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Abstract

The research explores the way in which postseparated parents continue to exert a bidirectional force on each other following divorce and separation. The study draws on qualitative interviews with 39 separated mothers and fathers in Ireland, including five marital sets of former couples. The study found many fathers adopted a range of *paternal banking* strategies on separation and that these strategies appeared influential on, or in response to, maternal gatekeeping behavior. The article develops the concept of paternal banking by linking it to maternal gatekeeping practices postseparation. The research indicates that an investigation of maternal gatekeeping in the absence of a review of paternal banking practices undermines the nature of parental role battle within the postseparated couple. The article argues that this is especially true when located in a state, like Ireland, where traditional family structures are pervasive.

Keywords

divorce, family separation, maternal gatekeeping, paternal banking, parental roles

According to research on family practices over the last decade, 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

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in employment patterns shift gender relationships. However, maternal and paternal roles are negotiated by couples and open to a complex set of structural and gender influences. Arlie Hochschild's (1989) book *The Second Shift* highlighted the strategies used by couples to avoid seeing obvious discrepancies between their ideals of equality and the actual practices of everyday life. Her findings demonstrated the slowness of changes in family patterns toward equality. Analysis of men and women's time use in Ireland found that traditional family practices are pervasive (Breen & Cooke, 2005; McGinnity & Russell, 2008). Recent findings revealed that "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 domestic workload than men" (McGinnity & Russell, 2008, p. xi). This gender difference in the allocation of time to employment and unpaid tasks has important consequences on separation. One manifestation of an unequal division of labor during the marriage is women's superior position as family managers and child care experts. Women's superior position as child care experts creates the notion that "fathers and mothers have a different connection to their children and that the one held by the mother is strong, vaster and more profound" (Doucet, 2006, p. 220).

Researchers over the last few years have paid closer attention to the ways in which mothers encourage or resist men's involvement in family work and child care (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Trinder, 2008). *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 & Hawkins, 1999; Arendell, 1997; Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Allen and Hawkins (1999) argue that it can be "one important source of men's under involvement in domestic labor and may inhibit mutually satisfactory arrangements for sharing family work" (p. 200). They present a model of three dimensions of maternal gatekeeping: mothers setting rigid standards, external validation of mothering identity, and gender differentiated conceptions of family roles. Allen and Hawkins (1999) highlighted that measures of family power and how it relates to gatekeeping practices is less well understood and requires further investigation. This article seeks to investigate how the parental role of financial provision postseparation might be integrated into research on maternal gatekeeping. This article explores the ways in which fathers, postseparation, control the flow of money while experiencing maternal gatekeeping activities.

Furstenburg and Cherlin (1991) argued that the factors that are likely to influence maternal gatekeeping include family structure, financial contributions, social capital, and ideology. Focusing on family structure first,

gatekeeping may be particularly relevant when the father does not reside with his children as is often the case in separated and divorced families. Wolchik, Fenaughty, and Braver (1996) found that between a quarter and a third of nonresident fathers reported various forms of intrusion and obstruction from the mother with father–child contact. However, other research relating to separated families indicated that mothers also facilitate father’s involvement (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). Trinder (2008) elaborated on the meaning of gatekeeping in postdivorce families by integrating both maternal gateclosing (behavior that limits involvement) and gateopening behaviors (behavior that enhances involvement). Her research findings suggested that maternal perceptions of paternal competence, child welfare beliefs, parental relationship quality, and parental role battles and bargains were all strongly linked to different types of gatekeeping postdivorce (Trinder, 2008). The parental role bargain was “a contextual factor involving the role bargain struck between parents” (Trinder, 2008, p. 1320). Although the definition of parental role is not stated clearly in her article, it is expected that the various roles that parents bargain over are the role as carer and the role as provider. Trinder argued that mothers’ behaviors are “at least in part a response to fathers’ beliefs and behavior as well as a trigger of what fathers may or may not do” (Trinder, 2008, p. 1320). However, Trinder does not elaborate on what fathers “may or may not do” both before and after separation. In the literature consulted, maternal gatekeeping is examined without much attention given to the contexts in which interparental support (conjugal role) in intact families is carried out. It is unclear whether fathers’ behaviors in Trinder’s research relates solely to parental involvement in terms of caring or whether they include parental involvement in terms of breadwinning.

The findings from Pruett, Arthur, and Ebling (2007) offer some insight into how past support within marriage affects postseparation behaviors. Pruett et al. (2007) explored the level of past reciprocal parenting support in the marriage. Their findings suggested that gatekeeping is a method through which mothers’ perceptions of their marriage influences their current willingness to facilitate father involvement after divorce (Pruett et al., 2007). Their research focused on reciprocal theory and suggested that payback occurs from events and relations between spouses prior to divorce, however it does so, similar to Trinder’s research, within the one-dimensional notion of parenting as caring. This article questions whether it is possible to examine caring practices (past and present) without having regard to reciprocal tasks and duties carried out within the context of family life, such as financial provision. This article will argue that such methods may be most inappropriate for

traditional families, in which the role bargain struck prior to the break-up is an exchange of caring for financial provision.

The role of financial contributions has not been completely overlooked in the maternal gatekeeping literature. Allen and Hawkins (1999) argued that one of the underlying motivations for maternal gatekeeping may be the mother's perception of the father's competence in his broader male (gendered) family role, that is, when fathers make greater financial contributions to the family, mothers view them as more competent (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Research evidence on the relationship between negotiated gatekeeping tactics and postseparation financial matters however remains mixed (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Greif, 1997; Lin & McLanahan, 2007; Roy & Dyson, 2005; Sano, Richards, & Zvonkovic, 2008). Whereas some research found that if the fathers are in arrears with child support, the mother may prevent visitation with children (Greif, 1997), other research found no direct relationship between financial contributions and maternal gatekeeping (Fagan & Barnett, 2003), particularly for lower-class families (Sano et al., 2008). Research evidence on gatekeeping practices with incarcerated fathers revealed that mothers often recruit or positively encourage parental involvement to obtain much-needed financial contributions (Roy & Dyson, 2005). Many aspects of the relationship between financial contributions and maternal gatekeeping remain unclear, and Fagan and Barnett (2003) suggest that further qualitative investigations are needed to understand what is going on in these different family processes. Although there is extensive research on maternal gatekeeping and how it may facilitate or inhibit father involvement postseparation, there is little understanding of how fathers' exert power and control by restricting the flow of money postseparation. How does financial provision postseparation and maternal gatekeeping compare? Are they opposite sides of the gendered parental role battle postseparation? And is this a continuation of the role agreement (conjugal role) developed in the marriage?

Previous work on maternal gatekeeping has used identity theory and family systems theory to conceptually guide their studies and help explain how roles and relationship interaction in families are redefined on divorce (Adamsons, 2010; Madden-Derdich, Leonard, & Christopher, 1999; Stone & McKenry, 1998). As Madden-Derdich et al. (2000) outlined, the rules that regulate relationship interaction on divorce are not always explicit and changing parenting roles after divorce may become more complicated. Pruett et al. (2007) pertinently described how

the different marital roles that parents choose in the marriage to create efficiency winds up becoming a major source of anxiety and conflict

after divorce, when efficiency and trust give way to primordial desires to get as much as one can of the waning relationship. (p. 718)

This article will focus on how each parent exercises their familial power and authority to get as much as they can, while controlling the actions of their ex-spouse. The role of maternal gatekeeping as outlined above demonstrated how mothers may exercise their familial power and authority by controlling the actions of fathers in relation to their involvement with the children. If women attempt to gain power in relation to men postseparation, do men also attempt to gain power in relation to women postseparation? If so, how do men use their power within families to “get as much as they can?” This article seeks to investigate how the parental role of financial provision postseparation might be integrated into research on maternal gatekeeping by exploring the ways in which fathers give and withhold money as well as experience maternal gatekeeping within the postseparated family.

Money is a very complex phenomenon within the family. One of the most important aspects of money in families is power (Stocks, Diaz, & Hallerod, 2007). 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). A traditional division of labor, with one male breadwinner and a dependent spouse, still represents almost half of contemporary Irish households (Breen & Cooke, 2005; Russell et al., 2009). Although men and women in Irish couples are ever-increasingly sharing in the market provision for the household, men typically earn more than their female partners (Russell et al., 2009) and may have greater economic strength and financial advantage following the separation. A major sticking point for resident mothers in the immediate period after the announcement of a separation is their former husband’s dominance and control over the mother through the restriction of the flow of money, in particular, maintenance for the children (Smart & Neale, 1999). Although a sizeable literature examines the factors that affect maternal gatekeeping behavior (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Greif, 2000; Lin & McLanahan, 2007; Roy & Dyson, 2005; Sano et al., 2008), a second large body of literature examines money in families, how it is distributed, managed, and consumed (Burgoyne, 1990; Nyman, 1999, Pahl, 1989). Both these literatures even include studies that focus specifically on divorce, that is, maternal gatekeeping in postseparated families (Trinder, 2008) and money, income, and economic consequences of divorce (Gadalla, 2009; McManus & DiPreite, 2001). Much less attention has been given to how this literature may be linked to each other; in particular, the relationship between maternal

gatekeeping and distribution of money in postseparated households. This article attempts to integrate these literatures by demonstrating how maternal gatekeeping practices and the distribution of money in postseparated families may be linked. Trinder (2008) explained how gatework is a “bi-directional process rather than a linear unidirectional act” (p. 1298). Although 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 postseparated households, which also act as reciprocal influences. Recent work on maternal gatekeeping has focused primarily on parental involvement within postseparated families, without placing it in a wider (division of labor) exchange relationship or explaining how it may be embedded in wider family processes. Although Pruett et al. (2007) research attempted to gain a better understanding of maternal gatekeeping practices postseparation by looking at reciprocal theory, their work did not examine economic provision as a form of paternal involvement. This article aims to explore how maternal gatekeeping is part of a wider gendered parental role battle within postdivorce families by exploring the ways in which paternal banking (behavior which limits or enhances financial provision) behaviors interact with maternal gatekeeping.

