The Transition of Masculinity in Post – Recession Irish Society

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Abstract

The aim of this research project was to investigate and identify how men have been emasculated in contemporary Ireland. The redefinition of females has progressed hugely over the years, for males it is only beginning. There are now 3 types of men known in society, the research carried out aimed to seek information on the 3 types of masculinity in relation to prominent themes that occur in society such as; general society, the workplace and family life. A qualitative approach was used along with a criterion sampling method to collect the data. Thematic analysis was used to highlight the similarities and differences among the participants also allowing for unanticipated insights. The participants that took part in the research were all born and living in Ireland, their ages ranged from 22 – 48.

The results identified 4 themes; social embeddeness and transition, gender and inequalities, men as "egotistic" individuals and power. The 4 themes found the surge of women now entering the workplace has also changed the meaning of masculinity, in turn emasculating men as the provider, which is embedded in traditional masculinity. The themes that have emerged from the data suggest that traditional male norms and values exist in Irish society even though social change is visible. This indicates that society is in transition producing many new equalities and new gender roles that were not present pre-recession.
In future research, this topic should include women for contrast and a possible suggestion would be including the theme of the media, as it was brought up during the interviews with participants elaborating on the topic.

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Literature review

<u>Introduction</u>

Until recent years social scientists studying gender mainly focused on the study of women, from the study of feminism and various other inequality movements. Research on gender seemed to focus on just one type of gender, even though there are two. Giddens (2009) states that gender is a term that is used to separate the physical, psychological, social and cultural differences between men and women. Gender consists of different male and female roles and identities, which are learned through socialisation. As the redefinition of femininity has progressed considerbaly in society over years, for males it is only beginning. Connell (2005) defines the concept of masculinity as a term used to describe male characteristics. Today men are more playful with masculinity; various models have been introduced to society, changing the name to masculinities. Connell (2005) outlines the different types of male roles in society as hegemonic masculinity, this is the typical male stereotype it ensues power over subordinate women and non – hegemonic males, it suggests males should be dominating society. The characteristics of hegemonic males are authority, power, control, strength and dominance. They strive to be in control over other men and women. Not all men are lucky enough to be big and strong, some make up for it by being aggressive like a drug dealer or being confidant like a musician, some men exaggerate their masculinity by using violence, confidence and aggression. Many men do not fit into the hegemonic masculinity category, but rather complicit masculinity, these are the man that benefit off hegemonic men, and for example they might buy drugs off an aggressive drug dealer to empower themselves. Some men fit into the category subordinate masculinity, these men are known to be poor, unsuccessful, from and ethnic background or homosexuals. Subordinate males are seen in the same light as women to hegemonic and complicit males. They are seen as unworthy and incomplete.

The research project aimed to seek information on these types of masculinity in relation to three prominent themes in society. The first theme being over all society, the research report investigated how this affects men and how it might make them feel. Also the stereotypical "hegemonic" man is not as common as it once was; the following will investigate other possible stereotypes that might emerge in years to come. The research also took interest in men and how they have changed in the work place in recent years. Giddens (2009) describes work as the carrying out of tasks involving physical and mental effort, which cater for human needs in return for income. Work in all cultures is the basis of economic systems. The research focused on the loss of jobs since the economic crises in relation to men and the decline of the breadwinner role. This suggested a change in family identity along with social and cultural capital, which Bourdieu (2009) explains it is how individuals differentiate themselves from others, not just with economic factors but also education, leisure, inheritance and community. The third theme that was investigated was the family and masculinity, they are both basic concepts in society and are both constantly changing. Giddens (2009) describes family as a group of people directly linked by kin relations. The adult members who are supposed to take responsibility of their children. As family relations are changing more frequently in recent years, this is bound to have an effect on fatherhood as the economic and caring responsibilities are a must for their children in a family. Another issue for men is trying to balance work and family to avoid trouble at home, between children and spouses. Work – Family conflict (WFC) has come about in recent years, it is a conflict on faces when they have to choose between family needs and work obligations. Giddens (2009).

General society

(Stereotypes and generalisations)

There are various stereotypes and generalisations associated with masculinities, such as being independent, competitive, assertive, aggressive, and strong and the financial provider for a

family, Giddens (2009). All these stereotypes tell us what society think it means to be a man. Weeks (2005, p. 56) believes that common sense is the problem, what society has been taking for granted as natural is starting to change, and that it is being recognized that no quality in man actual dictates their behaviour. Weeks (2005, p.54) also state that there is a crisis of masculinity, it is a crisis of their gender order and the way heterosexual male identity is changing. Levent (2011, p766) agrees in saying that the traditional norms of masculinity are dominance, aggression, self-reliance, these stereotypes are creating doubts in the minds of men in contemporary society as they may feel lacking in the so called norms. Men in the west find it difficult to let go of traditional masculine identity and replace them with new types, even when they are jobless or their spouse is the financial provider. Willott and Griffin (2004, p53) state that some say that this statement goes against saying that masculine identities are socially rather than biologically constructed. However, Connell (2011, p12 - 14) mentions that in the last decade there has been a surge of certain issues about men and boys with views of gender being constantly reinforced in the media, which is an agent of socialisation. This challenges a male's everyday life and causes them severe pressure. Although men are under pressure for performing this hegemonic masculinity it also encourages vulnerability (Connell 2005). Men also do not reveal their problems as this is not behaviour associated with being a man. Another key point associated with this stress is that revealing of difficulties is associated with weakness, while performance of masculinity is about strength. (Cleary, 2005, p160). Most men are in the know about this stereotype as Connell (2005, p17) adds that some men seem to think of hegemonic masculinity as a re - enactment of the strongest male gender form, they look at this type of masculinity of a fantasy of power.

