

THIS IS A QUALITATIVE STUDY TO FIND OUT HOW MEN AND WOMEN FEEL ABOUT THE DIVIDE IN HOUSEHOLD WORK.

Patrice Cowap

1290337

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts degree
(Social Science Specialization) at DBS School of Arts, Dublin.**

Supervisor: Dr. Niall Hanlon

Head of Department: Dr. Bernadette Quinn

Department of Social Science

DBS School of Arts

April 2012

Table of Contents

Content	2
Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Literature Review	6
Methodology	13
Results	18
Discussion	26
Limitation	30
Conclusion	32
References	33
Appendix 1	35
Appendix 2	36
Appendix 3	37
Appendix 4	38

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Niall Hanlon, Dr. Bernadette Quinn and Dr. Annette Jorgensen for all their assistance and guidance during this project. Also I would like to thank all the participants who let me interview them. And finally I would like to thank my family and friends who supported me through this project.

Abstract

The aim of this research project is to find out how men and women feel about the divide in the household work. A qualitative study was carried out with semi structured interviews conducted with six couples who were living together. A thematic analysis was used to investigate the data that emerged from the interviews. Four themes emerged from the data collected. 1) Gender, the work in the home is still gendered. Women felt that they wanted their partners to do more of the women's work but still keep doing the men's work. 2) Communication or lack of caused stress and arguments between the couples interviewed. 3) Feelings this is the theme that answers the research question by detailing how the men and women felt by the divide in the household work 4) Changes there is currently a change taking place within the households and this is due to the current economic recession in Ireland.

Introduction

The main aim of the research is to find out 'How men and women feel about the divide in household work?' Also some other points that the researcher would like to focus on is why each gender feel obliged to do their chosen amount of house work. Is there a patterns emerging from the level of education of participants being interviewed? Is the divide fairer for couples without children or with children. The objectives for this research proposal are

- 1) To interview 6 couples that live together, they can be co-habiting or married.
- 2) Analyse and write the findings from this research into a thesis.

Women are the centre of the family in most cases. There to support their families. In the traditional role the wife stayed home to be the carergiver. It was only in 1973 that the civil service lifted the marriage bar, so that women could still retain their jobs after getting married (Watson et al., 2012). Family life is changing; more women are going out to work. But with both spouses working who looks after the domestic responsibility? Is it equal as some researchers would suggest (Sayer, England, Bittman, & Bianchi, 2009) who believe that men work slightly more hours to women or is it still the women doing the majority of the second shift (Hochschild, 2003)? A lot of families are dual earners meaning that both the man and woman go out to work now. Not only is gender inequality socially constructed it has been embedded in us from a very early age in Irish Society (Leonard, 2004). Our chores growing up have always been gendered with girls carrying out care work and housework while boy's chores are generally 'men's work'. Hochschild (2003) makes comparisons to the percentage of working mothers with young children aged between 3 & 5 was 45 per cent in 1975 and 2000 was 72 per cent. A number of studies have provided us with research results that men have increased their unpaid housework and childcare but there still is a big divide between the amount of paid and unpaid work a woman does in comparison to the amount a man does.

Literature Review

Socially Constructed

Leonard (2004) research into girl's participation in domestic work in Irish households suggests that gender inequality is constructed at home as girls are expected to perform more household chores than boys. Girls are more likely to help out with younger siblings than boys. In Irish society children continue to grow up in a house that still has distinctions between men and women work. Over 3 quarters of the girls viewed this division as unequal and unfair and were optimistic that they would have a more equal house hold when they were older.

Evertsson (2006) researched to find out if work done is gendered and if so if it is following the parents footsteps and also to see if children's attitudes are influenced by their parent's attitude and practises. Sweden has been appointed the most gender equal country in the world by United Nations. Using data collected for the Swedish Child Level of Living Survey 2000 includes first-hand information from children and parents. Results show that children in two parent families are prone to engage in gender typical work. Girls still do more than boys in the home. Girls do more care work than boys indicating that housework is gendered even among the Swedish and even though parents state that gender equality is important in reality it is not the case. Mothers average 19 hours in the home per week and fathers average 7 hours. In families where both parent are working mothers spend more time on unpaid work and even adding DIY or car repairs does little to bridge the difference in time. Children from homes where the father does the majority of the housework tend to do more housework. And the increase is done by the girls this suggests that girls tend to substitute for their mothers in housework. Results show that the higher the mother's education the greater the kids feel that equality is important. As girls do much more in the home than boys this indicates that gender

difference is seen with children as well as adults. Children in the United States find it less acceptable for fathers to stay at home and for their mother to work and use gendered stereotypes as their reasoning. Children viewed their fathers as less competent in domestic tasks. Children accepted that both parents worked but it was more a personal choice for the mother to work and that fathers worked for financial reasons. Children did not see that the domestic role could or should be an equal opportunity. Parents that keep a traditional home endorse the gender stereotypes (Sinno & Killen 2009).

Health and Wellbeing

A Canadian study using multivariate analysis shows that women experience more stress because of the greater hours of unpaid work. Focusing on the relationship of unpaid work to stress, data was collected from February 1998 till January 1999 by telephone interviews. Women and men 25 to 54 years old were interviewed as these are the years they are likely to have a double burden of paid and unpaid work. A pattern emerged of women with more paid works were more likely to have high stress levels. 51.2 per cent reported 'constant stress', 43.3 per cent in part—time employment were constantly under stress and 39.6 per cent of women outside the labour force were under constant stress. Unpaid work tasks showed that women do twice the amount of unpaid work, women on average do 17.5 hours per week compared to men only doing 9.1 hours per week. Women do 28.6 hours of childcare compared to the men doing 12.1. For women who have their spouses contribute to the housework did not relieve stress but actually increased it (MacDonald, Phipps and Lethbridge, 2005).

Boye (2009) researched how paid and unpaid work influence wellbeing within the different genders. The research investigated if paid and unpaid work account for the lower wellbeing among women as compared to men in Europe and to find out if wellbeing and hours of paid

and unpaid work differed by gender attitudes and social context. Results to this research suggests that men's wellbeing appears unaffected by hours of paid work and house work, women's wellbeing increased with the increased paid working hours and decreased with the housework hours. Gender attitudes are indeed associated with wellbeing with a negative effect on women and a positive effect on men but it does not interact with the hours of work done. These findings suggest that women benefit from being able to do as little house work as possible.

Happily Married?

Most research is done on women regarding this topic but research done on male managers regarding work, family borders theory & gendered role orientation suggests that a relationship was found between strain based conflict and life satisfaction. Results suggest that emotions spill over between work and home and is related to life satisfaction but behaviour and time based conflicts are not related to life satisfaction. The only significant results was that participants experience differing levels of time based work to family conflict depending on the number of hours that spouses that worked. The moderate levels of work/family conflict and positive life satisfaction suggest that work/family conflict is not a major issue for this group (Donald, & Linington, 2008).

Using a dataset of couples from the United States researchers examine the relationship between gender ideology work to family conflict and marital satisfaction proposing that dual earner couples who have similar gender ideologies will have higher levels of marriage satisfaction. Results indicate that women with the lowest level of marital satisfaction are strongly egalitarian women with high levels of work to family conflict. This is because they are more likely to seek help from their husbands and this in turn may lead to marital

disagreements. Men's marital satisfaction is shaped by gender ideology (Minnotte, Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon, & Kiger 2010).