Method

The findings are drawn from the author’s qualitative doctoral study of how Irish families renegotiate family practices on separation and divorce by examining the renegotiation of responsibilities and caring patterns at a time of divorce or separation. The use of in-depth interviews allowed for additional topics to surface and the concepts of gatekeeping and money management within postdivorce families emerged as key concepts.

The sample consisted of interviews with 39 separated White Irish parents. This sample included five former couples ($n = 10$), where both parents were interviewed separately, and 29 “singletons,”¹ where only one parent participated in the research. The sample of “singletons,” as presented in Table 1, comprised 16 mothers and 13 fathers. The spread of the ages of the respondents was broad-ranging from mid-30s to mid-50s. 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. Table 1 indicates how the gender of the respondents was divided evenly between mothers and fathers. At the time of the interview, the average time since separation for a respondent was 3.1 years, while the range was 1 to 12 years. The average time for divorce was 1.6 years, while the range was 0 to 3 years. This distribution of time since separation is reflective of sampling parents

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of “Singleton” Sample (N = 29)

Characteristic	Independent Banking And Proactive Gateopening	Paternal Banking and Proactive Gateclosing		
	Egalitarians (6)	Involved but Constrained (11)	Aggrieved Mothers (9)	Excluded Fathers (3)
Gender	Female (5) Male (1)	Male (8) Female (3)	Female (9)	Male (3)
Age range	38-43 years	37-45 years	52-56 years	54-55 years
Age of children	>10 years old	>10 years old	11+	14+
Length of marriage (range)	10-20 years	10-20 years	12-20 years	17-27 years
Time since separation	2-4 years	5+ years	5+ years	2-4 years
Household type	Dual income (5)	One-and-a-half (11)	One-and-a-half (2)	Single (3)
	One-and-a-half (1)		Single Income (7)	
Female educational attainment	4th level (4)	3rd level degree (5)	3rd level nondegree (3)	Upper secondary (3)
	3rd level degree (2)	3rd level nondegree (4)	Upper secondary (6)	
Male educational attainment	4th level (3)	3rd level degree (8)	4th level (2)	3rd level degree (3)
	3rd level degree (3)	Upper secondary(1)	3rd level degree (4) 3rd level nondegree	
Female employment status (postseparation)	Full-time professional (4)	Part-time high skill (3)	Part-time low skill (2)	Homemaker (3)
	Full-time managerial (2)		Homemaker (7)	
Family home ^a	Model 2 (3) Model 3 (3)	Model 1 (3) Model 2 (3) Model 3 (2) Model 8 (1)	Model 1 (7) Model 3 (2)	Model 1 (1) Model 5 (2)
Maintenance order	None	Child (9) Spousal (1)	Child (9) Spousal (3)	Child (3) Spousal (3)

a. Financial models used by couples for organizing the future of the family home as developed by Mahon and Moore (2011).

who were at least 1 year separated. Because of the wide range of ages of children in the study (ages 2-25 years), the researcher grouped the ages according to whether the children were old enough to determine for themselves who they lived with postseparation and what contact took place.² Therefore, the sample was divided into two groups—children less than 12 years old ($n = 26$) and children between ages 12 and 23 years ($n = 43$).

On the basis of the respondents' occupations, more than three quarters (approximately 80%) of the respondents may be regarded as white-collar middle class, whereas less than one quarter (21%) are working class. This overrepresentation of white-collar class suggests that this study reflect the experiences of separation in middle-class families. The egalitarians were part of dual-income households, while the rest of the groups comprised single or one-and-a-half income households. Half of the female "singletons" were homemakers during the marriage, while a quarter were working part-time during the marriage. Table 1 also presents the outcome of the family home and maintenance award postseparation.³ In half the cases, the family home was awarded to the mothers without any compensation to the father (Model 1). This outcome was most likely for mothers in the aggrieved group or in the involved but constrained group.

The family home was more evenly divided among the egalitarians, with half of them splitting the proceeds of the sale 50:50 (Model 3) and the other half of the mothers bought out the home with compensation paid to the husband (Model 2). Spousal maintenance was also awarded in all groups apart from the egalitarians. It is interesting to note that the egalitarians did not have child maintenance awards, as each parent had the children for 50% of the time and thus incurred the cost of caring for the child equally.

The method of sampling for this research was opportunistic. Given the highly sensitive nature of marital breakdown, direct access to a divorcing parent sample was not available to the researcher. The researcher recruited a cohort of parents through lawyers so that the researchers could find parents who were recently or still part of legal proceedings. Separated parents were recruited from a mail-out from a private family law lawyer and referrals from two community family law centers. At the end of each interview with a separated parent, the researcher requested the permission to contact the interviewee's ex-spouse. Of the 29 respondents, 20 did not give their permission for the researcher to contact their ex-spouse. The response rate from the interviewee's ex-spouse was poor among the other 9 respondents, and only one ex-spouse agreed to participate in the research. Consequently, other means of recruiting marital sets were attempted, including contacting one-parent centers and family therapists. The therapist agreed to give these former clients

information about the study to both spouses of the couple. This method proved to work well and five marital sets were willing to participate.

The sampling of marital sets through a family therapist however led to a limitation within the research. This sample of five couples represents an overly hostile group, who were unable to agree on a parenting schedule. These couples had separated recently, that is, within the last 2 years.⁴ Given that parental conflict is most frequent and intense during the first 2 years after separation (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982) and these couples were only recently separated, a high level of conflict was also expected. The couples were interviewed separately and each spouse presented different versions of their postseparation period. With regard to the factual recollection of accounts, the marital sets' accounts were very consistent; however, each spouse interpreted these events quite differently. The separate diverging accounts represent gender-specific perspectives of his-and-hers accounts, of the same phenomenon. The separate interview allowed the two spouses to discuss how they experienced the behavior of the other spouse and this makes the composite story much richer.

As can be seen from Table 2, the spread of the ages of the couples and duration of the marriages at the time of the interview was broad. A common characteristic shared by all the couples, which reflects the sampling used, is that they recently separated in the last 2 years. On the basis of both husbands' and wives' occupations, four of the marriages may be regarded as middle class. All but one of the wives had been to university and all but one of the husbands had obtained a third-level degree. 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; one of the households was a one-and-a-half-income household, whereas two couples were part of a single-income household. A common feature of the couples, which again reflects the sampling used, is that all couples had at least one child aged 11 years 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.

After receiving ethical approval from the School of Social Work and Social Policy ethics committee, individual in-depth interviews with separated parents and separated couples were conducted in 2008. The majority of the interviews with the parents and couples took place in the researcher's university office. However, a few also took place in the respondents' place of

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Marital Set Sample ($N = 10$)

Characteristic	Independent Banking and Justifiable Gateclosing		Paternal Banking and Proactive Gateclosing		
	Allan and Paula	Jay and Niamh	Mark and Kathryn	Phillip and Stacey	Edward and Georgia
Age	56, 55	37, 35	45, 41	44, 43	54, 51
Age of children	>9 years	>5 years	>5 years	>9 years	>10 years
Length of marriage	20 years	9 years	4 years	18 years	18 years
Time since separation	1.5 years	1.5 years	1.5 years	1.5 years	2 years
Household type (preseparation)	Dual	Dual	One-and-a-half	Single	Single
Female educational attainment	4th level	3rd level degree	3rd level degree	Upper secondary	3rd level nondegree
Male educational attainment	3rd level degree	3rd level degree	3rd level degree	Upper secondary	3rd level degree
Female employment status (postseparation)	Full-time professional	Full-time managerial	Part-time professional	Full-time administrative	Part-time
Family home	Model 5	Model 3	Model 3	Model 2	Model 3
Maintenance order	None	Child	Child	Child	Child and Spouse

work, hotels, and/or the respondent's house. All respondents were interviewed one-on-one by the author of this article. The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. The interviews ranged from 90 to 150 minutes. The researcher 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. The order in which topics were addressed varied, but there were three main areas which the interview explored. The first stage of the interview related to the nature of the marital relationship and disintegration of the relationship. The research explored how the parents physically separated and how the parents experienced the move out of the marital home. The second stage of the interview focused on decisions the parents made about their children and financial provision since the separation. The third stage of the interview focused the parents' attention on their satisfaction with the parenting arrangement and the financial arrangements overall. This guide was designed as a starting point for all interviews but the researcher gave considerable scope for interviews to take their own direction, as such subjects were not

asked the exact same questions in the exact same order, but the researcher endeavored to explore similar areas with each respondent.

The interview data were analyzed by the framework approach as advanced by Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Connor (2003). The analysis comprised three overlapping stages: This first stage involved sorting and reducing the data by generating a set of themes and concepts according to which the data were labeled, sorted, and synthesized in Nvivo. Interviews were coded according to responses, for example, when parents stated who had initiated the break up, a code "initiator status" was created and all the data across the 39 interviews were stored at this node. Some basic themes began to quickly emerge, but because of the fragmented nature of using Nvivo, themes were verified by recourse to the original transcripts and the original contexts, and verification across the sample was completed. It was at this stage that the researcher organized three "peer auditing" sessions to conduct a consistency check with respect to the researcher's capacity to explore and identify themes and concepts accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of different analysts to compare and check data collection and interpretation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) bolstered the accuracy and reliability of the analysis and are all convergent with the inherent logic of transactional validity in qualitative research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, as cited in Cho & Trent, 2006).

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. The third stage of the research involved mapping key concepts across the sample by comparing and contrasting participants' accounts. I chose to use typologies, which evolved from the data, to help describe and explain the different experiences of roles and relationships that were developed postseparation. Constant checking and adjusting of the dimensions of the typology defined what underlay the discrimination between each category (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). For example, in the analysis of respondents' contact postseparation, the research distinguished between weekday overnight, weekend overnight, "day only" contact, and limited or infrequent contact. The five groups of parents that were identified were as follows: (a) egalitarians, (b) involved but constrained, (c) involved but stressed (couples), (d) aggrieved mothers, and (e) excluded fathers. The typologies indicate a variety of experiences of the postseparated renegotiated practices, but I do not claim that the typology is exhaustive. Analyses of the findings suggest that the postseparation 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 parents in each group represented changes (discontinuities and continuities) that were taking place in family roles and practices. The findings presented here are guided by these typologies and are divided into two main sections, which relate to the two forms of banking systems and (consequent) maternal gatekeeping models adopted: (a) independent banking and gateopening (as demonstrated by the egalitarians and (b) paternal banking and gateclosing (as demonstrated by all other groups). The final section of the analysis examines how the findings from the marital sets compare with the findings from the singletons.

Independent Banking and Proactive Gateopening

The egalitarians share equally their parenting and their time with the children after the separation. This group of five mothers and one father represented a very significant group of Irish parents as they indicate the changes that are taking place in family practices. The egalitarians had joint conjugal roles⁵ and were dual-earner couples during the marriage. When faced with the renegotiating of their roles and behaviors at a time of separation, these parents adopted a nongendered, egalitarian approach to this reconstruction, which moves away from traditional gender roles within Irish society. For the egalitarians, there was an emphasis on two separate purses, economic independence and individual ownership of money both before and after the separation. As a dual-income professional couple, Sandra and David had two high independent incomes, which eased the negotiation process on separation:

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.

The egalitarians operated an independent management system in which both spouses have an income and each retained access to his or her own income after the separation:

I mean I was in a much stronger position than most women. The house was worth one million euro and not many people could buy him out. So I was in a minority of very fortunate people. I think it made a big difference.

The quote above demonstrates how this mother reflected on how her strong financial position compared with the other dependent wives as she described herself as “fortunate.” Some mothers were proactive about the need to have an independent income, and they had been building up their potential power (material) to overcome any obstacles they may have encountered when they separated. Carol devised a “contingency plan” (Burgoyne, 1990) as 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:

There was a fifty, fifty split in everything. I had the same level of income as he did. I had been building up my career all through that time to try and get a level of earnings that would support all of this.

Given the significant body of research that has already been done in the area of maternal gatekeeping on divorce, the author will only briefly demonstrate the gateopening methods that egalitarians adopted. Egalitarian mothers reported varying amounts of father–child relationship management work, similar to that described in Seery and Crowley’s (2000) study. Although some mothers designated tasks to the father, others organized 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 I know that I have said it and I’ve got it written down, pocket money, school trips.

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.

There were examples of overt reaffirmation of the father’s role similar to those described by Trinder (2008) as proactive gateopening strategies. Egalitarian mothers in this group did not place their parental role as superior to that of the father. The egalitarian mothers placed equal value on the role of the father, which was seen as critical for ensuring the child’s best interests.

Paternal Banking and Proactive Gateclosing

In all groups, apart from the egalitarians, there was evidence of paternal banking and maternal gateclosing practices. Although the extent of such practices varied across the groups, the same bidirectional forces were applied within the postseparated relationship. These parents were faced with many barriers (segregated conjugal roles), and elements of a gendered approach to parenting still remained as the basis for the distribution of power and responsibilities in the recreation of their new parenting practices after the separation. The difference in exchanges both before and after separation revealed the indirect power and control by the earners. There was evidence that these parents (one-and-a-half-income couples or single-income parents) shared the money that they earned and felt that they worked for the family during the marriage. 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. In what follows, the article will outline the three main methods through which men in middle-class couples controlled money (as described by the female respondents) and women controlled access to the children. These three groups of parents are composed of 11 fathers and 12 mothers and represent the most dominant pattern in the sample (and across U.S. and U.K. literature; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Smart & Neale, 1999).

Child maintenance (alimony) is covered under Section 11(2)(b) of The Guardianship of Infants (1964) Act, under which the Court may make an order that either the father or the mother make maintenance payments as it considers reasonable. Currently, there is no standard recommended rate of payment for child maintenance. In determining the level of payment, the Court must have regard to the means of the person making the payment (Shannon, 2005). However, a considerable period of time may elapse before the parties obtain a child maintenance order, and during this interim period (which is a minimum of 1 year for a judicial separation),⁶ many of the respondents had no formal financial agreement in place and the resident mothers described how disagreements over maintenance caused “massive outbursts.” It is this pre-legal settlement grey period within which the findings are situated. Maria described how her ex-husband 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.

The main breadwinner had power over the family's financial resources and could threaten to "cut it back" or off at any stage. A threat to cut-off one's income is an indirect way of exercising control over a dependent person, who has no (or less) access to her own financial resources. 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.

As pointed out above, an important aspect of money in postseparated families is control. Disputes over child maintenance were often entangled with arguments about the father's commitment to the child. Aine began to question her ex-husband's commitment to his child as he stopped paying maintenance:

I had to bring him back to court for that (maintenance) because he stopped paying it. It was about *18 weeks* he had stopped paying and I went back to the lawyer 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. In so doing, child maintenance (alimony) became a currency representing love and care. These mothers perceived nonpayment or underpayment as a lack of love and care. Celine felt that her ex-husband was being selfish when he sought to reduce the child's maintenance:

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.

The quote above depicts the contrasting postseparated scenario of the dependent spouse fighting for maintenance and a high earning separated father. Dependent spouses were economically vulnerable during this period as many had to wait 3 to 4 months before their interim maintenance application was

heard in court. With lengthy waiting lists for the family law courts, dependent spouses had little ability to enforce financial obligations and were economically vulnerable.

