Motherhood in contemporary Ireland – experiences and motivations of having first child during global economic crisis.

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Abstract
The aim of this study was to explore and examine motivations and experiences of motherhood in Ireland in the face of global economic crisis. Ireland is exceptional country in EU with the highest birth rate. The 2008 we saw baby boom in Ireland, while year before Irish economy was one of the worst affected by global economic crisis worldwide. Past studies and researches suggests that unemployment and a decline in economic prosperity are likely, based on past trends, to lead people to delay having children, rather than opposite.

Introduction
Ireland saw baby boom in 2008. There were 75,587 births in Ireland in all that year and the birth rate in that period was of 17 per 1,000 inhabitants - the highest in Europe those twelve months. In 2009 there was slight decrease but Republic still had the highest rate of children per 1000 inhabitants in whole Europe, which were 16.8 while the EU average was 10.7.

Motherhood is a central issue for humanity since each one of us is born to a mother
When we think about child immediately we picture mother, traditionally the role of bearing a child was associate with mother, and work and breadwinner with father - men.

This phenomenon is very recent therefore not many researches has been done, however from the past attempts of explaining baby boom, it has been argued that unemployment and a decline in economic prosperity are likely, based on past trends, to lead people to delay having children, rather than opposite.

Hence this study aim to find out why Ireland is so exceptional in this matter, and explore the reasons behind and peoples motivations for having a child.

Method
The experiences and motivations for motherhood in Ireland during global economic crisis is qualitative descriptive analysis, data led piece of research. The qualitative approach was taken due to the fact that this is recent phenomenon and most of researches on that subject were done using quantitative methods.

This research was based on freely given informed consent of Irish mothers who have had their first child between years 2007 -2011 and were at the age of early thirties.

A total of 9 women agreed to participate in this study, but 3 of them cancelled interviews in the last minute, and 2 others were rolled out as they did not fit required criteria (one of them was 39 years old and the other had first baby in 1997) hence only 4 of them were purposely chosen for the interview sample that provided the raw data for this research.

The primary source of data for this study was face to face in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in March 2011 by one female interviewer and lasted from seventeen to thirty two minutes.

All four interviews were recorded using the Olympus Dictaphone. The interviews were later transcribed into World document and analyze in NVIVO software.

Results
Four main themes emerged from the performed interviews:

- economic factor not affecting peoples decision to have a child,
- psycho-social factor (mainly peer group pressure) impacting decision, motherhood experience (as a huge life change, happiness and learning experience) and the mothers professional career situation (women disadvantaged/discriminated against, need of sacrifice).

Discussion
There is no one answer explaining baby boom in Ireland. Motivation vary between peoples depending on their individual situation and circumstances. However there is similar pattern for women from the same social class. Most of them do not really have to worry about the money, therefore the economic factor is not something which would stop them from having a child. Nevertheless, all women were well settled before they made decision with their husbands that they are going to have a baby. It was important for all of them to explore life on their own, by travelling, getting higher education, enjoying social life as well as progressing in career.

All women were extremely happy and they find motherhood as best and at the same time the hardest experience in their lives. They admit that it took a while to get use to being a mother, and the consciousness that all the time there is someone who needs their priorities.

In general women did not complain but they admit that the full time mothering is not really appreciated as other occupations. Women feel also disadvantaged and discriminated against in terms of professional career.

Surprisingly the interviews presented another important factor which was not taken into consideration in regards of baby booms explanation namely peer group pressure. Women observe their friends having children and that inspire them to think about having one of their own, however further research is needed in order to explore this idea more.

References: