separation.

Income and Housing

Decisions that were made by separating husbands and wives in their effort to separate and establish two homes from one home was guided more or less by income. Total household income was a key factor in setting up two households after the separation. For parents in higher income families (dual income families) access to economic resources eased the transition to parenting across two households. In contrast respondents from single-income households had access to fewer economic resources and their transition to parenting post separation was made more difficult and had uneven effects for mothers and fathers. In such cases the family home was either sold or one person (usually the mother as the

primary caregiver) received the family home while the other parent (usually father as non-resident parent) re-housed themselves in smaller accommodation or in a more affordable location. This in itself proved to be a logistical burden in maintaining parent-child relationships for the non-resident parent. Non resident parents (usually fathers) were constrained by moving away and were no longer part of the community in which their children socialised and took part in clubs and activities. As such there were times when children were reluctant to go on contact as they had games, parties or events in their neighbourhood. These fathers' preferences were to live as close to the mother and children as possible, but their opportunities to realise those preferences were constrained by the fact that they had less financial resources.

Obdurate Parent

Many non-resident fathers in the sample encountered challenges from an obdurate parent, who were forceful actors in determining how fathers experienced the re-negotiation of parenting post separation. Fathers in this group were not so much free to pursue their own path or way out of the family home and into a renegotiated parenting role but were shaped by the actions of the obdurate parent. These findings support other research evidence on post-separation parenting that mothers play a pivotal role in facilitating father-child relationships (Arendall, 1997; Marsiglio, 1995). Trinder's work on gatekeeping (2008:1298) explains how gatework is a dynamic transactional, 'bi-directional process rather than a linear unidirectional act'. The bi-directional reciprocal influences are the influences resident and contact parents (and children) have over each other's relationship with the child and each other (Trinder, 2008:1314). Although Trinder (2008) refers to 'bi-directional processes' in regard to relational issues, this research has found it as appropriate to examine 'bi-directional processes' in accordance with the link between money and children, but more specifically, the exchange relationship that existed during the marriage. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, there was a system of transactions within most marriages in the sample. Women provided the care for the children in exchange from money from their husbands. Upon separation, if men were caught holding back on this mutual transfer, i.e. not providing maintenance, women could restrict the father's access to the children. A change in any aspect of the mutual exchange

process can result in an overall shift in how things (children and money) seem to belong to quite separate spheres.

Legislation

Many of the fathers in the group who believed that access was being obstructed by the mother, felt constrained by the lack of legal enforcement or support in tackling obdurate resident mothers. Some of the fathers mentioned how they gave up on contact as it was proving too difficult and distressing for all parties concerned. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim in *Risk Society* (1992: 112) admit that ‘divorce law and divorce reality... characterise some of the contradictions which the individualisation process has brought.’ In this research, I also have found fault-based reasons (spousal behaviour) and matrimonial guilt featured prominently in the parents’ accounts. Although fault has been removed from divorce legislation, the application of a judicial separation can still be sought on the grounds of fault. Such accounts allowed one parent to gain an advantage over the other parent by discrediting the badly behaving parent, and characterising them as ‘unfit’ for parenting. This in turn can indirectly influence child access decisions and invariably the court directly influences how your relationship with your child is shaped into the future. All of this emphasises the important role that legislation may play in creating conditions in which parents feel constrained in their ability to renegotiate their roles post separation.

The frequent mention of the constraints and barriers outlined above in divorcing parents’ accounts of renegotiating their role post separation suggests that the freedom of all individuals to realise and create their own biography is over-stated in the individualisation thesis. It is clear that a combination of gender and lack of socio-economic resources often result in constrained choices and autonomy in renegotiating their role post separation.

Family and Social Theory

The theoretical implications of the findings may be summarised as follows:

- The influence of the democratisation thesis on intimate relationships is over-emphasised in sociological understandings of changing personal relationships at a time of separation.
- The individualisation thesis downplays the role of structure in re-shaping post-separated roles.
- Gender, class, family law legislation, socio-demographic factors, and relational determinants are critical in shaping separating parents' renegotiation of the post separated role.
- Conjugal roles impact on the renegotiation of post-separated roles and therefore the 'care for income' exchange model held during the marriage is crucial in understanding changing intimate relationships at separation.

The findings from this research lead me to ask crucial questions about the appropriateness of the concept of democracy as a way of understanding what is going on in separating families in Ireland. In terms of its macro theoretical implications firstly, I would suggest that the findings from this research can best be interpreted as providing a degree of support for Gillies's (2003) thesis of a continuity in the experience of intimacy and family life rather than for Giddens's (1992) or Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) theses of shifts to completely new forms of individualised intimate relationships, regardless of whether they are conceptualised as highly egalitarian and radically democratic 'pure relationships' as Giddens suggests, or as 'negotiated provisional relationships' as Beck and Beck Gernsheim suggest.

On a descriptive level for example, the analysis of change to a more democratic relationship was witnessed in a few 'ideal' couples only. In the study of separating individuals and changing personal relationships, there is an indication that the highly educated professionals from higher income families have a choice and are active agents or 'creative biographers' as they have the resources necessary to make decisions and leave relationships and be economically independent outside of marriage. The accounts

presented by the egalitarians highlighted how they were engaged in a process of change. They are not reproducing a set of gender roles upon separation. They were producing new ways of organising gender and of doing 'egalitarian' post-separated parenting. These parents discontinued their pre-divorce parenting role and moved beyond hegemonic notions of gender and family practices post separation. The analysis indicates that change in more democratic relationships was most likely to be apparent in dual income couples, which were characterised by both spouses earning the same amount. However, in a society in which women still earn less and are more likely to work part-time if they have younger children (as outlined in chapter 2), as apparent in the majority of the accounts in this sample, these women did not appear to be treated in any more of a egalitarian way in terms of access to income than the older system of the male breadwinner model of gender.

The findings show that women, who may work part-time but earn less than their former spouse do not experience any greater level of equality than those women who never worked. Although these women provided a greater share of childcare responsibilities both before and after the separation, such contributions are not viewed the same. It is possible that among former one-and-a-half-income families, intimate relationships may be based on 'financial equity' rather than 'equality', in which the higher earner has more control over financial resources and a greater earning capacity in the future. In contrast to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), such accounts suggest this is less a result of women's increasing individualisation in the labour market per se, and more because of the continuation of the gender segregation in the family. Such practices therefore strengthen traditional gender roles rather than focusing on the increasing importance of co-provision.

On a more micro-analytical level however, the findings also point to the increasing importance of reciprocity in mediating gender relationships within intimate relationships (both before and after the separation). As discussed in the literature in the 70s in the UK within the conjugal role, there is a system of transaction with very different meanings and rules, i.e. during the marriage one partner may earn all the money and the other provides all the care for the family (Bott, 1971; Young and Willmott, 1973; Edgwell, 1980). This is the kind of exchange (reciprocal agreement) or mutual transfer of resources which they

appear to benefit from equally while during the marriage. However this research has found that upon separation, that mutual transfer of resources may become ruptured, things may seem to belong to either party or certain acts may not be as mutually beneficial as they once seemed and the exchange relationship breaks down. The important role of the exchange model, i.e. level of reciprocity between former spouses, is crucial in understanding changing personal relationships at a time of separation.

One part of the exchange model, i.e. the exchange of love for money, has been dealt with in a post-separation context. Maternal gatekeeping as described by Trinder (2008) influences the fathers' access to the children. In such situations women, as 'family experts and managers' play a key role in facilitating or inhibiting the father's involvement in parenting post separation (2008:1319). Whereas Trinder alluded to gatekeeping as a bi-directional (opening and closing behaviours) reciprocal influence, this research argues that gatekeeping is only one aspect of the "bi-directional" influence of an exchange model. Whereas women exchange childcare for money, men exchange money for childcare. Therefore there is an equally strong force or power that men control over financial resources. Whereas women's role as gatekeepers upon separation has been investigated, there is little research on father's role as 'paternal bankers' in a post separation context.