The interviews with fathers gave us insight into their perceptions of how the flow of money was controlled postseparation. Joseph, one of the excluded fathers, described how he had to take financial control of matters after his ex-wife, Sinead, continued to use a credit card, as she had done when they were married:

When we had our first child she stopped working but we always had a joint current account and she always had the credit card and I said recently, "What do you need a credit card for?" There was never what you and I would call an issue with money, it was just there but now she is not just going to spend it like she did before . . . it's different now.

Priority is given to divvying up the couple's joint pool in a way that protects against any risks and problems that might arise from having a communal pool, for example, access to joint bank accounts, credit or debit cards are terminated in case the nonearning spouse takes advantage. The couple's relationship is terminated by the beginning of separate lives in which having shared money no longer exists. Nonearning wives have less access to personal spending money and were constrained in their movements postseparation until a settlement was reached. One father described how he threatened to change the maintenance arrangements if his wife interfered with his access to their children. On separation, the mother wanted to relocate (100 km away) to be closer to her parents; however, the father objected to the move:

I rang her to have a go about something and she says there's nothing you can do and I said yeah, I can stop work, then what are you going to do? I remember saying to my ex-wife if the children move, there's going to be a substantial drop in the maintenance, and she said "Oh no, I'm with the children all the time so I need more money."

The power of the main breadwinner is demonstrated by their control over the wife's access to financial resources. If a wife attempts to actively prevent access between a father and child, the father can threaten to withhold financial provision as one father highlighted:

My ex-wife had been speaking poorly of me by saying to our daughter "oh you can stay with me, you don't have to go to your dad's house"

and I said, she does, there is an agreement, she said it doesn't matter and I said if I stopped paying maintenance would it matter?

These quotes highlight how disputes over children and maintenance were interlinked. If she altered contact arrangements, he threatened to withhold money.

For many couples, the family home may be the most significant asset and the sale of the family home provides each spouse with a substantial lump sum. However, selling the family home may take some time and both parents may not need a quick sale. Richard, who was working full-time as an engineer, explained how he could slow down the sale of the family home as a way of gaining power over the mother, who he accused of denying him access to his daughter:

I recognize that my wife, she wouldn't say this to me, I would say it under fierce financial pressure. There is a need for her to close up this (sale of family home) quickly. If I was her I'd be very worried. I know that I can make her feel very small that she has to come to me for money, but she is not helping the situation by excluding me from my daughter's life.

Resonating with other research findings, the main focus for wives seemed to be on the family home (Mahon & Moore, 2011). In such situations, wives who remain primary carers may be disadvantaged as they had the security of a home but little income.

The second method of paternal banking, particularly during the interim period on separation, arose in the context of breadwinners (men) hiding their assets from their wives and from the courts in order to keep them separate from the "shared financial pool" that will be divided on separation. Fathers embarked on paternal banking activities during the pre-settlement grey phase. As Pruetz et al. (2007) aptly described, trust gives way to the "primordial" desires to "get as much as one can," and in this case, men subtly withhold assets from the couple joint asset pool. One resident mother, Maria, described how her ex-husband was not disclosing all his financial information, so the couple was unable to make financial arrangements:

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.

During this time, she described how she had to “hold this kind of line” in arguments with her ex-husband about bills that needed to be paid:

He would say “I haven’t got any money, I can’t pay the school bills, and 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.

It appeared as if subtle and informal mechanisms for maintaining male power after the separation were at work. After the separation, women’s unpaid work did not appear to be included in the calculations. A norm of equality in marriage was overridden by a conflicting norm, which gave the earner the right to control their income. Such action led to increased levels of distrust and conflict between the parents and contributed significantly to their poor coparental relationship. 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.” Disputes over property, children, and maintenance were interlinked, as most resident parents were awarded the family home and had control of the children. The nonresident parents who were outside of the family home had money and controlled issues regarding maintenance and the division of assets.

A further indirect means of paternal banking was the father’s lack of involvement in child care postseparation, which resulted in mothers remaining primary carers with little time to obtain an independent source of income. Many women were restricted in their capacity to earn, as women tended to take responsibility for the day-to-day care of children. If these fathers were more involved in child care, the mothers could have possibly returned to the workforce and this would have provided them with an independent source of income. Instead, many of the women, who had been full-time homemakers

during the marriage, continued to be dependent on their ex-husband for spousal maintenance. Celine's example highlights the difficulties in carrying sole responsibility for the children after the separation and trying to reenter the labor force:

I was offered a part-time job before my son 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 my son here on his own. That's a non-runner. No point in going to his father, that's a non-runner.

Mothers were dependent on spousal maintenance and the breadwinners had control over the mother's income postseparation. In my findings, the dependent homemakers in the marriage continued to be dependent after the separation as they received ongoing maintenance postseparation as Sally described:

I didn't want to bleed the man. I just wanted an end to the situation I was in. The maintenance 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.

