Northumbria Research Link

Masculinities and Leadership in Entrepreneurial Teams

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Abstract

This paper analyses the relationship between leadership and masculinities in the context of an entrepreneurial team. It sets out a conceptual basis for understanding the links between gender and leadership in a way which transcends binaries. The term 'masculinities' here is formulated as a plural concept, recognising that many different versions of masculinity are available and that particular performances of masculinity are highly variable (Connell, 1995).

Previous research into the relationships between gender and leadership and between gender and entrepreneurship has tended to rely on binary views of gender and leadership, contrasting masculinity with femininity, and leader with followers. These dichotomies have been explained on the basis of agentic and communal traits. There is an opportunity to contribute to gender and leadership research by exploring more nuanced and complex ideas of performance of gender and the relationship between performance of gender and perceptions of leadership. Two areas of literature are explored here which are not normally considered together: hegemonic and plural masculinities, and shared leadership in teams. Combining these literatures enables new understandings of the links between gender and leadership as richly textured and variable responses to particular social situations.

An empirical research project is planned to explore these themes in the context of an all-male entrepreneurial team. An interpretive methodology combining ethnography with semi-structured interviews will be employed to gather and analyse data through thematic narratives. This methodology is based in hermeneutics and will account for performances of leadership and masculinity as embodied and situated in communities.

The paper contributes with a conceptual basis for understanding the links between gender and leadership in an entrepreneurial team in a way which transcends binaries, by focusing on masculinities as plural and nuanced, and on leadership as shared and mutual. This allows exploration of the links between gender and leadership as richly textured and variable responses to particular social situations, in this case, in the context of an all-male entrepreneurial team.

Masculinities and Leadership in Entrepreneurial Teams

Introduction

This paper develops the foundation for empirical research into the relationship between leadership and masculinities in the context of entrepreneurial teams. In doing so the research aims to challenge binary assumptions, not only with regard to gender, but also with regard to leadership.

Previous research into the relationships between gender and leadership and between gender and entrepreneurship has tended to adopt a binary view of gender, contrasting masculinity with femininity or male with female (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003). Due to gender role stereotypes, there has been a tendency to link leadership to masculinity because the latter is associated with agentic characteristics, necessary in managing teams and organisations (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). With respect to female leaders, their ability to lead has been interpreted as a lack of communal traits that are usually associated with women rather than men (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Hall and Donaghue, 2013). Eagly and Karau (2002) explained this theoretical structure of differentiation through a role congruity model, which is based on the system of descriptive and prescriptive beliefs determining women's and men's roles.

In the attempt to define entrepreneurship as a field of research there has been a tendency to generate an emphasis either on entrepreneurs as individuals and their qualities, attributes or characteristic activities, or on the entrepreneurial process as innovation, value creation, organization formation, risk or opportunity (Bruyat & Julien, 2000; Bull & Willard, 1993; Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991; Gartner, 1988; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). A possible solution to some of the problems created by varying definitions is to describe the domain of entrepreneurship broadly as concerned with 'the processes of […] emergence of new business ventures, across organizational contexts' (Davidsson, 2008, p.46).

Many of these theories rely on a basic idea of entrepreneurs as individuals and, even where the focus is on process rather than personal attributes of the entrepreneur, they have traditionally paid little attention to the idea of entrepreneurial teams (Kamm, Shuman, Seeger & Nurick, 1990). However, there is increasing recognition of the importance of entrepreneurial teams (Vyakarnam, Jacobs & Handelberg, 1999), and there have been some attempts to theorize the idea (Cooney, 2005; Harper, 2008; Schjoedt & Kraus, 2009). This emerging research area has begun to articulate key areas of interest that relate to team processes in entrepreneurship, including creativity (Chen, 2007) and trust (Chen & Wang, 2008), and already there are competing conceptualisations of the term 'entrepreneurial team', with some defining it in terms of a group of entrepreneurs (Harper 2008), and others in terms of a group of individuals developing an enterprise (Cooney, 2005).

This paper explores the link between the young male entrepreneurs performance of gender and their performance of leadership as intertwined practices in the entrepreneurial team (Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio 2004). It poses the core research question:

> *How do leadership and masculinity as plural and nuanced performances relate to each other in the context of an all-male entrepreneurial team?*

This central question then leads onto a number of other related questions, which may influence the development of the enquiry. For instance, why does the group perform either masculinity or leadership in the ways that it does? Are the particular forms of leadership and masculinity apparent in the entrepreneurial context different from descriptions available elsewhere, for example, sports teams or university campuses? How is the culture of the team affected by its particular entrepreneurial or cultural context?