Connell (2005, p24) suggests that masculinity is not a fixed cycle of development, it is social growth. The masculinities of adolescence generally have a close relationship to the masculinities defined for adults in their communities with socialisation with sport and so on.

Masculinity is not a universal term. Connell (2005, p24) also notes a contradiction, distance and sometimes rejection of old patterns which allows new forms of masculinities to develop and emerge in society. Levent (2011, p766) explains that there are pressures on heterosexual men to behave in certain ways that conflict with various aspects of traditional masculine norms, these are pressures such as, committing to relationships, communicating ones innermost feelings, nurture children, share housework equally, integrate sexuality with love, curb aggression and violence. These pressures have shaken the traditional norms to such an extent that a masculine crisis exists in society today. The common set of standards and expectations of male dominated power have been reduced. Men still see pride as an important aspect of being a man Willott and Griffin (2004, p64), indicate that the men that are unemployed are in a certain situation because working in a low down job would destroy their pride. It is also visible in a social setting; crime and cash in hand work are both used as capital resource for accomplishing a masculine identity, based upon the discourse of the male family breadwinner, when other resources were seen to be unavailable. Men with power have pride. Kimmel (1987, p168) suggests men are holders of class power, they are found located in the highest levels of political, economic, educational and cultural organisations, and even in that category certain masculinities are more dominant and valued than others.

Connell (2011, p17) agrees in stating the form of masculinity which is dominant is hegemonic masculinity, it has hierarchy overall individuals in society. Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005, p377) also argues that individual holders of institutional power or wealth may be far from the hegemonic pattern in their lives, new groups may challenge old solutions, a construct of a new hegemony. Connell (2011, p22) disagrees stating there are some cases both in research and in practice where patterns of masculinity are quiet tough to change, there are other situations where masculinities are unstable.

<u>(Patterns of masculinity)</u>

However there is no one pattern of masculinity, different cultures and different periods of time construct masculinity differently. Theory suggest that men and women are expected to behave in accordance with their gender roles because women are socialised into having feminine values and men are socialised into having masculine values, for example, women are more likely to see the family role as part of their social role identity than men. (Weeks, 2005, p681 - 682). Relationships between men and women are being renegotiated, while ordinary men worry about their appearance (not just women) and the evidence of transformation of the position of women across advanced societies, as they are starting to take place in industries, education systems, trade unions and government jobs. However big this change has been, the glass ceiling still exists. (Weeks, 2005, p54). Levent (2011, p767) states that violating gender roles has severe consequences, and more so for males than females. Some members of society believe that failure for men to achieve a masculine gender role identity results in homosexuality, and negative attitudes are common towards men who are thought to act like women instead of men. Levent (2011, p771) recognises that gay and bi-sexual men are normatively traumatized by the male gender role strain by virtue of growing up in a heterosexist society. Society fears those who do not play up to their gender role as concepts of both genders are socially constructed from biological, psychological and social experience. Individuals have a powerful psychological need to form a gender identity that matches their biological sex and the personality development attached to its formation. Weeks (2005, p59) agrees with this where he mentions, that in our culture, the discourses of gender and sexuality are so locked together for example, to be a real man means that one is definitely heterosexual. Society views masculinity and femininity important as they only exist in relation to each other. Bryan (2013, p72) agrees as research has also shown that people respond negatively to both men and women who do not conform to traditional gender role

expectations.

Kimmel et al (2005, p176) presents evidence that the growing presence of women in society has established a problem for hegemonic masculinities. Both women and men are seen as part of a class structure in which the male breadwinner role is declining, this in turn giving rise to masculinity becoming more fluid and various new types emerging. Kimmel (1987, p128) discovers that larger social changes are providing women with new sources of power, but in return are creating insecurities and vulnerabilities for men. Connell (2011, p14) agrees with this in explaining what effects the social position of women and girls must also affect the social position of men and boys. Numerous men now acknowledge that their position is under challenge.

Cleary (2005, p161) indicates that being a man, appearing strong, being able to manage one's life is important, while women today are becoming more independent with their lives and relying less on men. Although, Roy (2004, p261) disagrees as in society women aim to seek men who can provide, they look for men who can secure a family life and have a full time job. Most fathers to this day are continued to being socialised early into the notion that successful providing leads to respect and self-worth. Being poor and a father in society is a constant challenge, yet globalisation has further created new institutions which operate on a world scale, of which provide new arenas for the construction of masculinity with jobs in areas such as; transnational corporations, global media, intergovernmental institutions. Gottzén, (2011, p68) illustrates that those men that are redundant feel socially excluded by the fact that the dominant social groups, consisting of individuals with a high Socio – economic- status, make it difficult to obtain social and cultural parity for subdominant groups such as themselves. However, Willott and Griffin (2004, p64) notes that working class men generally have a greater investment in the breadwinner position than men from more socially privileged background. They are also said to spend more time at home communicating with

family than working. Bryan (2013, p80) states that fathers out of work have a closer bond with their children. Willott and Griffin (2004, p58) finds that unemployed men think that they are in a hopeless position, and find it impossible to climb out of their subordinate rut. This suggests that men in such a position may give up at trying to do better, as they might have the notion that they failed at life.