To understand why paid and unpaid work between men and women remain unequal a qualitative study of 31 Dutch couples was done. Interviews in the formative years before their first child was born took place. People in the Netherlands generally say they think it is fair to divide domestic tasks equally, although this is not what they do. Males work fulltime and are responsible for household income whereas the women work part time and have the responsibility of the home and childcare. Domestic work is not only done by the women, the males come out fairly well in the division of domestic duties. One important finding of this study was that even though couples prefer to share the load of domestic work equally they end up in more traditional roles. These couples did not find that their new living arrangements effected their work or study situation. Laundry is typically the woman's responsibility and men then do household repairs. Couples generally started to talk about the division when faced with a new situation, i.e. having a baby. These results suggest that couples who wish to achieve equality need to engage in decision making. Decision making is usually done by muddling through. Women see the cost of division of labour lower than the cost of confrontation so her first priority is the wellbeing of her marriage. The slow change suggests that gender division is embedded into the culture of society (Wiesmann, Boeije, van Doorne-Huiskes, & den Dulk, 2008).

Research done to compare whether and how the father's contribution to unpaid work is associated with divorce. Data collected in Britain from couples whose first child was born in 1970 with follow up interviews when the child was 5, 10 and 16. Results suggest that women who are not working but were employed in the 5 years since the first child was born are significantly more likely to divorce. Also men who do the highest level of housework and

child care regardless of their wife's employment status had a better chance of staying married (Sigle-Rushton, 2010).

Karaka, Dean Lee, and MacDermid (2004) conducted a qualitative study to examine the meaning of a good family life. The study was done on interviews from 1996-98 on professionals who chose to work less hours to spend more time at home. Results suggest different dimensions of family well-being for example spending quality time with family, emotional well-being and health of family members, high communication and support and satisfaction with work and work load at home. Participants noted that there was less stress in the home when the burden of work was lessened.

Women's Work?

With a study of 44 time use survey spanning 1965 to 2003 from 20 countries combining with national level data the researcher Hook (2006) found that men have not responded accordingly to women's increase employment as predicted. Is revolution stalled or is there convergence? Both conclusions are too strong. There is a clear increase in men's unpaid work. Among married and employed fathers time spent on unpaid work increased 6 hours per week from 1965 to 2003. Parental leave decreases father's time by reinforcing women's roles as caregiver. Women remain in part-time employment in several countries this keeps the demands off husbands. Results of this survey show men now work more in the home. Married men do more unpaid work than single men. Women's national employment practices and policies are key determinants of fathers unpaid work time at individual-level. During the industrial revolution men left the home for waged work, changing roles in the family life. Men became breadwinners whereas women stayed in the home as were seen as caregivers. In the 20th century women left the home to work (Hook, 2006).

As most studies suggest the same results that women do more this study contradicts most other studies trying to disprove Hochschild (1989) Second Shift. Quantitative analysis of gender difference in work time do not show excess of women's over men's total work anywhere near the 15 hours a week stated. Studies indicate that women spend more time doing housework and childcare to men but women also spend less time doing paid work than men. Recent time use data compared two liberal welfare states, the United States and Australia. Analysis based on two recent time diaries surveyed married men and women aged between 20 and 59. The groups were split into 4 groups; dual breadwinner couples in which both spouses are employed full time, neo traditional couples men full time and women part time, male breadwinner where man worked full time and the woman was unemployed and unconventional couples in which husband was either unemployed or worked part time and the wife was employed full time. Results show that women do not work more than men when paid and unpaid work is considered. Men work 3 hours more per week in the United States and 1 hour more in Australia. When adding the first and second shifts together more total work is done by men. Mothers do work more than men when combining motherhood with full time employment because children increase unpaid work more for mothers than for fathers. Women give more hours to childcare by cutting into their sleep and leisure. Men do not make these sacrifices (Sayer, England, Bittman, & Bianchi 2009).

Erickson (2005) research attempts to explain why biological sex remains the primary predictor of household chore allocation. The evidence still suggests that women do the bulk even though in fulltime employment. Results showed that women saw themselves in more feminine expressive terms than men, and women also reported to perform more emotional work. Both men and women answered that wives did more housework and childcare family work was constructed in a more traditional way. Women are seen as emotional caretakers rather than someone who does emotional care taking.