In one-income households, husbands had ultimately retained control over the money, despite pooling it during the marriage. The women in these couples, who had been homemakers during the marriage, had not earned, on average, in more than 16 years and remained comprised due to ongoing dependency on their former husbands. It is argued that the paternal banking strategies outlined above are a continuation of the gendered division of roles that existed in the marriage and continue postseparation. It is in this context that maternal gateclosing may be better understood.

Given the meaningful research that has already been done in the area of maternal gatekeeping on divorce, the author will only briefly demonstrate the gateclosing methods that separating parents experienced. It is safe to say that the research uncovered a series of justifiable gateclosing activities (according to mothers) and proactive gateclosing activities (according to fathers). The following quote outlines how Maria acknowledged and justified her gatekeeping behavior:

There was a period of about 2-3 years where I was constantly trying to pull back from that arrangement. . . . I was very torn (over the parenting arrangement) because at the time it caused huge amount of upset for my daughter in particular.

The fathers, on the other hand, believed that the resident mothers were exerting control over their relationship with their child, as one father described:

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. My wife has resolutely and vehemently taken every possible effort to alienate those children from me.

The sticking point for all these nonresident fathers was that their wives were in control of the children and the fathers had little power or control over their access with their children during the early stages, that is, before they agreed to a joint custody order as part of the judicial separation.

Paternal Banking Within and Across Couples

To examine whether the concept holds within as well as across couples, the couples were compared with the singletons. As can be seen from Table 2, the researcher has categorized two couples as independent bankers. Both parents in each couple were working full time. Like the egalitarians, there was no conflict over money as both partners had an equal and independent income as Allan described:

She got the family home and I got an equity contribution. I bought my new home, what I did was I took a very lateral view and I ended up buying a house for the amount of the equity contribution, so I didn't have any debt, so that was a very comfortable financial position to move from. My wife was equally comfortable and neither of us are dependent on each other. We are both quite comfortable, financially I mean.

Although these couples were independent bankers, these mothers felt justified in inhibiting access to the children out of concerns for the safety and well-being of the children rather than a punitive action due to unreliable financial provision:

He was drinking and that was a major problem, one of the main reasons I didn't want our daughter to see him was that he'd get drunk and she wouldn't want to go with him but I couldn't reason with him because he'd been drinking.

The other three couples, who were part of one-and-half-income and single-income marital households, demonstrated paternal banking practices in response to proactive gateclosing activities. The unreliable or insufficient payment of maintenance and the nondisclosure of assets were active ways in which men, as the primary earners, were able to exert power and control over the families' shared financial resources. Kathryn felt that her ex-husband, Mark, was not providing financially for the children. She expressed frustrations about the financial inequality between the two households:

He pays the mortgage on the house, but the mortgage is €25,000. The car loan is more. He pays half the crèche fees and household utilities, so the electricity and gas but he doesn't give me anything toward medical, school, food, clothing, extracurricular activities, or birthday parties. I paid for my daughter's birthday party, although he attended it . . . he maintains that he earns 30,000 euro and it (judicial separation) won't come through until the finances are sorted because he is hiding assets. We are going to have to get a motion from the courts to disclose his assets.

Mark remarked on how Kathryn subscribed to views of maternal centrality and how he felt that she has a low regard for the paternal role: "She sees them as hers and I think she has a very low opinion of the need for a father." Mark, who was working full-time as a financial consultant, did not deny that he could cut off maintenance as a way of gaining attention from the mother, who he accused of denying him access to the children:

The only tool I have is the maintenance, so if I cut off the maintenance, which isn't what I want to do, she will notice. Why am I doing it, I am doing it because I pointed out this [dissatisfied with access arrangements] and nobody is taking any attention. If I stop paying maintenance will you notice? Another words it is pressure, it is force, I don't mean that in a physical sense you have to have some twist on the situation.

Three of the couples displayed a similar pattern and were comparable with the paternal banking and proactive gateclosing group. The characteristics of this group were that the men had more spending power, due to their significantly

higher salaries. The women in this group were dependent spouses during the marriage and relied on maintenance postseparation. Different views on maintenance and the division of the assets led to conflicts. When men were prevented from reasonable access, threatening to alter maintenance arrangements gave them more control. Comparing the findings from the marital set interviews with the singletons interviews, the research has found that the notion of paternal banking practices postseparation are prevalent in one-and-a-half-income or single-income households. The link between maternal gatekeeping and paternal banking among the couples is more ambiguous as the marital set subsample is characterized by high levels of conflict and the coparental relationship is very poor.

Discussion

The findings support other research evidence on postseparation parenting that mothers play a pivotal role in facilitating father-child relationships (Arendall, 1997). This research has found it more appropriate to examine bidirectional processes by including the link between money and children, but more specifically, the exchange relationship that existed during the marriage. There is some indication that fathers were engaged in paternal banking as a result of maternal gatekeeping, particularly during the pre-legal settlement period (up to 3 years), when fathers had more control over income sharing. This research has found that different conjugal roles shape the power parents can exert over the former spouse postseparation. Parents, who had joint conjugal roles, as demonstrated by the egalitarians, were able to continue to adopt nongendered ways of parenting and providing postseparation. Parents and couples who had segregated conjugal roles, that is, a stronger gender division of labor during the marriage, continued to adopt gendered practices of providing and parenting postseparation. In such instances, women controlled access to the children and men had financial control over the household's resources. By restricting maintenance or refusing to pay bills, the fathers could make their wives feel more economically vulnerable and attempt to shift the "balance of power" when faced with proactive gateclosing behavior. These couples were competing for the various resources. The men in these couples had economic power which was strengthened by their control over joint assets at a time of divorce.