Men and the workplace

Some men personally see themselves as a failure. This identity of failure gives men fear of being exposed to not being a "real" man. Men feel judged by other men and feel the need to impress others (Cleary, 2005, p161). This may be hard and stressful on men as Connell (2011, p22) States that in work patterns of masculinity are quiet tough to change, they are also said to be instability. This unstableness could indicate that men seem to think that they are positioned, stuck in a cycle of hopelessness. (Willott and Griffin, 2004, p65).

Men in today's society are underemployed in part – time service sector jobs which makes them practically unsuccessful as a provider which emasculates them as they cannot raise capital as easily. They can also land temp jobs which can make them lose independence and feel stuck in a rut. (Roy, 2004, p265). The rut men are stuck in is a domestic place with meagre access to capital resources. The escalation of low paid jobs available to men contribute to a no – win situation. Not only are some men stuck in a rut, Ergeneli, Ilsev and Karapınar (2010, p59) mention the steady increase in the number of women and dual – career couples in professional life has led to an increased interest in the conflict between family and work responsibilities. The poorer the community, the more likely teenage males are to be in the labour market, which is often gender segregated. (Connell, 2005, p16). Many fathers struggle for years to find a pathway to legitimate full – time wage labour, they seem to be shaped by poor job opportunities. (Roy, 2004, p256). Men have less power since they have

started to include women in the workplace. Men who use feminine patterns are more successful at work, but they might refrain from doing so as it appears less masculine. Female patterns of communication are in general the preferred pattern of communication, thus, leading to the constant increase of females in the workplace. (Merlin, 2013, p16 - 17).

 In today's society, both genders have to work to be financially stable. (Roy, 2004, p263). More and more women are moving into the labour force, and their wages relative to men continue to increase;   emasculating men in certain jobs (Bryan, 2013, p73). Kimmel, (1987, p127) states that the rise of the female worker has eroded the ideological supports for male dominance and female domesticity. As now women can perform in areas once perceived only to men, and men perform in areas once suited to women (Kimmel, 2008, p340). Where as many studies over the years state that women managers fail to advance in their careers in comparison to males (Merlin, 2013, p13). O'Sullivan (2012, p381) disagrees pointing out that the majority of those entering the legal and medical field in recent years have been women, and some areas have become less segregated. However Wharton (2012, p230) states that the trend of mother's moving into the paid workforce is slowing down. Kimmel et al (2005) illustrate that men have been shown to exercise workplace control over women in many ways, like; job segregation, discrimination, wage inequality and sexual harassment. Men being a minority in an occupation which is stereotyped as being feminine gives them a need to prove their masculine stereotype, even if they are not being harassed or face inequality (Merlin, 2013, p17).

Another trouble for female employees is they are more likely to be exposed to the double burden of paid and unpaid work and thus have higher work – life conflict (Russell, O' Connell and McGinnity, 2009, p89). Ergeneli et al (2010, p681) agree by stating that women

are more likely to experience higher levels of work – family conflict than men. Another problem is caring responsibilities; they have been identified as a significant barrier to Irish women's career progression (O'Sullivan, 2012, p381). Both men and women that work flexible hours seem to enhance their work – life balance. They also believe that working part – time would be beneficial (Kimmel et al 2005). Alas, this may not be all that good, as Roy (2004, p259) argues that fathers are proud of their status as full – time workers, they meet obligations to their children and in return are uninterested in searching for better employment options. This can most obviously be done by education and training, it might decrease earning in the short term, but in the long term it increases economic capital (Willott and Griffin, 2004, p64). Many male adolescents see a different view to this as they see a job in the workforce as a solution (Connell, 2005, p16) Almost all organisations have a male managerial culture (Merlin, 2013, p14). Kimmel et al (2005) agrees in saying that male workers construct organisational countercultures and working masculine identities of others, such as managing office workers and women. This can be seen in workplaces where many women are unable to lift packages in certain jobs, leaving them to ask male co – workers for help. Men feel empowered by this (Kimmel, 1987, p143).

Men and family life

The term provider has transitionally been linked to masculinity. In recent years, men's ability to live up to the provider image has progressively become more difficult. (Willott and Griffin, 2004, p53). The lack of power and authority in the workplace can also be seen in the family unit (Share, Corcoran & Conway, 2012 p199). A profound destabilisation in the balance of relationship that the family is supposed to be has been noted. The relationship between adults and children has become particularly fraught, as there has been a breakdown in the traditional

family model. The rise of divorce figures, single parenting, the delay of marriage and new patterns of intimacy all indicate that family life is changing. New types of family ties have started in domestic life. In recent years individuals are not just confined to one life partner but many, as various methods of contraception are now available. Thus, adding to the significant change of masculinity in recent years. (O'Sullivan, 2012, p59 - 61). Could this change be due to the fact today's men are now encouraged and expected to take on the role of caregivers by participating in childbearing, and being more nurturing and emotionally involved in the lives of their children. On the evidence that Bryan (2013, p73) mentioning fathers being engaged and involved with their children are likely to cause conflict with established gender and relationship expectations. From the decline of the father as the breadwinner, numerous alternatives to providing have emerged, like father involvement with children. This would not be possible without dual – family earners. Other factors such as domestic routines have changed with retirement and unemployment, these scenarios can either fuel women to guard their space or encourage them to join the workplace. Willott and Griffin (2004, p64) states domestic responsibilities are often seen as positive unlike the increase of divorce can also change a man's role in a family. Could this evidence contribute to the existing body of literature with recent evidence suggesting that men's' participation in unpaid work in the home has increased internationally. (O'Sullivan, 2012, p382).