This paper proposes the following theoretical framework for the research. The first half of the paper reviews developments in the theorisation of masculinities since Connell's (1995) landmark text 'Masculinities'. Masculinities are discussed as plural and potentially competing relational constructs, and the theme of transcending gender binaries is introduced (Budgeon, 2013; Martin, 2004). In the second half of the paper, shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002) is argued to be a potentially helpful leadership model both from the practical perspective of the team context and from the theoretical perspective of transcending binaries.

Plurality of masculinities

Much of gender research into masculinity has been informed and influenced by Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) sees gender as a social practice that bodies engage in. Therefore, masculinity, like femininity, is "configurations of gender practice" or "gender projects" in which men and women participate (Connell, 1995). More specifically, Connell (1995) defines masculinity as serving two purposes. First, it determines "a place in gender relations" and "the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender" (p. 71). Second, masculinity also refers to "the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (p. 71). Such a definition of masculinity, according to Schippers (2007), explains that masculinity can be constructed equally by both men and women, it can denote characteristics and practices perceived as masculine and, finally, it speaks about what sociocultural effects can follow these performances of masculinity.

Masculinity, as it is acknowledged in gender research and beyond this field, is not possessed but is constructed through social activities over time and space (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Richardson, 2010; Tuncay, 2006; Schippers, 2007). Therefore, it is not an individualistic trait but a social and collective practice (Brownlie & Hewer, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Tuncay Zayer & Otnes, 2012) within a specific culture. According to Schippers (2007), masculinity is usually performed by larger cultural groups, including communities and societies. Given its collectivistic nature, this cultural dimension represents a behaviour model, therefore, it is a "doing" (West and Zimmerman, 2009) and not being. Similar notions of masculinity have been recorded in organisational studies highlighting its dynamic and relational side (Murgia and Poggio, 2009).

Gender research stresses that there is no single type of masculinity. On one hand, this sociocultural concept marks multiplicity due to its close interconnection with other identity properties such as class, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Beynon, 2002; Benwell, 2003; Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The list of factors, which have a tendency to inform and influence masculinity, goes beyond the above and it can also include religion, education or historical contexts (Beynon, 2002; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Tuncay, 2006). On the other hand, the concept of masculinity is plural because masculinities are embedded and embodied in specific social environments that undergo changes, so the perception of masculinity and practices associated with it evolve and alter. This refers to the plurality of masculinities about which Connell (1995) argued in his work "Masculinities".

A good explanation of what is meant by plurality has been given by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994). In their view, masculinity is plural in the sense that it contains different images and behaviours that often contradict and compete with each other. The same tendency is apparent in the behaviours of the individuals who can express and demonstrate competing behaviours sequentially or at the same time. "Masculinity has multiple and ambiguous meanings which alter according to context and over time. Meanings of masculinity also vary across cultures and admit to cultural borrowing; masculinities imported from elsewhere are conflated with local ideas to produce new configurations" (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994, p. 12).

Although, the dispositions and discourses of masculinity differ across geographical localities on three levels such as the national, international and global levels (Howson, 2009) and are very much enriched by contextual conditions, they are also shaped and altered by the people who embody them (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). "Meaning depends on who is speaking and who is being described in what setting" (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994, p. 12). Thus, this variety of intersectional factors such as race, class, ethnicity, etc. contribute to the plurality of masculinities we encounter today.

Hegemonic masculinity and gender hegemony

Being perceived and lived as a relational construct, masculinity develops in relation to its opposite social category, called femininity, as well as other masculinities (Connell, 1995; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994; Murgia and Poggio, 2009). This dichotomy has been explained through the hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell, 1995). Connell (1995) argued that male-female relations are predetermined by patriarchy that legitimises men's supremacy over women whilst domination over other men is achieved through their subordination and marginalisation due to latter men's lower

participation in sports, a weaker health and less profound or less evident social and financial achievements (Connell, 1995; 2005).