Conflict has been defined by Sprey (1979) as "the confrontation between individuals, or groups, over scarce resources, controversial means, incompatible goals, or combinations of these" (p. 134). The scarce resources in this research 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, spousal maintenance). Nonresident fathers felt that the resident mothers were exerting control over their relationship with their children. Emery & Dillion (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. In common with other findings, these conflicts were not always open or verbalized but were hidden and expressed through actions such as hiding assets, paying maintenance weekly instead of monthly, or threatening to cut off maintenance (Nyman, 1999; Pahl, 1989; Stocks et al., 2007).

Unlike the findings from Sano et al.'s (2008) research, this study found that middle-income families (one-income families) found child support arrears as a primary concern because they knew that the fathers had ample resources but were unwilling to "properly provide."⁷ Lewis & Welsh (2005, p. 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 household. This research raises the question of whether the economic well-being of children is dependent on postdivorce parental relationship. Although in Ireland the Court must have regard to the means of the person making the payment, there is no standard formula for child maintenance payments. Court-discretionary assessment appears to produce unsatisfactory maintenance payments and lead to continued conflict between the parents. Child support formulae in Australia, although not without their faults, have been implemented over the last few years. Smyth (2004) described how the scheme removed the need for parents to have discussion and conflicts about an appropriate and fair level of maintenance. If this was introduced in Ireland, to what extent could some of the financial issues involved in paternal banking be avoided by a mandatory child support formula that is deducted from wages? This scheme may improve the working relationship between parents by reducing the conflict that is associated with paternal banking. The initiation of such a scheme may be one way to assist one-income couples to move toward proactive gateopening postdivorce. If the formula takes into consideration the cost of contact for nonresidential parents, the payment will be more equal for both parties and assist the coparental relationship. The predictability and regularity with which financial contributions would be made could improve the parental relationship, which, as Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, and Sokolowski (2008) found, may also assist involved fathering. In this case, mothers may become

more facilitative of the father as, even the most traditionally orientated, would see the father fulfilling his role.

Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from these results concerning the practice of paternal banking in response to maternal gatekeeping? This article has explored how maternal gatekeeping is part of a wider gendered parental role battle within postdivorce families by exploring the ways in which paternal banking (behavior that limits or enhances financial provision) behaviors interact with maternal gatekeeping. To say there is a “link” is not to say anything about its character. This argument requires further inquiry into what actually happens between the parents that is into the nature of the links. My belief is that paternal banking is linked with maternal gatekeeping. Maternal gatekeeping and paternal banking appear to be effective gendered methods of exerting control and power over a former spouse, which reflect the division of labor during the intact marriage. The interaction between maternal gatekeeping, paternal banking, and gender equality is therefore the crux of my interpretation. Neither is by itself a sufficient explanation of what happens in postdivorce family practices. There appears to be a number of links or ways of managing the exchange relationship postseparation: independent banking with maternal gateopening, paternal banking with passive gateclosing or proactive gateclosing. I have made these distinctions to illuminate the interpretation. The current research has begun to tell us something rather interesting about the interplay between maternal gatekeeping, paternal banking, and gender equality in intimate relationships. Further research is necessary to improve our understanding of how gendered practices in families create different opportunities and constraints for postdivorce families.

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Notes

1. In a study on postdivorce families, Trinder (2008) referred to her sample as comprising marital sets and singletons. This study has adopted the same terminology to allow for ease of comparison.
2. Research on the outcome of divorce and separation cases found that in many cases, where the children are teenagers or grown-up, the courts are reluctant to make custody orders (Mahon & Moore, 2011). Irish legislation, under Section 3 of the 1964 Guardianship of Infants Act, provides for the wishes of the child to be considered in relation to custody. Shannon (2005) specified that this will only be done where the child is of sufficient age and maturity and found that children of 12 and 13 years are found to have been able to express such wishes.
3. Research into the outcomes of family law divorce and separation cases in Ireland found that there were certain trends in divvying up the financial assets of a couple. Financial models used by couples for organizing the future of the family home were developed by Mahon and Moore (2011).
4. 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 characterized 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 labor postseparation. Their postseparated 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.
5. The research has adopted a meaning of joint conjugal role by defining the sharing of child care tasks at least as an ideological commitment (Bott, 1972). 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 internal and external perspectives when considering the sexual division of labor.
6. Although the ban on divorce was lifted in 1997, the legislator favored a highly controlled form of divorce that was lengthy and encouraged reconciliation. The first requirement under Section 5 of the Family Law (Divorce) 1996 Act states that "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." It is during this period that arrangements often remain informal and irregular.

7. Section 20 of the Family Law (Divorce) Act, 1996, was instituted to "ensure that such provision as the Court considers proper having regard to the circumstances exist or will be made for the spouses and any dependent member of the family concerned."

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