There had been a decline in the ability of a single breadwinner to support a whole family (Kimmel, 1987, p127). This could relate to men taking pride in placing their children's needs before their own (Roy, 2004, p262). This can also promote good family communication as long- term spells of employment lead to stable household arrangements and partnerships, as these families have a certain routine to keep them on track (Roy, 2004, p266). Bryan (2013, p72) agrees with this positive change by stating that men's roles in the family have undergone a drastic change in the past 30 years with cultural expectations of the sole provider

diminishing and their involvement in caregiving growing. In recent years fathers are being there emotionally instead of solely being there financially and research states it makes a big difference on the lives of their children Bryan (2013, p73). Roy (2004, p260) believes that minimal commitments to part – time, low waged jobs allow fathers to spend time with their children and partners. The demands on some jobs lead to dissolution of the family.

Such as; men have pressures from spouses in that they want them home all the time, another problem is the transitioning in and out of intimate relationships, fathers find constant involvement of this type to be problematic.

The cultural work of providing being a main priority is related to everyday constraints faced by men, at that working mothers share the challenges unsuccessful providers face. Roy (2004, p267 – 270) it is also argued that economic provisions for children should be equal responsibility for both parents. In recent years it is becoming less of a primary concern for men since the responsibility no longer solely falls on their shoulders. (Bryan, 2013, p80). (Kimmel, 1987), holds an opposing view in saying that women today like women in the past remain emotionally dependent on men and continue to develop a set of psychological needs that leads then to want be emotionally cared for as adults. But this trend has changed in contemporary society as, Wharton (2012, p227) believes that employed fathers have a more positive emotional state when in the home than at work, because they can let their guard down and turn off the pressure of performing masculinity. Doble & Supriya (2010, p366) states that employees worldwide with access to family friendly arrangements often report greater satisfaction in their lives. Other arrangements are said to cause dispute when moods and pressure from work can be transferred to one's partner or family (Wharton, 2012, p227).

Conclusion:

The vast amount of research on masculinities exposes many stereotypes and generalisations with the male gender type. It is evident the hegemonic norm has changed, which is putting men under pressure as they are unsure about performing masculinity. The traditional image of the male breadwinner labouring in the male – dominated workplace of farm, factory or office is now diminishing (Share, Corcoran & Conway, 2012 p198). This suggests that males no longer have the dominant role in Irish society. The inclusion of women in the workplace has also given men less power than in previous years. Both genders are now less segregated and both now work to be financially stable. Relevant research has also acknowledged the link of power and men in the family. The idea of authority is ultimately based around the father (Share, Corcoran & Conway, 2012 p200). And as previously noted the term provider is linked to masculinity. Although gender patterns have changed, family unit pattern have changed too. The rise in divorce rates, single parenting and marrying later, all indicate the change in the family unit. It has also been understood that the sole provider has diminished but men are now getting involved in caring and domestic jobs. However, research on the topic of masculinities has failed to provide information since the hit of the economic crisis. The research had a target of finding out what it is like to be a man in Ireland today, and whether the recession has any impact.

Methodology

Design:

A qualitative approach was used and this was deemed most appropriate to answer the

research question, through the use of rich in-depth data.

The research question explored how males have been emasculated by various factors in

contemporary society. Semi – structured interviews were used as it gave freedom to

participants and gave flexibility in the interviews. It also allowed for further probing and to

follow up information. Thematic analysis was found most appropriate as it is qualitative

research and allowed for more personal and flexible research. (Richie and Lewis, 2003, p78-

79).

Materials/ Apparatus:

An interview schedule (see appendix i) was compiled in order to answer how men's roles

have changed in contemporary society. The themes general society, the workplace and family

life were identified from the literature review and were used to help making up the questions

for interviews and it was ensured that they would address to seek information on the 3 themes

for the research question. Peer reviewed research was used to compile the literature review.

This research took the form of journal articles, research reports and books from authors who

specialise in the subject of gender. Prompts such as current affairs were used throughout

interviews to get the participant engaged and interested in the subject. A Dictaphone

(OLYMPUS VN-711PC) was used to record interviews with prior permission. A password

protected USB was used to store the data. The interview recordings are terminated one year

after they take place.

Participants:

The sample size was between 5 – 7 participants. In total 5 participants were interviewed as the researcher reached point of saturation.

General breakdown of participants:

The participant's ages ranged from 22 – 48. Their occupations varied from unemployment, student and working full-time. All of the participants were from Ireland, 4 lived in Dublin and 1 lived in Kilkenny. The reason behind choosing the participants was their background's differed in a variety of ways. Only one of the participants was married and had children, another was still attending 3rd level education, two of the participants had graduated from college, with only one having a full time job, and the other was still seeking work in an area related to his field of study.

Sampling method:

A criterion sampling method was seen as the method most appropriate as the research was aimed at males only and of which had to be the age that were adults and in the working world or had their own family. The participants were also chosen because they had particular features or characteristics which enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the 3 central themes of the study.

All the participants participated willingly, and there were no issues or problems in any of the interviews. (Richie and Lewis, 2003, p78- 79).

Procedure:

Once the participants agreed to take part on the study a location and time was organised in a confidential place or setting. The researcher explained to the participants the ethical considerations, for example, they're right to with draw from the study at any time. Consent

forms (see appendix ii) were obtained prior interviews. The interviews lasted on average 30 –
40 minutes as deemed an appropriate amount of time following pilot interview. A pilot
interview was undertaken, to finalize the interview schedule by arranging the questions, what
would help with the flow of the interview, what prompts to use and to be prepared for the
unexpected.

Ethical considerations:

Confidentiality was addressed numerous times at the start of each interview to ensure the
participant to speak freely on the topic without fear of exposure. No identifying was also
stressed. Precaution was taken in that no sensitive questions would be addressed as it might
have possibly lost the participants concentration on the subject or caused untruthful answers.
Approval was also sought by a supervisor in that all questions were appropriate to use and to
ensure that no ethical boundaries would be crossed.

Data analysis:

The data analysis of choice is thematic analysis. The reason behind this choice is the
flexibility on analysing key features from a large amount of data. Using thematic analysis
will help highlight the similarities and differences amongst the participants also allowing for
unanticipated insights. (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

After in-depth thematic analysis of the data recorded, four key themes seemed to arise. Firstly the theme of social embeddedness and transition was recognised, it varied from embedded social norms and values in society and the change of attitudes in recent years. Gender and inequalities was another theme recognised. This theme focused on the inequality that still exists in Irish society in terms of gender, along with gender equality that has become and continues to be visible in contemporary Irish society. Another theme that emerged from the data was men as "egotistic" individuals, this theme relates to the pressures men are faced to be a man in society in relation to career and appearance. Power was the final theme recognised; the data indicated that men seem to be driven by power, in both past and contemporary society. Each theme will be discussed in detail below.

Social embeddedness and transition

The men in the study all seemed to have knowledge of the idea of the traditional gender roles and values. This indicates that patriarchy along with similar values remains embedded in Irish society. Men still think they have to perform a certain role or way of being that gives them higher status than women.

> Power in terms of Ireland (pause) it's male dominated and it's a fact that there's definitely an ingrain that top iron men are needed for politics and that cause they wanna be in control of their situations." (P-1)

The role of the breadwinner was expressed to be still visible in Irish society, even though there has been a dramatic change in the labour force with women joining. This indicates that the male role of being the sole provider for the family is present in contemporary Irish society even though other aspects of gender roles have changed throughout Irish history. This shows that the male breadwinner role is also embedded in society.

> Men in the past always had to be the bread getter, going out getting work and women obviously didn't have as much rights back then. But now you do see more and more women working with qualifications, but overall is still think it's the same still like, like a man is always proud, he want to provide, to do the hard work or whatever, and is still think that's visible and ya know.. I don't see a problem with that. (P-4)

The data also provided evidence that men think about earning and being practical a lot, this could indicate that men are still being socialised to thinking in this way, even though family forms and patterns have become more diverse in recent years.

> Many women don't mind being stay at home mams and some lads don't' mind going out to work, but is know this is not said often but men like women mightn't want their gender roles either. Where they eh just make money, they were assigned to this role. Men don't ask for their roles, like back in the day men were forced to go over to England to work to feed their family, and were forced to war. (P-2).

It was also apparent from the data that men notice gender stereotypes and that they feel they are being discriminated against because of embedded social norms.

> Yeah bouncers are gonna see the man as more of a threat to start a fight compared to the women like, yeah like I mean a group of lads are more likely to mess about compared to lads with a group of girls, like do ya know with lads they automatically think there's gonna be trouble. (P-1)

Men also feel as though they are being discriminated against in the working world because of social norms and values and along with the transition of women now being in the workplace. This is sexism towards masculinity:

> More often than not a girl would get hired cause sex, it sells, like men look at girls as more   trustworthy, easier to control... em easier to fire as well, that's how they'd just view them ya know. (P-2)

Although this notion of sexism in the workplace can also be seen in reverse. When the participants were asked about the phrase "the glass ceiling", the majority agreed it still was visible in society.

> Oh yeah it definitely still exists today, look at all the board rooms, the men are in power. (P-3)

And

I do think it exists, but not where I work. (P-5)

Society is currently in a state of transition. The change has many positive aspects which can

be seen with men now engaging in domestic responsibilities, like caring for the children,

which was once a responsibility associated with women only.

Times are changing... especially with the whole stay at home dads now and eh like ya
see a lot more of that, I can't stand men that expect all that stuff to be done by women.
(P-1)

But along with positive aspects comes negative aspects of social change. The majority of the

participants thought conflict between the genders has been a result of social change, that it is

society's influence.

We've began to learn certain roles of certain people, and like we're not at all that
different but sometimes I'm unsure how much men like women really ya know? (P-3)

And

In the 21st century people believe men and women are not getting on as well as they
used to be, I think we're in transition and I think sexist jokes are just a way of dealing
with the transition, anything that's current there's generally jokes about it, like there
was never really sexist jokes in the '40s because back then it would of been taking the
piss out of someone's job, it's a joke now cause it's in the past. (P-2)

Sexist jokes are related to Conflict between the genders, on the other hand it is taking a

humorous light on an old norms and values in society, and attaching comedy to issues that

were once serious.

I know of girls that don't take any offense to sexist jokes, they'd laugh too like. (P- 5)

Gender and inequalities

From analysing the data, men seem to acknowledge that inequalities still exist for women in

Irish society. The majority of participants assume that exploitation is present even though

men are now engaging in domestic responsibilities.

> Yeah for starters I don't think there's the whole same family kinda structure these days, times have changed a lot, but I've seen my sister go out and work a full day and she comes home and the washing never stops ya know, she's always cleaning does dinner, and himself does a shift in work not any more strenuous than what she does and he'll come home lay on the couch and watch TV, I suppose that's what ya meant by second shift? (P-1)

Not only do men acknowledge the inequalities in the home, they also notice them in the media. They realise that women are used in the media, much more than men.

> Well, women sell a lot of products on TV and it doesn't matter if they're female products or male products, they generally sell them through advertising from their own sexuality, in America they have women dressed in a certain way to sell coke or whatever because it's what will turn heads. I mean the superbowl that had cheerleaders on ads just to sell the superbowl. (P-2)

As women's positions in the workplace have changed, the men interviewed all agreed that this was a positive thing. The participants suggested that women in the workplace are accepted, however when it comes to men in positions of power and have high up jobs, they are seen as a threat; perhaps a certain level of intimidation is present.

> Like I think it bothers men with no education, but personally I think there kind of afraid of them, like men in high up jobs always had women to do jobs for them, and now they see these women working alongside and they're gonna try find faults in what they do, a good example would bet the movie anchor-man... And when you are getting good money you can't see the fact that women are as good as you, they get jealous. (P-4)

The data indicated that the men do not think economic dependence was still present with females in Irish society; they seemed to have found a decline in the breadwinner role and agreed that women are more independent in contemporary society. This indicates that Irish society has become more gender neutral and balance between domestic work and labour is becoming more equal.

> Well there's more equality with work and I suppose yeah there's less pressure to be the sole provider most women want to work as much as men really, and they seem to be succeeding. Like 2 years ago a girl I started with has been promoted to manager way ahead of me, the factory manager there is a women, a lot of the managers there are women actually. (P-5)

And

> The father should work, but yeah the mother should work too why not, it should be all shared cause like men can cook and clean too, last week I cooked for a girl and I had no problem with it at all, so yeah I think responsibilities should be shared and the fact that nowadays more men are looking after their kids ya know and it's a good thing because men get to spend more time with their children. (P-4)

All the men shared agreement on shared responsibilities in the home. They looked at the family as a team, there to help one another out which indicates balance and equality present in the Irish family. They also shared agreement that it is not fair to exploit the other person in the marriage because it would fall apart. This could be an indication to why there are so many family break downs such as separation and divorce in recent years, these family break downs could be a result of society in transition and people are more aware of their entitlements as an individual.

> I think it should be fluid, they should back each other up, I think both parents should do what has to be done, why because it's a bloody hard job, you can't expect one person to do it all, and when the kids get older they should also contribute. (P-3)

Also

> They both have to do roles equally cause there has to be a balance, like my brother and his family, himself and the wife work out a rota system. (P-2)

Gender equality in society has also given rise to diverse family forms and practices. The men acknowledged that individuals in society are becoming more independent and career focused giving rise to the change in the family unit.

> Times have changed a lot like, I think that like marriage has become more em ya know not as big as it used to be the whole family unit thing is not as big as it used to be. (P-1)

This was echoed by P2:

> They want more of a career, which conflicts relationships, for example on valentine's day just passed the independent usually have a booklet with ideas for couples and things to do but this year they had a singles booklet, which indicates that there might be more single people than in relationships, and it's from careers and that people have more choice to actually follow a goal that they want to do, the world is much bigger place now than it was. (P-2)

Men as "egotistic" individuals?

There term "egotism" was introduced to each interview by the participant of their own accord. They discussed it in different aspects. Egotism is seen as a negative male characteristic by the men. This could indicate that men in power are egotistic. And they would do anything to have high status.

> Like I think guys kinda see the goal instead of looking to see what will come before a goal. Like they all want money but don't think of the costs. Get big and strong, don't think of the costs. Get famous and then again don't think of the costs. And sometimes other people get hurt from it, good friends or whatever, it's a shame really, and it's all down to lads egos. (P-4)

It was evident that the men thought that appearance and egotism were correlated. They also stressed that it is a new trend in society. This trend could be caused by the influence of women, in the fact their gender roles are becoming more fluid could mean men's roles are becoming more fluid too. Both roles are influencing each other.

> A great deal of people are going to the gym these days, and I think women go to get fit and men go to the gym for a macho reason, women don't have the macho ego, while with men it's all about competition and to see who can be bigger or lift the heaviest thing. (P-2)

The data also suggested that men have a certain way about them "egotism" and that they want to be bigger, better and stronger than one another.

> But I think it comes down to like the male, the way we're programmed like that we wanna be big and we wanna be buff, and i don't think it's to solely attract women either, It's to show other males that they're stronger and then therefor they're like the alpha male ya know. (P-1)

Men are constantly competing with each other. Not just with work and appearance, but with everything. This competition generates social pressure amongst males in Irish society.

> Guys like show off to girls, have egotism to show off like, ya know be the perfect, be the perfect. And I mean it's nice to be looking well but not to the point where I'd dismiss my friends or dismiss living even... there'd be some lads that would spend all their time in the gym, fair enough if ya enjoy it, but just ya know it puts that social pressure on ya. (P-4)

Likewise, another participant stated that:

> Men are just so competitive with each other and don't give up, men have a competitive streak that women don't have. Men are competitive with anything, fucking anything...... masculinity in itself is who is more macho, it's also the fear of being laughed at or being weak and also the fear of masculinity itself. (P-2)

Power – The powered driven gender type?