The sport literature argues that hegemonic masculinity achieves its supremacy over other forms of masculinity through physical prowess and aggressiveness (Chen & Curtner-Smith, 2015; Grindstaff & West, 2011; Næss, 2010; Wellard, 2006). Chen & Curtner-Smith (2015) found that in Physical Education sessions male pupils' aggressive behaviour and demonstration of physical prowess guarantees them dominance over other young men. Research in psychology and social science confirms this view and refers to agentic characteristics (i.e. leadership, competitiveness, assertiveness and emotional detachment) (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Petersen, 2003) as the determinants for men's success. The latter characteristics, if embodied and practised in social settings, bring superiority over other men, while those who lack those characteristics, or do not provide enough evidence of demonstrating them in public arenas, have to settle for a lower status within male social relations. Within gender hegemony, these types of masculinities are perceived as less masculine, and thus, subordinated and marginalised (Connell, 1995).

According to Chen & Curtner-Smith (2015), the traditional model of masculinity is practiced and maintained through various social actors – individuals, social groups (e.g. sports teams) and social institutions (e.g. media, schools, prisons and military). Schippers (2007) defines hegemony as the cultural dominance of one group over other groups in the society. She believes that "hegemonic features of culture are those that serve the interests and ascendancy of ruling classes, legitimate their ascendancy and dominance, and encourage all to consent to and go along with social relations of ruling" (Schippers, 2007, p. 90). For example, in the organisational context, Murgia and Poggio (2009) report that organisations are run by hegemonic practices with hegemonic masculinity based on the male-breadwinner model. Thus, those men who choose to disobey the hegemonic model, for example, by taking paternity leave, earn disapproval from management for setting a bad example for their children and other employees (Murgia and Poggio, 2009). Furthermore, their decision to prioritise their family needs over career invokes questions regarding their masculinity because such behaviour is viewed as transcending gender boundaries by stepping into the private space closely associated with women and femininity (Murgia and Poggio, 2009).

Recognition within male social relations is also often defined and regulated by sexual orientation. It has been argued that masculinity and heterosexuality are closely linked and often treated as synonymous (McCormack, 2012). This suggests that heterosexual masculinity receives more respect in comparison to other types of masculinities, whose sexual preferences differ. Heterosexuality plays a key role in regulating bodily practices and successes in the social spheres of life, and is perceived as more masculine in comparison to others (McCormack, 2012). Yet, the sport literature argues that it is not sexual orientation that grants exclusivity but appropriate bodily performances. For example, Wellard (2006), in his work on social constructions of sport activity, explains that joy deriving from physical activity is not necessarily achievable for everyone given that it is "regulated by social constructions of appropriateness of particular bodies and bodily performances considered necessary to participate" (Wellard, 2006, p. 108). In the sport arena, this privilege is assigned to "exclusive masculinity" which sets the expectations and requirements of what physical abilities and what forms of bodily performances are required in adult sport (Wellard, 2006). It regulates sportsmen's behaviour by excluding and often by downgrading other expressions of gender. Wellard (2006) calls hegemonic masculinity an "exclusive masculinity" because it is available to those male identities that adopt aggressive, assertive and competitive bodily practices. This is closely linked to sport spaces where such qualities are essential in reaping athletic success. Appropriate bodily performances can contribute to successful masculine status whilst inability to enact the expected version of masculinity results in the construction of failed sporting identity. "The emphasis upon the body as a means of presenting 'natural' or 'unnatural' masculinity reinforces the hierarchical structure of gender relations and simultaneously contributes to the dominance of a hegemonic masculinity" (Wellard, 2006, p. 114).

Wellard (2006) further argues that in the sport context, competeveness, which is closely tied to the hegemonic masculinity standards, should not be bound to specific types of identity given that both male and female athletes, disabled sportsmen as well as gay players can demonstrate a competitive performance. Yet, it is stereotypically perceived that men are more competitive than women are. Niederle and Vesterlund (2011) found that confidence and attitude to competition determines gender difference towards willingness to compete. In line with previous knowledge, the most recent empirical

research, derived from male and female players' participation in sport, suggests that competition is perceived as a masculine trait (Warner & Dixon, 2015). Warner & Dixon (2015), in their research into competition, gender and sport, found that the meanings of internal and external competition vary by gender. While both genders view external competition as a means of building a stronger team identity and creating a more meaningful sport experience, their answers on the benefits of internal competition differ significantly. It appears that men are more comfortable competing both internally and externally whereas their female counterparts appreciate the benefits of external competition with internal competition being less desirable due to it being taken on a more personal level (Warner & Dixon, 2015). The men's perspectives reveal that internal competition fosters mutual respect within a male team and serves to improve the performance of oneself and the whole team (Warner & Dixon, 2015).

Transcending gender binaries

Martin (2004) and Budgeon (2013) believe that, in order to challenge gender binaries, it is important to begin with undoing gender ideology since it is the one that forms people's perceptions and expectations (Budgeon, 2013), their practices, social rules and relations (Martin, 2004). In the past there was a significant focus on gender dichotomy distinguishing men and women as two different groups. However, lately, new approaches emerged in the analysis of gender and gender relations. For example, Howson (2009) in his critical study of masculinities employs a postmarxist approach and deconstruct hegemonic masculinity to an "empty signifier" to show that women and men differ not only as sex categories but also within their sex categories. Since the last century sociologists and in particular feminists from various disciplines aimed to break gender binaries to show that women can possess both feminine and masculine traits despite their sex category. This is evident in the research on doing gender well and differently simultaneously in the dirty dancing and managerial contexts (Mavin & Grandy, 2012, 2013).

Intermingling both feminine and masculine qualities has been particularly evident and visible within femininities. With gender emancipation, building female identities with assertiveness and autonomy contributed towards women's empowerment within the public domain (Budgeon, 2013). These new and successful femininities, as Budgeon (2013) asserts, are changing gender hegemony. However, taking into consideration that traditional and modern values exist along each other today, female identity work is unavoidably ambiguous (Gonick, 2004). Young school age girls struggle to master and embody both types of value at the same time, due to what their subjectivities seek and what public norms within community and family convey. The construction process of ambiguous femininity includes contradictions that make identity work difficult (Gonick, 2004). According to Gonick (2004), gendered subjectivity is achieved through the interplay of autonomous agency and relationality that are competing within the individual and induce a great deal of tension in the new modes of femininity construction. "Traditional femininity is being undone through its inclusion in discourses of individualism, rationality and adulthood, even as it is being rearticulated through an ever increasing array of contradictions, the juggling of which has always shaped experiences of femininity" (Gonick, 2004, p. 207). We can see in this research that often the construction of femininity involves innovative gender performances competing with traditional gender norms in the same social space, and often alternative or innovative embodiments are treated and perceived as "bad ones", as they break well-established behaviour norms.

Although it is not so essential for men to reconstruct their identities by doing their gender in a different way, since masculinities have not been so visible or problematized (Budgeon, 2013), yet this pattern is now also permeating into male social relations and practices. Budgeon (2013) argues that in the construction work of masculine identities, masculinities are required to embrace more feminine attributes due to feminisation of culture that permeate even work cultures. A similar opinion has already been expressed by Kimmel in the late 1980s. Men have always been perceived as a normative gender. However, having in mind that masculinity is also a relational construct, which develops alongside other social categories such as women, any changes that happen in the category of femininity has a direct effect on other dimensional constructs such as masculinity (Kimmel, 1987). Therefore, constructions of masculinity, like constructions of femininity, also undergo tensions when managing between tradition and modernity. Since the 1980s, with a growing availability of new role models, the means of constructing masculinity started to be questioned. According to Kimmel (1987),

these new behaviours, functioning alongside traditional ones, created a tension between the old and new models of masculinity.

If we apply the hegemonic masculinity model in constructions of contemporary masculinities we see that "otherness", which in this case stands for femininity, might orientate masculinity toward the negative. The male individual might feel that holding these opposites in tension in his own performance of gender is undesirable: everything that is not masculine is feminine, and to be avoided. For example, in the past homosexual men experienced violent acts or economic discrimination (Connell, 2005). This echoes Kimmel's (1987) and Herek's (1987) explanation. For years, masculinity has been constructed by differentiating it from femininity as well as homosexuality (Kimmel, 1987), thus, it is not feminine and not homosexual (Herek, 1987). Failing to perform masculinity in the expected way challenged and questioned men's masculine identity. On the other hand, a normal and well-established way of constructing masculinity – through heterosexual behaviour modes – contributed to a man's professional and social success. All this, as Herek (1987) states, increases "his self-esteem, and give him a sense of doing his duty as a man" (Herek, 1987, p. 79).