Research indicated that although gender inequality and time use has altered over the past 40 years women continue to do more of the unpaid housework than men. Technological advances like dish washers and dryers are probably the reason that women do less work. Women are still expected to be primary caregivers. Women tend to work in paid jobs of little or no work satisfaction. Men are pressured by work, family and friends to spend less time with their children as it may affect their ability to provide financially. The decline of free time is sharper for mothers who tend to cut into their leisure or sleep to accommodate their children's needs unlike men. Men and women are not stalling gender revolution but are finding it hard to shake off what is socially constructed (Sayer, 2005).

Part time work has been criticized for creating gender division in families. Results show that part time work is done by women to help them cope with the demands of work and motherhood. Those moving from full time to part time work reported that they traded in working hours for non-paid work. Their part time work lessened pressures on their husbands who expected to do less around the home and increased their leisure. Stay at home mothers who started working part time found that their husbands helped more in the home. Women who work hours opposite to their husbands had left them no choice but to do more. Women felt less empowered asking their husband for help. Findings show that part time work can help or cause a bigger divide in the gender difference in the home (Webber, & Williams, 2008).

Methodology

The research project question is *'how do men and women feel about the divide in household work?'*

Research methods

'Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practises transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversation, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln as cited in Davies, 2007, p.10)

There are many benefits to the Qualitative research methods. With qualitative research we are able to provide scientific explanations of facts, quantitative could be seen as taking a shortcut in processing the information (Flick, 2009). Also qualitative research can be used on its out without the use of quantitative methods whereas quantitative needs qualitative for explaining findings. Qualitative is more appropriate for micro sociological questions and is used in public health research as it leads to more relevant results due to the complexity (Flick, 2009). By using qualitative methods researchers are sacrificing scope for details but because of this researchers can get closer to the perspective of participants through the details in interviewing and also during interview you get to observe the participants and there body language into what you are asking them (Silverman, 2005).

‘The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. These procedures have been developed in order to increase the likelihood that the information gathered will be relevant to the question asked and will be reliable and unbiased. To be sure, there is no guarantee that any given research undertaking actually will produce relevant, reliable and unbiased information. But scientific research procedures are more likely to do so than any other method’ (Selltiz as cited in Davies, 2007, p.9-10).

A quantitative research method has a list of pros too. Quantitative data lead to results in the actual sense of the word but qualitative data plays a more illustrated part (Flick, 2009). Researchers tend to find quantitative research more useful for macro sociological questions. Quantitative research methods surveys can be used on a much larger scale than qualitative interviews. Surveys have a standardized reliability measure to ascertain the facts. Quantitative studies measurements and analysis of casual relationships between variables (Silverman, 2005).

Both qualitative and quantitative can be applied to the research question but which research method would be more beneficial to get the maximum information from my social science research project? We could get more definite results by using quantitative research results than we would using qualitative but we would get more detailed information if we were to use the qualitative method. Both research methods have their advantages but as this is a fixed design we cannot use both methods.

The social science research project

The research goal for the social science research project is ‘How do men and women feel about the divide in household work? I came to this question because I am very interested in this field. Times have changed and the structure of a family has now changed too. Before we had the family model of the husband going out to work and the wife staying at home to look

after the children and the household, but things have come a long way since then. Not only are couples co-habiting rather than marrying, but women now have more power in the workforce, and due to equality rights they are getting paid fairly. Economic factors mean now that both have to go out to the workforce to live comfortably. Research has proven that although men do more within the house regarding the unpaid domestic work and childcare the women are still doing more than the men and are responsible for the majority of the household work and childcare. The fact that women do more than men has been proven numerous amounts of times so there was no need to go back and research this topic further. The research was carried out to find out what the different genders actually feel about the division of labour, are they happy about it? Do they feel it is their duty to fulfil these household chores on top of their working day?