The idolised hegemonic male is noted to be a powerful individual and one who succeeds in

life. All males strive for this powerful image and they go about developing this image in a

variety of ways. The data collected suggested that violence is one of these ways.

> Well certainly men are associated with violence or else highly achieving, whether that's a positive or a negative but overall slightly more negative I'd say. (P-3)

Also

> Men would tell sexist jokes and try to assert their power over women I think they also do it do boost the alpha male camaderie. (P-4)

The data also suggested that men also like to be in control of situations, this goes hand in

hand with power.

> I think perhaps men engage in violence to be dominant and in control of their situations. (P-5)

The data also suggested that men have also recognised that females are now entitled to power

in relation to society and the family unit. The participants saw this as a positive change.

> I don't see any difference between men and women and i work, ya know, women being there, it adds to rather than take away from. (P-3)

Discussion

The aim of this research was to contribute to the existing body of literature in finding out how each gender role has changed in contemporary Irish society, dealing specifically with males. A thematic approach was used to find themes related to this change. As previously discussed research in the field of gender focused mainly on the female gender role. Gender consists of differing male and female role, which are learned through socialisation Giddens (2009). As female identities have progressed in society of the years, for males it is only beginning Connell (2005). Today men are more playful with masculinity; various models have now been introduced to society. The research sought information on these various models in relation to three themes. Firstly the change in Irish society; how it affects men and how it makes them feel. Followed by men and how they have changed in the workplace, focusing on the loss of jobs since the economic crises, the decline of the breadwinner role and men trying to balance work and family to avoid conflict in the home. The third theme investigated was the family and masculinity, both of which have become more diverse in Irish society. Although previous research on masculinities exposes many stereotypes and generalisation, there was a lack of information following in position of the economic crises.

Social embeddedness and transition

After analysis of the recorded data, four themes emerged. Social embeddedness and transition, inequalities and gender, men as "egotistic" individuals and men being power driven in Irish society. Men in Irish society are aware of traditional roles and values that they think are expected from them, it is clear they understand that these roles have been embedded even patriarchy. Previous literature expresses similar findings in declaring that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant form in society, various roles and values are associated with this type of masculinity and are displayed daily (Kimmel 1987, p168). Men in the West also find

it difficult to let go of the traditional masculine identity and replace it with the new forms, even in the result of losing a job or their spouse is the financial provider. . Levent (2011, p766) explains that there are pressures on heterosexual men to behave in certain ways that conflict with various aspects of traditional masculine norms. The data contributes to these previous findings in that the role of the breadwinner is still evident in Irish society even though women have now joined the labour force; it shows that the male breadwinner role is embedded in society. In contrast to this finding there has been development in recent years with society starting to reject old patterns allowing new forms of masculinities to develop and emerge in society (Connell, 2005, p24). In the interviews men were found to be marginalised in the working world from the transition of women now being part of the workplace; this was viewed to being sexism. The literature informs us of the steady increase in the number of women and duel career couples in professional life; it also indicates that men now have less power as a result of this (Karapinar, 2010, p59). Sexism can be seen with female patterns of communication being the preferred pattern of communication in the workplace and that the majority of those entering the legal and medical field in recent years have been women (Wharthon, 2012, p230). The data shows that society is currently in a state of transition. The transition has had many positive effects for men, such as engaging in domestic responsibilities. Men are now encouraged and expected to take on the role of caregivers by participating in childbearing, also since the decline of the father breadwinner, numerous alternative to providing have emerged, like father involvement with children.

Traditional domestic routines for men have also changed from unemployment and women joining the workplace. (Bryan, 2013, p73). In contrast, the data suggested that there were also negative aspects of this social change, such as conflict between the genders. The literature reviewed affirmed this in stating that the relationship between adults and children has become particularly fraught from the breakdown in the traditional family type along with the rise of

divorce figures, single parenting, the delay of marriage and new patterns of intimacy all indicate that family life is changing. (O' Sullivan, 2012, p59 – 61). In the interviews sexist jokes were viewed as taking a humorous light on old norms and values in society. As women were once economically dependent on males, and were confined to domestic duties. Opposed to this thought, the literature proclaims that women today like women in the past remain emotionally dependent on men and need to be emotionally cared for as adults, suggesting lack of independence (Roy, 2004, p261). Men interviewed for the current study acknowledge the inequalities that still exist for women in Irish society. They are aware of female exploitation and the glass ceiling. The literature reviewed also made this acknowledgement in saying that men are holders of class power, they are found located in the highest levels of political, economical, educational and cultural organisations, and also that hegemonic masculinity has hierarchy over all individuals in society (Kimmel, 1987, p168). In comparison to female inequalities, the findings suggested that women's positions in the workplace have changed, and was looked at as a positive development; although an element of intimidation was present. Men do not have as much pressure to be the sole earner of a family; women are now starting to take place in industries, educational systems, trade unions and government jobs. In today's society both genders have to work to be financially stable, this shows the rise of equality for both genders along with women now performing in areas once only perceived to men and men performing in areas once suited to women. (Weeks, 2005, p54). Intimidation may exist due to the current crises of male gender order and the rise of equality for women in society as social changes have provided women with new sources of power and this is creating insecurities and vulnerabilities with men.