In the debate about alternative of subordinated masculinities, Howson (2009) agrees that one's inability to comply with the principles of hegemonic masculinity results in social exclusion that manifests in both practices and moral life. "So it is not necessarily configurations of practice that they are excluded from but the morality of the community. It is this latter aspect that ensures their ultimate exclusion but most importantly, only when required to maintain the hegemony" (Howson, 2009, p. 20). Although recent research shows that in the past, male students, by embracing feminine attributes, were at risk of undermining their masculinities in relation to the idealised model of masculinity (Budgeon, 2013), privileged to and attained by the middle-class, white and heterosexual Western men (Connell, 1995; McCormack, 2012), we see social change in how men construct their masculinities today. In both sport and educational settings men are showing greater physical and emotional intimacy with each other (Anderson, 2009; McCormack, 2012), which in the past would be interpreted as feminine or homosexual acts. Andersson (2009) identifies such masculinity as inclusive masculinity that embodies both masculine and feminine behaviours without interpreting the latter as non-heteronormative.

In line with the work or Budgeon (2013) and Warner & Dixon (2015), we can argue that emerging new form of masculinity negotiate the amalgamation of masculine and feminine characteristics into leadership practices which together dismantle gender binary and gender hegemony, retaining successful social relations within and outside their gender categories. Reworking masculinities and femininities can bring positive changes. According to Budgeon (2013), alternative femininities so as masculinities "dismantle binary relationality, promote greater degrees of social change and open possibilities for alternative social arrangements" (Budgeon, 2013, p. 330).

There is, then, increasing recognition that a variety of gender practices, styles and identities live along each other; there is no single type of masculinity, just as there is no one way of constructing one's femininity. Binaries are increasingly challenged in gender research, and it is also possible that this trend in research reflects real changes in social life. The model of gender hierarchy based on the legitimisation and prioritisation of one type of masculinity, embodied by western heterosexuals from the middle class of society and superior in relation to women, might be disintegrating. According to Howson (2009), gender hierarchy can be deconstructed if we look at this relationship through the lens of identity. Howson (2009) believes we cannot assume that real men and women express complete representation of either hegemonic masculinity or emphasised femininity, since both aspects can be recognised in each. Hegemonic masculinity, as sport and gender literature reports, is predominantly performed in the sport contexts where competition, assertiveness and aggression are necessary to win against other teams. However, in other public domains such as education this may be less required (Budgeon, 2013). Men are becoming more confident in embracing feminine qualities without risking placing themselves in subordinated or marginalised positions.

Transcending leadership binaries

This paper aims to develop research which transcends binaries in both gender and leadership, setting up empirical research which sensitive to shared, plural and nuanced performances. As we have seen, a movement towards disrupting binaries is evident in gender studies and feminism (Budgeon, 2013). It has been less evident in organization or entrepreneurship studies, and even though there are recent

challenges to binary assumptions in these areas also (Knights, 2015; Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012; Patterson, Mavin & Turner, 2012, Williams & Mavin 2012), most research remains dependent on binaries with regard to gender or gender related traits, even when the implications of these binary assumptions are being questioned. Such binaries include the contrast between autocratic and democratic styles of leadership and its link to male or female leadership performance (Eagly & Johnson, 1990), and the association of 'agenticism' and 'communalism' with masculinity and femininity respectively (Berdahl, 1996). Vecchio (2002, p. 647) complains that 'the equating of major dimensions of leadership with gender stereotypes has not demonstrably advanced understanding'; he welcomes parallel moves in both gender and leadership theory towards multi-dimensional approaches, and calls for research into intact, continuously performing groups, which is sensitive to context, rather than de-contextualised or experimental studies. We argue below that developments in theories of shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007) enable discussion to move beyond binaries, not only with regard to gender, but also with regard to leadership.