Burgoyne's (2004) research on money in heterosexual marriages give us some insight in looking at how money and care are exchanged in marriage. Burgoyne (2004:170) highlighted how receiving money imposes a 'debt', which in the context of the household tends to translate into an obligation to provide care but the precise terms of 'repayment' is unsure. The 'unspecified debts' involved in non-economic exchanges that Burgoyne (2004:170) refers to, can be 'infinite in effect' and hence lead to the possibility of exploitation. If we apply such insight into a post-separation context, in which maternal gatekeeping is also at play, we see how these behaviours are continued from the exchange model that was developed during the marriage. Control of the 'heart strings and purse strings' is an apt way to describe the type of exchange that is set up post separation in which there has been a traditional division of labour during the marriage. Ideas of 'asymmetrical reciprocity' are useful as a means to account for individual subjectivity

and diversity among the mutual exchanges between differently positioned men and women post separation.

This grounded inductive study can be used to ‘chip away’ at the grand theories credibility. In this thesis I have aimed to provide ways of thinking about changing family and personal relationships and intimacy, ways that do not fall into the dominant theoretical approaches on family and social change, i.e. democratisation and individualisation theses. This research has found that the extent of social change has been overstated and suggests that diversity and plurality that have been a feature of family relationships since the 70s remain strong. An analysis of conjugal role jointness and segregation in examining how parents move into new post-separated roles, allows us to capture the types of change and continuity in personal relationships at a time of divorce.

Although I have had to engage with these ideas in order to establish a starting point, I have paid more attention to mapping alternative ways of thinking and combining traditional sociological concepts of gender. This approach allows for the familiar argument over structure and agency to take place and it becomes difficult to assert that these individuals are becoming more individualised and autonomous within democratic relationships. Gender segregation and gender roles do matter as this thesis has highlighted how deep-rooted gendered family practices developed during the marriage influence the post separated role. The changes in intimate relationships in Ireland found in this study highlighted the slow, uneven influence of social change on the way individuals live their lives.

Looking to the Future

This is clearly a small scale study with a middle-class group of families. The findings therefore, which have been drawn from this sample are more particular to this specific middle-class sample and not as applicable across a wider population. Overall the relationship between social class and the renegotiation of family practices post separation could not be explored in-depth in this study due to the highly atypical composition of the sample. Income, work and social background are important factors to consider when studying equality in relationships and the renegotiation of family practices post separation

(Bjornberg and Kollind, 2005). I am conscious of the fact that individuals or couples with higher incomes may have a greater influence on the division of labour in the home or in terms of jointly shared and separate consumption of resources. Comparing couples in this sample to lower income couples, it is evident that couples in this sample had more joint and individual assets and higher total household income which gave them a better opportunity to set up two households post-separation. As part of this lifestyle, the higher earners could also outsource all domestic tasks to nannies or domestic workers, so negotiations over the division of domestic duties could be avoided. High income earning females were better educated and have more employment choices when entering and exiting a marriage. Similarly, professional status may have influenced negotiations between the spouses concerning the re-negotiation of family practices (caring and employment) post separation. This leads me to ask how separation or divorce within lower-income families might have shaped different post-separation biographies. How would the findings from a lower-income sample compare to the findings of this study? Would the model created from this sample be appropriate for families from lower socio-economic backgrounds? How would it need to be adapted?

Firstly I need to examine the research literature to investigate what we know about lower-income families in Ireland. Daly and Leonard (2002) conducted a qualitative in-depth study exploring the lives of those who live on a low income. The sample of 30 families, including 50 adult parents and 28 children, comprised of 32 married individuals, 6 separated and/or divorced parents, 6 single parents and 5 cohabiting parents. Their research found that one in three households had income only from social welfare⁸⁸ (likely to be two-parent as much as one-parent households), i.e. these households had no active link to the labour market. Only four households had no income from social welfare. Daly and Leonard (2002:13) explained that the 16 households which had links with the labour market were not full-time earners but included part-time employees, trainees, employment scheme participants etc. As such, they outlined that almost two thirds of all

⁸⁸ The main social welfare payments claimed by households were the One-Parent Family Payment and the Unemployment Assistance or Benefit. The one-parent family payment is a social welfare payment for both men and women who bring up children without the support of a spouse. Unemployment assistance is a weekly payment made to unemployed people who do not qualify for unemployment benefit. It is means tested.

households had no more than the equivalent of half a full-time earner (2002:15). Lone mother households were strongly represented among them.

Daly and Leonard (2002:32) also found that marital breakdown was a significant cause for families experiencing persistent debt and falling into arrears. Such families were classified as 'sinking' which described the household in relation to the overall financial situation. Interestingly, the research also revealed that discussions around pooling and managing money were decided together (Daly & Leonard, 2002:57). There was little evidence of gender difference with regard to money or consumption. For almost all households, there was no gap between the household's overall level of income and that which was available for collective consumption. These findings resonate with international literature which find that the distribution of income within low-income families tends to be equal because 'the economy was so meagre' (Bjornberg and Kollind, 2005:93). As such, these households could be classified as neither dual income or single income families but 'survivalist-income' families.

The evidence relating to fathering practices in lower-class families points towards more traditional notions of fathering. Ferguson and Hogan (2004) described the men in their study as rooted in the 'breadwinner and provider model of fatherhood'. Working class fathers from the qualitative study, based on 24 interviews with 'vulnerable' fathers⁸⁹, their families and professionals, were found to continue to adopt traditional fathering practices. Findings from another small qualitative study in a working class area in west Dublin found that fathers and their families are retaining more traditional family practices (Barnardos, 2006). The study found that women and men retain a traditional, normative conception of the family, in which there is a clear segregation of roles of breadwinner and homemaker. For women in this project, motherhood was defined as an ability to maintain a family, keep a home and often provide financially by working outside of the home. Fatherhood was perceived by the mothers as a 'playmate for the children, company for his partner and bring home the wages' (p.32). For the fathers, breadwinning and being head of the household was important but above all, the emotional bond with their children

⁸⁹ The notion of vulnerability adopted by the study included a wide range of experiences including men who had been violent, those who experienced marital or relationship breakdown, those who were in poverty and the impact of social exclusion.

defined their role as a father. Mothers also believed that even when the father and children were physically separated, this bond should be preserved, as long as it was safe and without risk. These findings would suggest that although there are traditional expectations to provide, the father-child relationship is perceived as important for family life. Corcoran's (2005) study of young marginalised non-resident fathers in Dublin found that "almost all shared a sense of commitment to their children and to embodying a fathering commitment to their children and to embodying a fathering role, even in the face of institutional, social and economic barriers" (Corcoran, 2005, p150). In all three studies it was found that substantial structural barriers exist in the Irish context which prevents paternal involvement when financial resources are low. This literature suggests that researchers are uncovering a complex and sometimes ambiguous relationship between class and parenting values and behaviour. It is possible that the findings of this study would have been very different if a more socioeconomically diverse sample had been recruited, but also possible that many similar themes would have come to light and future research should seek to include a more diverse sample to explore these issues further.