Balance and equality

Those interviewed agreed that women are more independent in contemporary Irish society, it shows that society is now gender neutral and balance between domestic work and labour is more equal. It also indicates balance and equality in the Irish family. Relevant theory opposes this in suggesting that men and women are expected to behave in accordance to their gender roles. Female employees remain having the double burden of paid and unpaid work, in result have higher work – life conflict than men, another problem is caring responsibilities, and these responsibilities have been identified as a barrier to Irish women's career progression (Russell et al, 2009,p89). The research carried out indicated that family break downs could be a result of society in transition as individuals are more aware of their entitlements. Individuals are not just confined to one life partner but many, with the aid of contraception and legislation. The literature also stated that the increase of divorce can change a man's role in the family. In contrast the literature suggested that society in transition is promoting good family communication as long – term spells of employment lead to stable household arrangements and that these families have a certain routine to keep them on track. (Cleary, 2005, p165).

Men as individuals in society

The research found that men seem to be concerned with their status in society. And in recent years appearance is a growing trend amongst men. This trend could be the influence of women as gender roles are now becoming more fluid. Some men give themselves the identity of failure if they do not match the hegemonic male type. The identity of failure gives men fear of being exposed to not being a "real" man. Men seem to still see their pride of being a man as very important; this indicates that the men that are unemployed are in their situation because working in a low status job would destroy their pride. It is also visible in a social

setting; crime and cash in hand work are both used as capital and masculine status. Men also compare themselves to what they interpret from the media, which encourages pressure to have a certain status (Cleary, 2005, p161). The results found that men are constantly competing with each other. This competition is putting social pressure on males in Irish society. The literature declares that men feel judged by other men and that competition is a leading characteristic of masculinity (Cleary, 2005, p161). The results demonstrated that all men strive for the powerful image of the hegemonic male. The literature stated that men with power have pride (Willott and Griffin, 2004, p64). The results indicated that violence was another way of displaying the dominant male image, violence being another leading characteristic masculinity. Violence is also associated with pressure to conform to being a man also. In contrast the literature found that the common set of standards and expectations of male dominating power have been reduced (Giddens, 2009). Along with violence, control was also found to being associated with the hegemonic male. The literature demonstrated that men who lack independence feel as though they are stuck in a cycle of hopelessness (Willott and Griffin, 2004, p65).

There was no evidence prior the research suggesting that the change in men's appearance is related to women's newfound power in society. However, it can still be argued to at what context, whether it is extensive male grooming, diversity in family patterns, a statement of social change or equality of expression for both genders?

Limitations

There were few limitations with the research project as it was a small scale study with limited data on the topic in Ireland, especially post – recession. The participants were also based on a criterion sampling method which was gender specific. In future research on this topic should including women for contrast. It was also difficult being selective with choosing what data to

use as the majority seemed relevant. Time is another component that limited the research, more time would be recommended for future research in order to allow for a larger word count and using a focus group to get the participants talking in a group setting. A possible suggestion for future research would be including the theme of the media, as it was brought up during the interviews with the participant's elaborating on the topic.

Conclusion

The term provider is linked to the masculinity role. The surge of women in the workplace has changed the meaning of the masculinity role, in turn emasculating men as the provider, which is embedded in traditional masculinity.

The themes that have emerged from the data suggest that traditional male norms and values exist in Irish society even though social change is visible. This indicates that society is in transition producing many new equalities and new gender roles that were not present pre-recession. There was also limited research in the context of men and their appearance linked to women's newfound power in society.

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Appendix (i)

Have men been emasculated in contemporary Irish society?

My name is Sarah Browne and I am conducting research that explores: How men's roles have changed in contemporary society.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves an interview that will take roughly 40 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. If you do take part and any of the questions do raise difficult feelings, you do not have to answer that question, and/or continue with the interview.

Participation is confidential. If, after the interview has been completed, you wish to have your interview removed from the study this can be accommodated up until the research study is published.

The interview, and all associated documentation, will be securely stored and stored on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact Sarah Browne (sarahzgreat@gmail.com) or Annette Jorgensen (Annette.jorgensen@dbs.ie)

Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: _____   Date: _____

(ii)

Interview Schedule

- **What kind of behaviour is represented by males in current affairs; do you think it's accurate? (violence)**

o   TV

o   Read newspaper (descriptions)

- **What would you like to see change in advertising and movies in terms of gender stereotypes?** Violance with men, why is the women always the victim (rape)

- **What is your view on men who take interest in their appearance?**

 Do you think men are singled out if they do?
o   Fake tan

Skinny jeans

- **In the past men saw themselves superior to women; do you still think this exists today?**

How / give examples / why??

- **What has changed for men in Irish society since the recession**?

o   Does society look at men differently?

Do you think being a man in your father's time is much different to today?

- **What are your feelings on the fact that more and more women are joining the labour force? And getting high up jobs? How does it make you feel?**

How do you think it makes men in high up jobs feel? Threatened?
- Do you think it would bother you if a female got a raise or promoted over you in work? Embarrassed? Would you tell your friends?

- **What do you personally think should be the roles of each parent in the family? Why?**

o   What if the family has no offspring? Should your opinion still be the case?

o   Or both out of work? Should your opinion still be the case?

o   Do you think men should be entitled to maternity leave also?

o   If so, for what reasons? Is having a baby strenuous on a father as well as being a mother?

- **In the case of separation/divorce, who should get sole responsibility of child/children? In most situations it's the mother.**

- Does this aggravate you?

o Why do you think this is?

o Do you agree?

o Would you like to see this changed?