Authors who provide an overview of leadership theories emphasise the variability of definitions and conceptions of leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse 2013; Yukl, 2010). Nevertheless, it is common to most traditional theories on leadership that they depend on some separation of two key components, the leader and the led. When Northouse (2013, p. 5) says that influence, 'the process by which the leader affects followers', is the 'sine qua non of leadership', he voices a fundamental binary assumption of much leadership literature, that there is a person who leads and others who follow. This basic binary assumption may be more or less explicit, but still tends to underpin thinking on the topic:

> 'Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.' (Yukl, 2010, p. 26)

In Yukl's (2010) description of leadership the person of the leader stays in the background, rather than being brought forward explicitly as the subject of the sentence but, as with Northouse, the fundamental binary between leader and led remains intact. Leaders influence others. This first binary of leader and followers implies a second binary of activity and passivity, and both are evident in a wide range of mainstream leadership theories.

These binaries of leader and led, active and passive, underpin most mainstream theories of leadership. Theories of charismatic leadership are focused on the person of the leader, and his or her personal attributes (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Situational and contingency theories focus on the activities of the leader, encouraging the leader to understand the needs of followers and to respond by engaging in either more supportive or more directive behaviours accordingly (Blanchard, Zigami & Zigami, 1985). Path-goal theory has a similar emphasis on the style and behaviours of the leader in order to maximise productivity in a dyadic relationship between leader and followers (House, 1996). Leader-member exchange theory, although it is interested in both sides of the leader-follower relationship, remains similarly dyadic (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass & Riggio, 2006) shows the leader inspiring followers to great things; here the leader has a vision not only of how particular tasks can be accomplished but also of how followers can better themselves as human beings. Authentic leadership is primarily focused on the 'true self' of the leader (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011), and depends on individual leaders being able to understand themselves and their deeply held values and being able to communicate this to their followers.

In all of the major theories above, the leader is seen as active and giving (giving support, direction, vision, values, inspiration, influence or instructions), and those led are seen as passive and receiving. Followers remain active with regard to the tasks in hand, including the tasks of self-improvement, but they are largely passive with regard to the process of leadership; they are the people influenced by the leader. These dichotomies remain intact in the literature on entrepreneurial leadership. The idea of entrepreneurial leadership as one which 'creates visionary scenarios that are used to assemble and mobilize a 'supporting cast' of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation' (Gupta, MacMillan & Surie, 2002, p.242) is focused on the role of an outstanding individual orchestrating a cast of characters. Entrepreneurial leadership is reconfigured here as a particular set of behaviours or style (Renko, et al., 2015), but there is no significant interest in challenging basic dyadic structures of leaders and followers.

Recently, there has been a renewed interest in people as engaged in leadership without such clear distinctions between roles. Work in complexity sciences has begun to challenge modernist dichotomies of leadership as in many respects mythic, and to explore emergent leadership as a way of expressing the complexity of real human interactions (Houglum, 2012; Lewin, Hlupic & Walton, 2010). Interest in emergent leadership in the context of teamwork, where formal hierarchical structures may not apply, is not new (Kickul & Neuman, 2000). However, consideration of the ability of teams to direct themselves without assigned leadership structures has led to exploration of the possibilities of recasting the leadership-followership dichotomy as a 'teamship' continuum (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2003), and to the idea of shared leadership as an internal property of teams (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007). This latter reformulation of leadership as a team property which enables the group to lead itself in processes of sharing information and dialogue also facilitates team learning (Decuyper, Dochy & Van den Bossche, 2010), and appears a promising account of the development of leadership in entrepreneurial teams.

Shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002) offers a model which has potential to transcend some of the binary assumptions discussed above. Carson, Tesluk and Marrone (2007, p.1218) define shared leadership as 'an emergent team property that results from the distribution of leadership influence across multiple team members'. The authors expand on this description with some key additional points: shared leadership is relational, involves mutual influence among team members, and is distinct from vertical (or hierarchical) patterns of leadership or ones which are focused on an individual leader.

These features of shared leadership challenge the central binary of leader / followers, because in this form of leadership 'all members of a team are fully engaged in the leadership of the team', in 'a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process (Pearce, 2004, p.48). Shared leadership does not abandon the concept of leaders, or the assumption that one person can influence others, and it is hard to envisage how leadership could be discussed without processes of influencing, or some equivalent expression, being available. However, because leadership is now repositioned as a property of a group, and as a network of reciprocal relationships within the group (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007), it is no longer limited to the binary of leader / followers. Shared leadership also does much to disrupt the binary of activity and passivity. Leadership here remains an active process, but there are no longer distinct individuals who are allocated active or passive roles, or agentic or communal characteristics.

Research context

The leadership that young male entrepreneurs adopt will be explored in the context of Northumbria University's Entrepreneurial Business Management programme (Blackwood, Hatt, Pugalis and Round, 2014). The programme offers the chance to explore leadership and relational dynamics within an all-male entrepreneurial team which is working together for three years as part of a degree programme based on a Finnish Team Academy model of team learning. Team Academy originated in Finland in 1993, and offers young people the opportunity to come together in an entrepreneurial team to create their own company and run business projects within it, at the same time as studying for a degree in entrepreneurship (Belet, 2013; Tosey, Dhaliwal & Hassinen, 2013). Participants on the programme are known as entrepreneurs or 'teampreneurs', and rather than attending a predefined series of traditional lectures and seminars they are supported by coaches to learn by undertaking entrepreneurial activity in teams, whilst managing their own learning to support that activity (Blackwood, Hatt, Pugalis and Round, 2014).

Leadership development, self-managed learning, learning in teams, and the experience of running real businesses are all core components of the Team Academy model (Belet, 2013; Toivanen, n.d.; Tosey, Dhaliwal & Hassinen, 2013). Teampreneurs are encouraged to develop not only their own enterprises, but also their own team structures and their own team learning. Team Academy sees itself as a learning organisation (Senge, 1990) and explicitly seeks to enable its teampreneurs to set up their own teams as collaborative and cooperative learning systems (Partanen, 2014). Teams are provided with a team coach, and are encouraged to form a legally incorporated company (Northumbria University, 2014). Teampreneurs direct their own learning within the team, decide for themselves what business projects to run, and develop their own business processes. This latitude is a hallmark of the Team Academy programme, which puts the teampreneurs from the outset in a

position of having to work as a team to establish their own aims and solve their own problems, and to define and follow their own learning journey as individuals and as a team (Belet, 2013; Gebel, Neusüß & Stark, 2009). One important consequence of this is that leadership has to emerge within the group according to the group's own standards (Toivanen, n.d.). Leadership also turns out to be inevitably a precondition of team entrepreneurial activity. It would be possible for an individual to begin an entrepreneurial activity without leadership, but as soon as this becomes team activity, some form of leadership is implied.

Shared leadership in teams has been found to be a positive contributor to team performance in the context of learning teams (Decuyper, Dochy & Van den Bossche, 2008), change management teams (Pearce & Simms, 2002), and entrepreneurial teams (Zhou, 2014). The model fits well with the context of Team Academy's approach to developing entrepreneurial teams. Team Academy promotes a style of leadership termed *friend leadership* (Toivanen, n.d.), which explicitly borrows from other formulations of leadership, including shared leadership. Friend leadership emphasises the importance of members within a team stepping forward to encourage each other in forming and pursuing shared aims and objectives, and developing their own structures. The team is encouraged to share leadership roles within the team and to rotate these: 'each and everyone can take on the role of team leader, financial leader, creative leader, production leader, customer or marketing leader' (Toivanen, n.d., p.17).

A further important link between shared leadership theory and Team Academy practice is the role of the team coach (Hackman & Wageman, 2005), which in Team Academy is central to encouraging and supporting teams to develop their own internal leadership dynamics (Partus, n.d.). Carson, Tesluk & Marrone (2007) find a positive correlation between supportive external coaching and the level of shared leadership within a team, and they recommend this coaching support for the development of shared leadership particularly where a team might lack a supporting internal dynamic of its own in the first instance.

Research approach

This study is designed to be a qualitative and interpretive enquiry into the culture of a particular group. It takes a hermeneutic approach, based on the philosophies of Gadamer (1975), and MacIntyre (1981; 1988; 1990). Understanding the group is seen as a party-dependent process of conversation (Taylor, 2002). Conversation is therefore central to the process of data collection. The research is enabled in part because one of the researchers is already embedded in the group as team coach, and consequently this researcher is a participant observer. That one of the researchers acts as participant observer does not in itself entail that the method of the research is fully ethnography, but there are clearly elements of ethnography in the process (Bryman 2012).

The study will collect two main sets of data, one gathered as field notes by a researcher who is a participant-observer (Van Maanen, 1988) in the team, and the other gathered as interview transcripts by a researcher who is external to the group. The researcher embedded in the entrepreneurial team has a formal role as coach for the team, and is not himself a teampreneur. The team meets for coaching sessions twice weekly, and the coach is therefore an active participant (Bryman 2012) in the coaching group, but not fully an active participant in the team proper, since the team works to its own objectives outside of the coaching meetings. Primary data will be in the form of field notes which are intended to form an ongoing narrative of the researcher's growing understanding of the group, rather than precise and full factual accounts of events unaffected by previous events (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Van Maanen 1988). The researcher who is not embedded in the team will conduct semi-structured interviews (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Wengraf, 2001) with team members. Planning for the interviews will be informed by themes emerging from literature on plural masculinities and shared leadership, as discussed below. Primary data from these interviews will be in the form of audio recordings and transcripts.

In a hermeneutic approach, interpretation is involved in the research from the outset (Warnke, 2011). Whenever a researcher works with their data (e.g. reads a passage of transcript), a turn of the hermeneutic circle is achieved. The hermeneutic circle here is conceived as a conversation between text (data) and reader (researcher), which starts with the researcher bringing a set of prejudgements to the text, proceeds as the researcher interprets the text, and finishes with the researcher arriving at a new set of judgements, which then form the initial prejudgements for the next turn of the circle (Gadamer, 1975; Grondin, 2002). As more data is gathered, further iterations of the hermeneutic

circle will follow. Since prejudgement is explicit in this process of understanding anything, reflexivity is of crucial importance to the quality of the research if distortion is to be avoided (Gadamer, 1975; Finlay, 2002).

This process of handling data is better termed interpretation than analysis, partly because interpretation is basic to Gadamer's hermeneutics, and because narrative is central to MacIntyre's tradition-constituted enquiry (Beadle & Moore, 2006). Interpretation is integral to the whole process of the research; not only is it involved in handling data from the outset, but also it precedes that process by informing the terms of the enquiry, and the questions under consideration. Because narrative is central to this process, it is important that narratives which emerge in transcripts and field notes are not broken up and reassembled as the term analysis implies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Bryman 2008).

Findings will be presented in narrative format. This narrative will pay attention to two main structures. One structure will be provided by the chronological sequence and expressed as far as possible in the language of the group, where the group is understood to include the researchers. The other structure will reflect the themes which emerge from the researchers' interpretation of the team's cultures of leadership and masculinities.

Conclusion

Our purpose in writing this paper was to develop a conceptual platform for empirical research into leadership and masculinities in entrepreneurial teams, with a focus on the question: *How do leadership and masculinity as plural and nuanced performances relate to each other in the context of an all-male entrepreneurial team?* In pursuing this we have explored two groups of literature which are not usually considered together: hegemonic and alternative masculinities, and shared leadership and entrepreneurial teams. We argue here that considering them together offers a useful initial conceptual basis for the study.

The literatures considered here challenge binaries by emphasising plurality. Ideas of hegemonic and alternative masculinities are implicitly a challenge to the notion of masculinity as one side of a binary with femininity on the other. Performances of masculinity are rather seen here as plural, complex and nuanced. For example, different communities have different understandings of masculinity, and individual members of those groups in turn perform variable and particular masculinities (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). The interest here, then, is not to explore some particular style or styles of masculinity, but to explore the way in which variable performances relate to each other and to the dynamics within the entrepreneurial team.

The same is true of leadership. Different social and organisational contexts favour different forms of leadership and, on the model of shared leadership, members of a given team influence each other in particular ways at particular times, depending on circumstances (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007). Shared leadership as a theory does not set out to disrupt binaries, but it does break down the distinction between leader and followers; members within the team influence and are influenced by each other in complex and reciprocal patterns. Again, the emphasis of this approach is not on particular styles of leadership, but on structures, looking for patterns of complex and reciprocal influence within the entrepreneurial team.

In considering these two literatures together we have found that theories of hegemonic and plural masculinities on the one hand and theories of shared leadership on the other provide a conceptual basis for exploring patterns of complexity and reciprocal interaction within the entrepreneurial team. These literatures can work together to help to move research past the limitations of binary assumptions in gender and leadership, and they appear to offer a way of understanding the complex dynamics operating within an entrepreneurial team which is all-male, and which has no formal leadership structures imposed from the outside. Our ability to move past binary assumptions in this way seems particularly important in this creative, open-ended, and self-directing team context.

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