If I were to actively speculate how lower-class families might experience and understand the renegotiation of their post-separated roles, using the model developed by this research, the following scenarios may develop. The exchange model that holds in the intact family is to some extent the traditional division of labour, and may replicate similar patterns of the 'home centred' mothers and the 'guest' father. Instead of the fathers being devoted to their careers, they are devoted to providing and any responsibilities to the household or children may be overshadowed by their commitment to their pursuit to be the provider. The women, despite their engagement with the labour force, are not 'work centred', they are 'survivalists' and similar to the 'drifters' may move in and out of low-paid employment depending on their life stage or husband's employment status. During the marriage therefore, many lower class men are part of traditional households in which, the men may have to 'let the wife work'. Some families may be living off social welfare payments, such as unemployment allowance. They may possess few assets and may be living in social housing or a local tenancy. If men are unemployed one could speculate

that they may have more time to care for the children. However if more traditional attitudes are prevalent, and if there are expectations on the male to provide financially, I could speculate that paternal involvement in childcare is limited to more playful tasks rather than being the primary carer.

Upon separation there is a rupture in the exchange model, women continue to be the primary carer and they may continue to work part-time (depending on the age of the child). As a low paid worker, they will incur a substantial drop in income and struggle to cope financially from one low-paid part-time wage. The couple may not have been the owner occupier of any property. However the family home, which may be a tenancy, will more than likely be transferred into the wife's sole name to ensure reliable accommodation for the mother and child. Research evidence from the outcomes of separation and divorces in the Irish family law courts demonstrated that the tenancy tended to be awarded to the primary carer (Mahon and Moore, 2011:51). The spouse who retained tenancy in these cases did not have to make any payment to their spouse for surrendering their interests in the tenancy (Mahon and Moore, 2011:52). In such cases, the father will be required to look for and pay for alternative accommodation.

Men on the other hand continue to work, or continue to seek employment (receive unemployment assistance). Either way, they will maintain the same income as during the marriage. However this time they will have to pay for accommodation and may find it difficult to obtain social housing. Simpson et al. (1995) described how many low-income separated fathers can only afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment. In which case, the father will not have enough space for his children to stay overnight. Contact in a neutral venue will be the only option which may result in additional expense. It is for these reasons that the research evidence suggests that unemployed fathers are less likely to have their children to stay overnight (Simpson et al. 1995).

Post-separation, many men from lower-socio economic families may find it difficult to pay child maintenance, pay for alternative accommodation and provide for themselves. Bradshaw et al. (1999) found that the payment of child support can facilitate contact, if maintenance is in arrears, contact with the child may be restricted. In addition, fathers

may need to work extra shifts or obtain a second job to meet their maintenance requirements. If they do, they may sacrifice the time they have to spend with their children. Many fathers may struggle to pay maintenance, fall into arrears and shy away from contact because of the difficulties arising from the costs involved in running two households.

If maintenance is unreliable, many mothers may prefer to claim One Parent Family allowance, which is regular and provides a basic standard of living (Mahon and Moore, 2011:81). The mother is left with the entire caring burden but is provided with a minimum standard of living. Her ability to gain full-time employment will be constrained by high childcare costs and her lower level of education. The mother may rely solely on the One-Parent Family allowance or may combine it with some kind of 'Back to Work' or Community Scheme. If the mother returns to better paid full-time employment she runs the risk of losing many of the social welfare entitlements, including back to school clothing and footwear allowance, medical card, family income supplement, supplementary welfare allowance. As such, women in low-income separated families are constrained severely and may be at risk of falling into poverty.

Theoretical Implications of Atypical Sample

Working class couples tend toward the traditional ideal whilst the middle class tend toward the egalitarian ideal (Hochschild, 2003:196). Hochschild argued that middle class men often saw themselves as "equal partners playing slightly different roles". It is argued that men's higher salaries gave them greater potential power, although they did not talk about it, they had it. Research evidence on fatherhood amongst the working classes argued that although fathers appear to be seeking changes in their role, they encounter many obstacles, particularly upon separation, which prevent them from being dominant or hands-on carers. If the same holds true for working class mothers and fathers in Ireland, the findings of this study may have over-emphasized the extent to which gender equality and individualisation has been achieved within personal relationships.

The divorce literature also suggests that educational level, employment status/income and housing are key factors which influence the frequency of contact between non-residential parents and their children. By excluding families from lower socio-economic groups, I may have over-estimated the level of contact and child support that is taking place. It appears from the international divorce literature that lower income families display less gender equality in their post-separated roles as there are high levels of absent fathers. By under examining the role that class (particularly diversity within each class stratum) shapes the renegotiation of roles post-separation, this study has given a more optimistic view of the extent to which changing family practices are characterised by gender equality and individualisation.

Research Recommendations

It is important to re-iterate that these emerging typologies are provisional and their basis is currently in a small data set. Larger scale studies with a more socially and economically diverse group of separating and divorced parents would test the typologies that have emerged from this small scale study. Such studies would also provide the opportunity to identify different and varied types of renegotiated roles for parents in lower socio-economic families as well as exploring other types of typologies that may exist.

Underlying the questions that I have raised about the opportunities and constraints faced by separating parents renegotiation of family practices, are deeper issues. These relate to the contrasting experiences of women post-separation, which appears to be highly related to age. This research has uncovered a generational (age-cohort) shift in women's experience of divorce and points to a striking polarisation of women's experience of divorce in Ireland. Findings from the research demonstrate that younger women, who are better educated and higher income earners, perceive separation as a form of 'liberation'. They were the initiators of the separation and are seeking a different intimate relationship. On the other hand, the older generation, who were less well educated and dependent spouses during the marriage, perceived the separation as a form of desertion.

These contrasting perceptions and experiences of divorce are indicative of the changes that are occurring in female employment, education and marriage in Ireland over the last three years.

While this study sampled women between mid-30s and mid-50s, further research should follow mothers/wives over a longer period to investigate whether the division of roles established in the first few years of marriage continue after the separation and how it these roles may fluctuate over time. I would speculate that over time greater patterns of equality will become more evident as the number of dual-income households increase and as the introduction of paid childcare becomes more widely available. However research that looks at the trajectory of women's employment patterns before and after separation could examine how other events such as, children starting school, children leaving the home, improvements in paternal and maternal benefits affect the shifts in patterns of female employment both before and after separation.

Further longitudinal research would also establish whether the increased anxiety and conflict described by the involved but stressed couples in the early months/period of separation remain consistent and what impact this has on aspects of their lives such as work, social interaction, re-partnering and mobility. The marital set subsample was drawn from a highly atypical group of couples that experience great levels of conflict and hostility upon separation. Longitudinal research on marital sets that follow the parents' experience of separation from the first few months to beyond the divorce would give a better insight into how levels of conflict fluctuate over the course of the separation.

In addition, the research has tapped into notions of the role of 'maternal centrality' and how mother's ideology of the role of the father may shape paternal involvement. Research into how women view fathers' role would illuminate how gatekeeping and gate closing within families both before and after separation influence paternal involvement. Such research would explore the extent to which women feel supported by their partners in the caring role and the impact this has on the division of roles during the relationship and after the relationship.

The findings demonstrate that grand theories need to be evaluated by qualitative research in order to fully explain and properly inform sociological understandings of changing family practices. One of the limitations of this thesis is that while it provides valuable analysis of the experiences of changing personal relationships at a time of separation, it cannot be assumed that this is generalisable to other types of relationships such as the ways in which couples organise money within intimate relationships, including cohabiting relationships. An important finding which was revealed in this research was that resources are not always shared equally among family members. Since one of the findings is that many of the women who were dependent spouses during the marriage had disagreements over money and unequal sharing and access to money and consumption, there is a need for similar qualitative research to be conducted in matters concerning gender equality and intimate relationships. Moreover, the national context established that marriages are frequently being replaced with cohabitation. If this is the case, it is necessary to explore the experience of 'informal' separation amongst cohabitants. Such research could act as a good basis of comparison for this study.

It was notable that many of the men were served with barring orders (which were later rejected) as a way of removing them from the family home. Given that many of the difficulties in post separation parenting arise at this early stage (and inflated claims of abuse increased parental conflict), research into this practice and experience is desirable.

Although the current study was not designed to explore the influence of gender on labour market decision-making, the results suggest that women's tendency to compromise on labour market participation during the early years in marriage may have a strongly restrictive impact on their freedom to regain employment post separation. This suggests that exploring the impact of separation on employment choices and outcomes for women may be an interesting line of enquiry to pursue in the future.

Conclusions

This study has attempted to analyse the opportunities and constraints faced by separating parents in renegotiating family practices upon marital breakdown. In doing so, the

research has stressed the relationship between the conjugal role, the impact of the separation on the rupture of the conjugal exchange model and the post-separation role as a way to emphasise the changes and continuities that exist in Irish family practices. The research highlighted the important role of the relationships between gender, work and the family as a way to capture the reciprocity between autonomy and choice for individuals and couples upon separation. The conjugal role appears to bring a greater measure of influence on the post-separated role than has been previously researched. The concepts developed from this exploratory research demonstrated how concepts constructed from empirical analysis are better suited to understanding complex realities of separating parents changing relationships in Ireland.

Whereas Young and Wilmott (1975) talked about the symmetrical family and companionate marriage, Giddens outlined how balance and mutuality in confluent love are key features of the 'pure relationship'. Whether a democratic possibility within the family is possible still remains unclear. On the one hand, the emotional power that women wield within the home and as primary caregivers is held in an environment where they lack control over material resources. On the other hand, men, who wield power through their employment and as breadwinners, lack control over the home and family relationships. This research has found that at a time of separation, maternal gatekeeping and paternal banking may be opposite sides of the same coin.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Biographies of interviewees

The following list provides a brief biographical note on each of the 38 people who participated in the study. They are listed in order of interview that took place. The list also outlines whether they were part of a 'marital couple' or whether they were interviewed individually.

RC 1: Mary is in her late-thirties and is a divorced primary carer of a nine year-old girl. She was married for nine years and has been living separate from her ex-husband for four years. The father of her child lives abroad and access is flexible and limited to holidays only. Mary has re-partnered and lives with her new partner who is also separated and has two children. (Individual interview)

RC2: Josh is in his early-forties and is a separated father of two children who are aged nine and five. Josh was married for eleven years and separated five years ago. Josh has experienced difficulties in negotiating access to his children, so he has a fixed arrangement where he sees his children every Monday after school, every Wednesday overnight and every second weekend. (Individual interview)

RC3: Daisy is in her mid-fifties and is a divorced mother with two children who are now aged twenty-two and twenty-one. Daisy was married for twelve years and separated six years ago. She lives in a small rural town. She got a divorce last year and had difficulties earlier on in the separation process in negotiating access. The children are old enough now to arrange contact themselves but contact is infrequent. (Individual interview)

RC4: Larry is in his early-forties and is divorced with two children. Only one of his children is still dependent and she lives with the mother. Larry was married for twelve years and got a divorce last year after being separated for six years. The parents had split custody of the children and the boy lived with Larry and the two daughters lived with the mother. (Individual interview)

RC5: Aine is a divorced mother and the primary carer of three children who are now aged eighteen, sixteen and ten. Aine was married for eighteen years and separated from her ex-husband twelve years ago. She got divorced three years ago. The father of the children applied for sole custody of the children and there was a high level of conflict which followed this story for many years. The children now stay with their father, who has re-partnered, at weekends only. Aine continues to work part time. (Individual interview)

RC6: Celine is in her mid-fifties and is separated. She is the primary carer of a permanently dependent child. Celine was married for twenty years and had three children. The eldest two children are now independent. Celine was a homemaker during the marriage and continues to care for her dependent son on a permanent basis. The father of the child has regular (once a week) but brief contact with his dependent son. (Individual interview)

RC7: Ray is in his late-fifties and separated four years ago. Ray was married for twenty seven years and had three children. Whilst two of the children are independent, the youngest child is in third level education. Ray has regular contact with her now but the initial period after separation was fraught with conflict and poor communication. (Individual interview)

RC8: Cian is in his late thirties and is divorced. Cian is the father to a fifteen, twelve and six year old. He was married for ten years and has been separated for six years. Cian got divorced in 2007. Due to access problems at the beginning, Cian now has a fixed parenting schedule with his ex-wife which offers no flexibility. Cian works in the financial sector and his wife continues to work part time (Individual interview).

RC9: Jackie is in her early-fifties and is a divorced mother of two children. Her children are aged fifteen and thirteen. Jackie was married for eighteen years and separated seven years ago. The father of the children, who has re-partnered, sees the children at weekends. Access has been irregular and inconsistent on his part. A Section 47 report had been applied for and this family have been attending psychotherapy for a number of years to try to manage access. (Individual interview)

RC10: Joanie is in her mid-fifties and was married for twelve years and separated ten years. Joanie has one dependent child who is eighteen years old and she is the primary carer and sole custodian of him. The father has access with the eighteen year-old son and they arrange it independently from the mother however contact is rare. (Individual interview)

RC11: Paula is in her early-fifties and separated five years ago. Paula was married for twenty years and there were four children to the marriage. The access order only pertains to the youngest child who is eight years old. Paula is the primary carer and the father sees the child on a weekday evening for a few hours and on Saturday. The children are aged nineteen, seventeen, fifteen and eight. The older children arrange access with the father independently. Paula is a professional and has re-partnered since the separation. At the time of the interview, Paula had instituted divorce proceedings. (Couple interview with RC38)

RC12: Sandra is in her early-forties and is a professional mother who is separated. Sandra was married for eighteen years and has been separated for a year. Sandra has two children who are aged nine and five. Sandra and her husband have a parenting schedule in place and time with the children is shared on a 40/60 basis. (Individual interview)

RC13: Carol is in her mid forties and is a separated, working mother of four children. The children are all dependent and are aged seventeen, fourteen, ten and ten. Carol was married for twenty years and separated two years ago. She and her ex-husband operate a shared parenting arrangement in the form of a 'week on/ week off' approach. (Individual interview)

RC14: Sally is in her mid-fifties and is a separated mother to five children. Sally was married for twenty years and separated six years ago. The children are now aged sixteen, fourteen, eleven, ten and eight. Sally is the primary carer and all the children live with her in the family home. The father sees the children every Sunday for a few hours. Access is not fixed but usually occurs at the same time each week. (Individual interview)

RC15: Patricia is a separated mother in her early-fifties. Patricia was married for twenty years and separated from her husband three years ago. There were four children to the marriage, who are now aged sixteen, fourteen, thirteen and ten. The children see their father two evenings during the week and stay overnight with him every second weekend. The arrangement is fixed but the parties are on good terms and are flexible. (Individual interview)

RC16: Mona is in her late-thirties and is divorced. Mona was married for ten years and had two children. She separated from her ex-husband four years ago and got a divorce in 2007. The two children are aged thirteen and ten. The children spend one overnight with their father during the

week and stay with him every second weekend. The arrangement is fixed but the parties are flexible if important occasions arise. Mona runs her own business. (Individual interview)