Choice of method

The method that I will be using for the research project is qualitative. There are a number of reasons that I chose this research method. The object of the research is to find out how men and women feel about the divide in household chores. Qualitative could provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the research participants and their views. The sample would be small in scale for more detailed data. The researcher would be in close proximity to the participants and could pick up on an issue that would have been overlooked if the research had of been quantitative. Also the interacting with participants leaves room for emergent issues to be explored. The data received through qualitative methods would be detailed and information rich (Lewis, 2003). The researcher gathered the information through paired interviews. Interviewing couples together would get a more honest response and there would be an opportunity to go deeper into feelings towards the topic. It would also give participants the opportunity to reflexed and give a response to their partner's answers. Using these methods of data collection would only allow for qualitative research methods and not for

quantitative so I would have no choice but to use qualitative research for this social science research project.

Ethics

As to ethically respect participants in this study, each participant signed a consent form. It was made clear to them that they could withdraw at any time from the interview. I outlined the basic study, inform them that this research was part of a college study, everything was put into laymen's terms so they will understand everything being discussed and will inform them that everything is confidential in this study and that nobody besides the researcher will know who was interviewed.

Sampling

The participants interviewed for the research project were six couples. The sample was gathered using the snowball effect finding one couple and asking them to pass on my details to anyone else they knew who was interested in being interviewed. All participants volunteered to be interviewed. The main criteria for participants were that they were male and female couples who lived together they could be married or co-habiting. They needed to be at a child bearing age, participants needed to be in their twenties or thirties. Having or not having children did not affect the sample. The researcher was originally contacted by eight couples to be interviewed. Two couples later cancelled. Participant ages ranged from 24 to 36. Their dependants ranged from none to three. Out of the six couples only two were married.

Procedure

The researcher found that participants seemed to be a bit shy at the beginning, therefore opened with a general question on how the participants met each other. Some participants

only gave one worded answers to some of the questions but the researcher asked them to elaborate on those answers to try get more information. The researcher sensed that some couples found the discussion a bit difficult. Certain questions were met with a very heated discussion between couples and this was dealt with by asking a different question.

Data Analysis

Chosen method of analysis was thematic analysis.

Results

The main purpose of this study was to find out how the genders felt about the divide in the household. The participants were interviewed together as a couple and asked questions that would cause debate between them. During the interviews some interesting data came out of the analysis. Unfortunately it didn't all fit into the themes. In all the interviews which took place the females did the majority of the work although it differed between couples. Also I would like to add, that participants who worked around the same amount and had children, the childcare was more evenly divided. Those who lived together the longest seemed less stressed and managed the division better than those who moved in together more recently. Another interesting theme that came up was that the men usually went for the chores that they liked or least disliked, and left the rest for their partners. A number of themes emerged when analysing of the data but it's the following main themes that we will focus on.

- 1) Gender
- 2) Communication
- 3) Feelings
- 4) Changes

Gender

Although none of the male participants said they expected their partners to play the traditional functionalist role, the issue of gender was still a reoccurring theme that surfaced throughout the interviews. For example, one set of participants found that it just went that way as both were good at these specific jobs.

‘Well we don't have a.....have a..... so Trionas a woman so she cooks more or anything like that, Trionas more experienced in cooking for example so she...eh she's better at it...so she does generally cook coz it's her strength,

she can do it better so she does it but like when I cook eh hh like I got a bit of experience now and I can do it well enough but there would be the odd thing which I wouldn't be sure of so I'd ask her so then she would come and so in that sense you know that distribution would be like eh in her favour like she would be doing more cooking but that only because she is good at it like I am in charge of the cables eh eh you know she calls it technology if it has two wires out of it and I don't say anything because she doesn't know what stuff is so I deal with it so in that sense there is a lot of stuff we don't mind like I don't mind sweeping the floor or cleaning the bathroom ' (Triona and Shane, one and a half earners).