RC17: Georgia is in her early-fifties and is a separated mother. Georgia was married for eighteen years and separated three years ago. Georgia was a stay at home during the marriage but has returned to work since the separation. There are three children to the marriage, all of whom remain dependent. The children are aged twenty-one, nineteen and fifteen. The children were to reside with the mother but all three children reside with the father and have regular contact with the mother. The eldest two children are in university and the younger girl is in school. Georgia and her ex-husband had to seek professional help in order to manage the parenting arrangements for the youngest child. (Couple interview with RC37)

RC18: Warren is in his mid-fifties, is a separated father of three children and lives in a small town. Warren was married for eighteen years and separated seven years ago. At the time of the interview in 2008, divorce proceedings had been instituted. Warren was the primary carer of the three children for the last seven years however at the time of the interview, only one child remained dependent. The children arranged their own contact with their mother and there was very little communication between the ex-spouses. Warren has re-partnered and is living in the family home with his new partner. (Individual interview)

RC 19: Mairead is in her early-forties and is a separated primary carer of four children. Mairead is a professional working mother who separated six years ago after being married for thirteen years. The children are aged seventeen, fifteen, twelve and ten. The parents have a fixed parenting schedule in place and the children spend every second weekend with their father from Friday night to Sunday night. (Individual interview)

RC 20: Mike is in his mid-forties and is a divorced father of three children. Mike was married for twelve years, separated nine years ago and has been divorced for two years. Mike's children are aged seventeen, fifteen and twelve. There is a fixed parenting schedule in place and Mike sees his children every Wednesday evening for a few hours and then three weekends out of every four. There is a high level of conflict in the history of this divorce. Mike was served with a barring order, he vacated the family home and later the barring order was rescinded. Mike has now re-partnered. (Individual interview)

RC21: Laura is her late-thirties and is works part time. Laura was married for nine years and separated four years ago and got a divorce recently. Laura has three children who are aged thirteen, eleven and eight. Laura is the primary carer of the children and the parents have a fixed access schedule in place. The three children stay overnight with their father every Wednesday and they stay overnight every second weekend. (Individual interview)

RC22: Peter is in his early-fifties and was married for twelve years. Peter separated from his wife seven years ago and got divorced two years ago. Peter has two children who are aged twenty and fifteen. Peter sees his children regularly and lives near the family home. There is an access schedule in place which states that Peter has the children every Wednesday night and every second weekend. In recent years this schedule has become more flexible due to the ages of the children. (Individual interview)

RC23: Rob is in his late-thirties and separated four years ago. He was married for ten years and he has one child who is aged six. Rob was part of a one-and-a-half-income family and has a demanding career. There is a fixed access schedule in place and Rob has his child every second

weekend from Friday evening to Monday morning. Rob would like to see more of his child but he is simply not able to reconcile his work and family obligations. (Individual interview)

RC24: Jay is in his mid-thirties and is separated with two daughters. Jay was married for eight years and separated two years ago. The children are aged three and five. Jay shares the parenting with his ex-wife. The two parents live very close to each other. The schedule is very detailed and differs for the two children, with the older one staying overnight more often than the younger child. Jay has a flexible working arrangement and is able to work from home. This case is highly acrimonious and has been wrought with repeated court applications. The parties have worked with an independent assessor to try and manage the parenting schedule. Jay was also served with a barring order at the time of separation, which was later rescinded. (Couple interview with RC29)

RC25: Joseph is a separated father of three children. He is in his mid-fifties and separated two years ago. Joseph was married for twenty years and his three children are aged eighteen, sixteen and fourteen. Joseph has had unsatisfactory contact with his children; there is no fixed arrangement in place due to the ages of the children. Joseph is a professional and has been seeking help to deal with the 'loss of his children'. (Individual interview)

RC26: Margaret is a divorced mother of two children, only one of whom remains dependent. Margaret was married for eighteen years and lived most of her married life abroad. Margaret separated from her ex-husband nine years ago and returned to take up residence in Ireland. Margaret got a divorce three years ago and has since re-partnered. The children are now aged twenty-five and twenty-one. The younger child is still in full time education and is dependent on the mother. Since the separation the father has lived abroad. The children see him about five times a year. The father has since remarried and has a new child. Margaret has been the primary carer of the children for the last nine years. (Individual interview)

RC27: Philip is in his mid-forties and is a separated father of one child. Philip was married for twelve years and separated two years ago. Philip has been seeking to get more access with his nine year old child. The parents have a fixed schedule and the mother is the primary carer. Philip sees his daughter every Monday and Wednesday (after school to the next morning when he brings her to school) and every second Sunday (which is also overnight). However, the parents live on the opposite side of the city and there are large amounts of travelling required on both sides. Philip applied for a Section 47 report to be undertaken to assess the 'best interests of the child' and the schedule resulted from that. (Couple interview with RC36)

RC28: Michelle is in her mid-fifties and is separated mother of three children. Two of the children are now independent but there is still a seventeen year-old dependent child who is at school. Michelle is a professional who was married to her husband for twenty years and lived with him in a small rural town where he and his family are from. Michelle separated from him five years ago. The child who remains dependent attends a boarding school, so access for both parents is limited and flexible. There is no communication between Michelle and her ex-husband. (Individual interview)

RC29: Niamh is a separated working mother of two children and was married to RC 24. Niamh is in her mid-thirties and separated two years ago after being married for eight years. The children are now aged three and five. Niamh believes that she is the primary carer as the children spend 60 per cent of their time with her. Niamh lives in close proximity to her ex-husband and would prefer to move back to the country where she is from. Niamh sought legal permission to relocate, but this was refused by the court. Niamh does not believe that her ex-husband can adequately

parent the children and has made several claims against him including the application of a barring order. Niamh does not agree with the recommendations of the Section 47 report that have been carried out to date. (Couple interview with RC24)

RC30: Gary is in his mid-forties and is a separated father of four children. Gary was married for fourteen years and separated two years ago. Gary is a professional and works long hours. He and his ex-wife are on very good terms and went through mediation to agree a settlement. Gary and his ex-wife share the parenting of the four children, who are aged sixteen, fourteen, twelve and ten. The two youngest children live with the mother and the eldest child lives with the father. The other child is at boarding school and the parents and children visit him together every two-three weeks. The parents live in a rural part of the country and frequently call into each other during the week. There is no fixed arrangement, but Gary stated that he sees the younger girls at least once during the week and every Sunday. (Individual interview)

RC31: Eoin is in his early-forties and is a separated father of two children. Eoin was married for twelve years and has been separated for five years. His two children are aged twelve and eight. He has a fixed parenting schedule in place in which he sees the children on Tuesday and Thursday evening and every second weekend. Eoin has found it difficult to negotiate and manage access with his ex-wife. Eoin described how he couldn't afford a house in the same area as the family home and so the children do not regard his new house as their 'home'. He also feels that his ex-wife has control over the children's movements as she is the primary carer. (Individual interview)

RC32: Ciaran is in his mid-thirties and is a divorced father. Ciaran was married for six years, separated six years ago and got a divorce last year in 2007. The child of the marriage is six years old and due to work constraints Ciaran can only spend every second weekend with her. Ciaran has since re-partnered and has another child. He wished that the schedule could be more flexible. (Individual interview)

RC33: Kathryn is in her early-forties and a separated mother of three young children. Kathryn was married for four years and separated two years ago to RC35. The children are aged five, four and two. Kathryn is a professional who works part time and is the primary carer of the children. There is a fixed parenting schedule in place in which the children see their father for two hours on a Wednesday and Friday and they spend every second weekend with him from the Friday evening to the Sunday morning. The parents have not been able to manage to negotiate satisfactory access. A Section 47 report was conducted which put in place this current arrangement. At the time of the interview the middle child was reluctant to go on access with the father and Kathryn was distressed by the damage this was doing to the son. (Couple interview with RC35)

RC34: Maria is in her late-thirties and has two children. She was married for twelve years and has been separated for five years. The children are aged fourteen and eleven. There is a fixed parenting arrangement in place in which the children spend three out of every four weekends with their father. Maria was a stay at home mother during the marriage and is now doing a postgraduate degree.

RC35: Mark is in his mid-forties and is the ex-husband to RC33. Mark was married for four years and separated two years ago. He is the father to three young children and is dissatisfied at the current access arrangements. Mark is a professional working for himself and manages his work life around the commitments to his children. Mark is eager to gain more quality contact with his children. The couple cannot agree a financial settlement and Kathryn made an application of discovery against Mark, who was believed to be hiding assets. (Couple interview with RC33)

RC36: Stacey is in her mid-forties and is the ex-wife of RC 27. Stacey was married for twenty years and separated two years ago. She has one daughter, to whom she is the primary carer. Stacey works and has always worked throughout her child's life. Stacey is satisfied with the current arrangements but would prefer if more flexibility could be introduced, particularly at weekends. (Couple interview with RC27)

RC37: Edward is in his early-fifties, separated and is the primary carer of three children. Edward was married to RC17 for eighteen years and separated three years ago. The children are aged twenty-two, nineteen and fifteen and all three children remain dependent. Edward and his ex-wife operate a flexible parenting arrangement but they do not communicate well together. Edward believes the children are old enough to decide for themselves where they reside. (Couple interview with RC17)

RC38: Allan is in his early-fifties and is separated. Allan was married to RC11 for twenty years and separated three years ago. There are four children to the marriage, who are aged nineteen, seventeen, fifteen and eight. Since the separation Allan has been living far away from the original family home. He organises contact with the older children directly. The parties could not negotiate satisfactory contact between Allan and the youngest child, so a Section 47 report was conducted. The report recommended that he should see the child every Thursday and for a few hours on a Saturday. Thursday access occurs regularly and satisfactorily, but access on Saturday is irregular and still unsatisfactory. (Couple interview with RC11)

RC39: Cathal is in his mid-fifties and separated four years ago. Cathal was married for seventeen years and had four children. The children were aged fifteen, thirteen, twelve and eight at the time of the separation in 2003. Cathal has seen his children only a handful of times over the last five years and is keen to regain contact with his children. Cathal has since re-partnered and lives in the old matrimonial home.

Appendix II: Sample of Divorce Cases from Family Law Reports

A judicial separation was sought in a reported case in a Circuit Court in the southern region (The Court Services, 2007: 27). The couple had three children all under the age of ten. Both parties agreed that the relationship had been suffering over the years, however, the husband cited his wife's alleged adultery as grounds for judicial separation. The father outlined his attachment and involvement in the children's lives and was seeking a 50-50 parenting arrangement. The parties were heard in court where Judge Kenny gave the parties an indication of the orders he would make but urged the parties to explore the issues overnight. The next day the case had been settled, the grounds for adultery were dropped and the house was to be sold with the proceeds split 55-45 in favour of the wife, there would be joint custody of the children with a schedule of access and the would pay €250 a week in ongoing maintenance for them.

Another case in the southern Circuit Court dealt with a custody and access dispute (Coulter, 2008a:26). The parties were separated and there were three children to the marriage. The eldest was independent and the youngest child was living with the father. The middle girl, the child who was the subject of the dispute, was sixteen years old and lived with the mother. The mother was reported to have a drinking problem and the father was seeking custody of the sixteen year old daughter. The mother had been suffering from depression and had threatened to commit suicide. Two psychologists' reports stated that the daughter was in an impossible situation, that she was unable to leave her mother herself without the decision being taken for her. The judge believed that "A child needs stability and you're not in a position to guarantee that stability. The young woman is torn between what is going on and is trying to manage a situation that no sixteen-year-old should have to manage and it isn't good for the parent either". The judge awarded custody to the father and ordered that free and open access with the mother take place.

A subsequent divorce application was made by a wife who was seeking to amend the terms of the separation agreement, in what is known as a 'second bite of the cherry' (Coulter, 2008a:32). In this case the parties were married in 1983 and had two children now aged twenty-three and fourteen. The parties entered a separation agreement on 15 March 2002. Under the separation agreement the family home was transferred into the wife's name and she received a lump sum of €35,000 from her husband. The wife was to receive monthly child maintenance of €500 for the now fourteen-year-old boy who was to live with her. Since the separation agreement difficulties had arisen between the child and his mother and the child chose to live with his father who had stopped paying maintenance. In reviewing the access orders set out in the separation, the judge made an order giving the mother access at her home from 4pm on a school day until his father picked him up and access on Sundays. The husband's counsel was concerned with that order and its potential consequences given that the child might not want to go to his mother, and the husband could do nothing about that. The judge then added a note to the order for access noting that the child was fourteen years old: 'It was made without his presence in court and it, "obviously relies on his co-operation.'

In an unusual set of circumstances presented in a case in the Midland Circuit Court, a young boy, aged fourteen, had become involved in the legal proceedings and sought to change his custody arrangement (Family Law Matters, 2008b:32). The boy had been living with his mother and two older sisters but had become uncomfortable in the house since his mother's partner moved into the house. The boy contacted the solicitor and informed him of his wishes. The mother did not believe that it was in the child's best interest to live away from her and his sisters. Judge Kennedy appointed a Guardian ad Litem⁹⁰ for the boy and interviewed the boy in chambers. The judge stated he was happy to give the boy's father primary residence and custody. He said: "I want to take things very slowly; the boy should be facilitated to see his mother as he wants to and I am giving each side liberty to apply to this court in June if necessary. As the child is so young the situation needs to be monitored closely."

Another married couple who had initiated divorce proceedings incurred a dispute over access. The married couple, who had a son aged five and a daughter aged nine, had separated five years before and initially the children lived with their mother, who then began a new relationship and had another child. The mother experienced financial difficulties afterwards and thought that the father could better provide for the children. The children went to live with the father and although she had continued to see the children she had no overnight access. The purpose of the current hearing was to alter the access arrangement as the mother now wanted overnight access once a month in a new house she shared with her new partner. In deciding the matter the judge stated that "(There) 'should be some report from some appropriate body in relation to the children visiting with (the new partner) and staying overnight.'" He directed that a report should be before the court from some responsible third party and that the legal teams should agree who that party should be.

⁹⁰ The role of the Guardian ad Litem is to independently establish the wishes, feelings and interests of the child and present them to the court with recommendations. The Guardian ad Litem is independent from all other professionals and agency staff involved with the child and his/her family

Appendix III: Cover Letter from the Solicitor

Dear []

I am writing to inform you that I have been asked, by a researcher at University of Dublin, Trinity College, if any of my clients would be willing to participate in her research study. The main focus of the research is on renegotiating family practices post separation/divorce. The researcher does not have access to your name or address, which is why we are writing on her behalf.

The researcher needs to interview a sample of couples who have recently divorced or separated. The study, being done by Elena Moore for her PhD thesis, seeks to explore the way in which parents re-organise their financial and parenting responsibilities post separation or divorce. As she has no access to separated parents she has asked us to help her to find a sample. We are sending out a letter to all parents on our files and hope that some of you will be willing to be interviewed by her.

I wish to make it clear that the study is not conducted by this firm or the court. None of the information gathered by the researcher will be seen by this firm or the court. I also wish to point out that you are under no obligation to take part. Any possible future judicial application or involvement by you will not be affected in any means whatsoever if you take part in this study.

I hope that you can assist this researcher in her endeavours. Her work will be of great significance and importance in the development of this field. To date, not enough research has been done and your participation will be sincerely appreciated. If you wish to participate in this research study, please find all the necessary information in the enclosed letter.