Interestingly enough it was one of our female participants that felt like she was doing the 'man jobs' and was upset about it as she thought her husband should do the jobs considered 'manly' for example cleaning the windows and putting out the bins.

'Yes Lynn does everything, even the men's jobs'(Lynn and Deco, unemployed).

One participant actually felt that it was expected of her to follow the traditional role as she was a woman although she seemed to resent the fact that she was expected to act out this role.

'I'm in college and work and to be honest hate cleaning don't understand why I am expected to do the majority' (Sid and Nancy, dual earners).

Most of the participants children were too young to take on chores in the home. The issue of their future household roles came up and both male and female participants with a daughter felt strongly about the fact that they wanted more for their daughter than to become a housewife.

‘Oh right yeah definitely I don’t want my daughter having to look after a fella all the time...like when we were growing up our ma's did it for their husbands. I don’t want Kelly to be just a housewife I want more for her’ (Lynn and Deco, unemployed).

Participants seemed reluctant to perceive some jobs as women’s and some as men as they felt that they didn’t want to be in those traditional roles. It seemed that female participants seemed more agitated that their partners refusal to step into the traditional male role but in the same instance were annoyed that they were expected to be in a traditional female role.

Mothers

Another strong theme that came through on why participants thought that their partners or they lacked the incentive to do housework and that was because they had at home been so used to their mothers doing everything for them that they didn’t have the abilities to do the house work.

‘When Jason was growing up his mam did everything for him... like when we first moved in together he didn’t know how to make toast...he tried to put the bread in the microwave’ (Nadine and Jason, part-time earners)

This is a reoccurring theme even for the female participants who grew up within the traditional functionalist roles at home.

‘My mam did everything for me but she was a housewife I'm not’ (Sid and Nancy, dual earners)

One participant in particular blamed her mother in law for that the lack of work her partner did in the home. She felt strongly that if he had of been given chores growing up that he would have been more able for chores in their home.

‘Eh I suppose so like...his mam worked part time and did everything in the house, she says it now herself she did too much for them that they can barely look after themselves now’ (Carla and Lenny, dual earners).

Both male and female participants whose mothers had a strong traditional role in the home had a harder time adjusting to sharing chores in the home.

Communications

Two of the themes communication and feelings were consistently together as when participants were discussing the lack of communications the feelings ran high. Also the results of having no communications between them regarding chores made each party annoyed or stressed at the situation. Most of the couples could not agree that they had had any discussions regarding chores. To the question of have you ever discussed the division of the chores the couples had different answers.

‘Carla: Yes Lenny: No’ (Carla and Lenny, dual earners).

‘Sid: No Nancy: Yes we have’ (Sid and Nancy, dual earners)

Both parties felt that they were not being listened to. The females in the group found this more of a problem. Most couples admitted that the lack of communication between them did lead to arguments.

‘We have killed each other many a time over this, right it’s not a discussion. You don’t listen until I go mad at ya and we have a big fight over something stupid’ (Sid and Nancy, dual earners)

Another trend was that unless they were specifically told by their partner the men would not do any of the chores in the home.

‘Well generally Gary does the rubbish but he has to be told, he wouldn’t do it on his own’ (Charlotte and Gary, unemployed)

One of the main changes the participants wanted was for the work to be done ‘without having to ask’. This was a recurring response to the question ‘Are there any changes you would

make to the divide of chores?’

‘It’s just the having to tell him to do things that annoys me, he knows there is stuff that needs to be doing but he just won’t do it’ (Charlotte and Gary, unemployed).