Yours sincerely,

Invitation to take part in an interview

Dear parent,

I am writing to you because I hope you may be able to help me with my research. I am carrying out a project on how parents negotiate and manage parenting after separation or divorce. X Solicitors has agreed to send this letter on my behalf because I cannot access your contact details without your permission.

Separation and divorce are now part of everyday life in Ireland. Although divorce was introduced over ten years ago there is very little research on how parents organise their lives with their children once they no longer live together. This research hopes to address this gap in our knowledge. Legally, parents are awarded either joint or sole custody, however, this does not tell us anything about the realities and practicalities of financial and parenting arrangements after divorce or separation. This research is important as it hopes to increase awareness among policy makers, the public and those who work directly with families, of the concerns and the challenges of post-separated family life. Better understanding of parents' views and experiences will help to provide the basis for better support of parents and their children.

I would like to talk to you about the arrangements you have made. I hope to talk to parents who have agreed and worked out financial, custody and access arrangements that both are happy with. I am also planning to talk to parents for whom childcare and parenting arrangements are a source of disagreement. I realise that children and parenting can be demanding and that arrangements vary between parents. This is why I believe it is important to speak to parents themselves and get their views on how they organise their family lives post separation or divorce.

If you agree to be interviewed, I would like to talk to you about the following:

- How much contact time you have with your children and what happens on contact visits
- How do you allocate money between the households
- How do you organise care and contact during weekends, holidays, special occasions
- How do you share expenses, childcare and parenting tasks with your former spouse
- Do you regularly discuss your children's education, discipline etc.
- What are the greatest difficulties that you have encountered since divorce or separation
- Do you have any advice for other parents seeking separation and divorce? Any issues that have proved to be problematic or difficult

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to you in more detail about your financial, parenting and care arrangements. If you are willing to take part in a confidential interview then please send me your contact details on the slip attached in the SAE included. I will contact you about arranging a convenient time and place to meet with you. The interview will last approximately one hour. All the information I gather is confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

I would like to thank X Solicitors for allowing me this opportunity and for supporting this research.

Many thanks for your help. Please phone Elena Moore on 01 896 3244 or 086 867 9098 if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

If you wish you may also contact my PhD supervisor, who supports and oversees this research.

Dr. Evelyn Mahon M.A. M.Sc. Ph.D.F.T.C.D.
Senior Lecturer and Research Director
School of Social Work and Social Policy
Arts Building
Trinity College
Dublin 2

Contact Details

Yes, I would be willing to take part in a confidential interview about my experiences of post-separation parenting.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Telephone

Work/daytime: _____

Evenings: _____

**Return to: Elena Moore, School of Social Work and Social Policy,
2nd Floor MSW, 3 College Green, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2.**

Appendix IV: Parent's Interview Guide

My name is Elena from the School of Social Work and Social Policy in Trinity College. As you know, I am here to talk to you about your experience of separation and in particular renegotiating financial and parenting arrangements upon separation. I am conducting the interview as part of my postgraduate studies aiming to find out more about the reality of life post separation or divorce. The interview should last about an hour or an hour-and-a-half. All the information that you give me will remain confidential. Extracts from the interview may appear in my thesis, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included. Your participation is entirely voluntary, you are free to end the interview at any time and you can refuse to answer any question.

1. Nature of Separation

- As you are aware, this study is about your experience of separation and in particular parenting after separation. So going back to the time of separation, perhaps you might tell me a bit about when things started to go wrong in the relationship?
- Describe the marital relationship: allocation of paid and unpaid work and allocation of money during the marriage

2. Nature of Contact and Financial Organisation

- Could you tell me a bit about how your arrangement with the children works? For example the frequency and where do you get to see the children and what happens on contact visits?
- Initially after the separation how often did you see the children? Is that still the same arrangement?
- Could you tell me a bit about how your financial arrangement works? For example, who pays for visits to the dentist, school trips and clothes?

3. Arranging and Negotiating

- How did you come to these arrangements?
- Have there been any major changes in this pattern over time? If so, what would you say is the main reason for the change?
- Have there been any major difficulties with these changes? How, if possible, did you resolve these difficulties?
- Can you talk about how the overall pattern of contact is working for everyone?
- What, if anything, do you find satisfactory/unsatisfactory about the current arrangement?

3. Parental Responsibility and Involvement

- Could you tell me a bit about how you and your former spouse have shared the responsibilities of raising your children (aside from the living arrangement).

- How do you and your former spouse agree on how decisions relating to the children are made?

4. Sources of advice and support

- Did you seek any professional support or advice?
- Who would you rely on for help and support?

5. Evaluation I: Positive Aspects

- Can you talk about any of the things that make your arrangement work well? What sorts of things have affected your contact or financial arrangements?
- What conditions do you think need to be in place for joint parenting to be a workable arrangement?

6. Evaluation II: Difficulties

- Are there currently any areas of disagreement between you and your former spouse regarding the raising and caring of the children or the payment of bills? If so, what are those areas of disagreement?
- And what about the things that make your arrangements difficult?

7. Closing questions

- Would you change anything?
- Is there any information you wish you had at the time of separation that might have made contact with your children easier or better?
- What advice would you give to other separated parents in making arrangements for children after separation?
- Is there anything else you would like to add? Or is there anything important that this study has not covered?

Appendix V: Solicitor's Interview Guide

My name is Elena from the School of Social Work and Social Policy in Trinity College. As you know, I am here to talk to you about your professional experience of managing and negotiating parenting and financial arrangements post separation. I am conducting the interview as part of my postgraduate studies which aims to find out more about the reality of family life post separation or divorce. The interview should last about an hour. All the information that you give me will remain confidential. Extracts from the interview may appear in my thesis, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included. Your participation is entirely voluntary, you are free to end the interview at any time and you can refuse to answer any question.

1. Introduction

- Could you tell me a bit about your qualifications and experience in this area?
- Why did you choose family law as your area of practice?
- Who do you think are the most recognised specialists in this area?

2. Taking Instructions

- Could you outline your approach in taking instructions for preparing arrangements for children and the division of assets upon separation?
- How do you advise a client who is unsure of the parenting arrangement?

3. Accounts of How Family Members Handle Access and Maintenance Disputes

- Could you tell me about how family members handle access and financial disputes?
- Can you tell me a bit about how parents negotiate their own parenting arrangement, either from reported or direct consultations which you have had with your clients.
- Can you give me an account of your own negotiating role?
- Based on your experience with clients, what kinds of ideas, norms and beliefs operate in families concerning parenting or contact with children and sharing income post-separation

4. Relationship with Clients

- Can you tell me a bit about the personal nature of your work? Establishing a rapport with the client/ Sensitive nature of the discussions/ Emotionally charged work?
- What do you think are the crucial points in managing and negotiating a parenting plan and a financial settlement post separation?

5. Interface between families and the law

- Can you tell me a bit about the negotiations taking place between what parents want to do and what the law will allow them to do?

6. Closing question

- What do you think are the crucial points in managing and negotiating a parenting plan and a financial settlement post separation?
- Now that you know what the research is about, is there anything that I should have asked but didn't?

Appendix VI: Parents' Information Sheet**Renegotiating Family Practices Post Separation: An Irish Case Study**

You are being asked to participate in a study on how separation and divorce influence the family practices between parents and their children. This research is part of a PhD thesis in Sociology in Trinity College Dublin on how parents organise their lives with their children once they no longer live together. The study is being undertaken by Elena Moore and is being supervised by Dr. Evelyn Mahon.

Separation and divorce are now part of everyday life in Ireland. While legislation for separation was introduced in 1989 and divorce in 1996 there is very little research on how parents organise their lives with their children and between each other once they no longer live together. This research hopes to address this gap in our knowledge.

In an earlier piece of research we discovered that legally parents are awarded joint or sole custody. But these terms do not tell us anything about subsequent contact between parents and their children. We also know that each of these orders can have different implications for the way in which children reside with and have contact with each parent.

We know that the number of separated parents with children is increasing but we know little about how they organise their weekly lives with their children. Summer holidays, birthdays and times like Christmas can present timetabling difficulties. How do parents negotiate these arrangements? How do former couples share the cost of raising children? Who pays for the child's school trip and how is that arranged?

I am looking to interview you as part of this research. I am concerned to hear the views of both fathers and mothers regarding custody and access arrangements and financial arrangements. I am also interested in knowing whether the arrangements have changed over time and whether there are ongoing issues.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and should you wish to withdraw from the interview, you may do so at any time. The interview should not take longer than one hour. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded using a recording device. The interview will be transcribed; all information is strictly confidential, references to names and personal details will not show up in any reports, publications or product of this research.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study. I can be contacted on 01 896 3244

Appendix VII: Solicitors' Information Sheet

Renegotiating Family Practices Post Separation: An Irish Case Study

My name is Elena Moore and I am carrying out research on renegotiating family practices as part of my PhD in Sociology with the School of Social Work and Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin. The title of the research is 'Renegotiating Family Practices Post Separation'. I have completed the first phase of the research which was observing family circuit court cases over five months. The next phase of the research intends to investigate how parents manage and experience post-separation parenting and financial provision in their everyday lives. The study is being supervised by Dr. Evelyn Mahon.

I am looking to interview you as part of this research. I am concerned to hear the views of lawyers regarding the following issues:

1. How family members handle dividing assets and access, based on your own experiences of dealing with clients.
2. What kinds of ideas, norms and beliefs operate in contemporary families concerning parenting /contact with children and sharing financial resources post-separation?
3. How are matters related to parenting and finances post-separation are negotiated?
4. What is the interface between families and the law on matters related to proper provision, custody and access?
5. Is there an underlying tension between family responsibility and the legal principle for joint custody?

The interview should not take longer than one hour. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded using a recording device. The interview will be transcribed; all information is strictly confidential, references to names and personal details will not show up in any reports, publications or product of this research.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study. I can be contacted on 01 896 3244 or 086 867 9098.

Appendix VIII: Consent Form for Parents**Renegotiating Family Practices Post Separation: An Irish Case Study**

You are being asked to participate in a study on how separation and divorce influence family practices. This research is part of a PhD thesis in Sociology in Trinity College Dublin on how parents organise their lives with their children once they no longer live together. The study is being undertaken by Elena Moore* and is being supervised by Dr. Evelyn Mahon.

Separation and divorce are now part of everyday life in Ireland. While legislation for separation was introduced in 1989 and divorce in 1996 there is very little research on how parents organise their lives with their children once they no longer live together. This research hopes to address this gap in our knowledge.

In an earlier piece of research we discovered that legally parents are awarded joint or sole custody. But these terms do not tell us anything about subsequent contact between parents and their children. We also know that each of these orders can have different implications for the way in which children reside with and have contact with each parent.

We know that the number of separated parents with children is increasing but we know little about how they organise their weekly lives with their children. Summer holidays, birthdays and times like Christmas can present timetabling difficulties. How do parents negotiate these arrangements? How do former couples share the cost of raising children? Who pays for the child's school trip and how is that arranged?

I am looking to interview you as part of this research. I am concerned to hear the views of both fathers and mothers regarding custody and access arrangements. I am also interested in knowing whether the arrangements have changed over time and whether there are ongoing issues.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and should you wish to withdraw from the interview, you may do so at any time. The interview should not take longer than one hour. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded using a recording device. The interview will be transcribed; all information is strictly confidential, references to names and personal details will not show up in any reports, publications or product of this research.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study. I can be contacted on 01 896 3244

I would like to express our thanks to you from taking part in this study

I have read and understood the above:

I have had the opportunity to fully discuss my concerns and questions, and I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research and the possible risks and consequences.

I give my permission to participate in this research.

Yes No

I give my permission to record this interview.

Yes No

Research Participant Date

Researcher Date

Please send a report on the results of the project.

Yes No

Contact information for those requesting a research report.

Name: _____

Address: _____

***Elena Moore,
School of Social Work and Social Policy,
2nd Floor MSW,
3 College Green
Dublin 2**

**Tel: 01 896 3244
Mob: 086 867 9098**

Appendix IX: Consent Form for Solicitors

Renegotiating Family Practices Post Separation: An Irish Case Study

You are being asked to participate in a study on how separation and divorce influence family practices. This research is part of a PhD thesis in Sociology in Trinity College Dublin on how parents organise their lives with their children once they no longer live together. The study is being undertaken by Elena Moore* and is being supervised by Dr. Evelyn Mahon.

Separation and divorce are now part of everyday life in Ireland. While legislation for separation was introduced in 1989 and divorce in 1996 there is very little research on how parents organise their lives with their children once they no longer live together. This research hopes to address this gap in our knowledge.

In an earlier piece of research we discovered that legally parents are awarded joint or sole custody. But these terms do not tell us anything about subsequent contact between parents and their children. We also know that each of these orders can have different implications for the way in which children reside with and have contact with each parent.

We know that the number of separated parents with children is increasing but we know little about how they organise their weekly lives with their children. Summer holidays, birthdays and times like Christmas can present timetabling difficulties. How do parents negotiate these arrangements? How do former couples share the cost of raising children? Who pays for the child's school trip and how is that arranged

I am looking to interview you as part of this research. I am concerned to hear the views of family law solicitors regarding custody and access arrangements.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and should you wish to withdraw from the interview, you may do so at any time. The interview should not take longer than one hour. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded using a recording device. The interview will be transcribed; all information is strictly confidential, references to names and personal details will not show up in any reports, publications or product of this research.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study. I can be contacted on 01 896 3244

I would like to express our thanks to you from taking part in this study

I have read and understood the above:

I have had the opportunity to fully discuss my concerns and questions, and I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research and the possible risks and consequences.

I give my permission to participate in this research.

Yes No

I give my permission to record this interview.

Yes No

Research Participant Date

Researcher Date

Please send a report on the results of the project.

Yes No

Contact information for those requesting a research report.

Name: _____

Address: _____

***Elena Moore,
School of Social Work and Social Policy,
2nd Floor MSW,
3 College Green
Dublin 2**

**Tel: 01 896 3244
Mob: 086 867 9098**

Appendix X: Measuring Attitudinal Support for Gender Equality in Ireland

Table 11: Factor Analysis of the Gender Equality Scale Ireland (five-item)

	Component
Men make better political leaders than women	.755
University education is more important for a boy	.647
Men should have more right to a job than women	.611
Necessary for woman to have children to be fulfilled	.551
Woman wants to have children as single parent	.454
% of total variance	37.4%

Note: Principal Component Analysis factor analysis

Source: Selected Irish Data from World Values Study 2001

Results

The 5 items of the 'gender equality scale' were subjected to

- The 5 items of the 'gender equality scale' were subjected to Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation using SPSS. Prior to performing the Principal Components Analysis the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .67, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1974), and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (Barlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the use of factor analysis.
- One factor with Eigenvalues above 1 were initially extracted. These explained 37.4%, of the variance. Catell's (1966) Scree test suggested that only one factor should be extracted. For ease of analysis it was decided to extract only one factor.