‘All Lenny does is put out the bins but he thinks its 50 -50. It’s a joke. I do everything and I get no help it’s like he doesn’t see the mess like come on you live here how could you not see the mess? If I want anything done I have to ask and even then it’s like, in a minute in a minute sure I’m quicker just doing it myself than asking. I get so annoyed about this I would just love not having to ask him to do things if he would just get on with it’ (Carl and Lenny, dual earners)

Instead of having a discussion the participants generally fought over the chores. Some participants felt it was easier just to do the work than asking for help and having to wait for their partners to help with the work.

‘No although there is good intentions there but just you know sometimes it’s just easier to do something yourself than trying to make and hassle someone to argue with someone to doyou know you could probably go in and ask could you do that but then you kind of want to do it now and when you’re ready for it to be done but they don’t want to do it again for a couple of hours and then you start its easier for me to just go do it myself’ (Triona and Shane, one and a half earners).

Some participants found that through arguments and discussions they were in a better place now regarding the division of the housework. That their partner listened to them and they came to a happy medium.

‘Yeah but I’ve said like time and time again when I’ve done loads of cleaning and I feel like I’m doing an unfair amount and I’ve said it a

million times and I think that's why we are at the place we are now because I gave out and we fought' (Sid and Nancy, dual earners)

Feelings

The interviews themselves brought a lot of feelings to the surface for instance there was some anger during the interviews between couples who couldn't agree on responses. As well as the discussion of feelings, the reasons for these feelings kept repeating in the interviews. The female participants were more forthcoming with how the division made them feel.

'Yes but if you just did it right I wouldn't have to go around doing it again. I just get sick of it I wish I didn't have to tell him. That's the main thing that annoys me telling him to do it or having to go around and fix what he has done. Like who needs a cigarette break between hanging out clothes. You just do it then have a smoke not hang half and leave half and wander off roll a cigarette and smoke it then finish the washing and not even doing it right' (Charlotte and Gary, unemployed).

'No but we both work so why should I do the majority of the cleaning too. He may do a little bit of DIY but certainly not enough to bring the divide up to 50 50. I get so pissed off at him and this is a sore subject but what can I do...I say it and say it but because his mother did everything for her precious boys he expects me to do it' (Carla and Lenny, dual earners).

It was a reoccurring emotion of annoyance or stress.

'No he has to be told. He would leave it there letting it over flow unless I say something to him. It gets annoying. It be great if I didn't have to ask him to do every little thing he does' (Charlotte and Gary, unemployed)

The majority of males were happy or had no specific feelings regarding the division of the chores. Only one female participant actually said that she was happy with the way things were done in the home.

‘But saying all that, he doesn’t drive yet so I wish he would start driving so I wouldn’t have to do all the driving with the baby or I wouldn’t have to go do the shopping but other than that I would say I’m very happy at the minute’ (Sid and Nancy, dual earners)

There are a number of reasons for the fighting within the couples that was reoccurring throughout the interviews. The main ones for females is their partners do not see the mess, that their partners don’t do the chores when asked, having to ask in the first place and when they do the work it’s not done right or to their standards, that they have to go back and do it. The women interviewed seemed to get on with the chores in the house even though they thought they were unfair. After a while then the emotions came to the surface and then an argument would begin.

‘Well sometimes and sometimes I get annoyed. I fucking run amuck’
(Nadine and Jason, part time workers).

Changes

One interesting theme that came up was that there had been recent changes in the divide. This had occurred in half of the participants homes. It still didn’t bring the divide up to equal amounts but changed the divide none the less. The three reasons for these divides were

- 1) Recent changes in employment
- 2) Refusal of one of the parties to do certain jobs
- 3) Through discussion or arguments the divide got better

Recent changes in employment with either unemployment or just a reduction of paid working hours resulted in the males being in the home more. With this change the division of housework changed.

‘Deco would collect the kids but that is because I done it for years so I am sick of doing it coz he was always working so now that he is home he’d

collect them most days and if they have to go to rugby, if I don't feel like doing it'(Deco and Lynn)

'Well I want to add that although Deco does a bit now before he was unemployed he did nothing' (Deco and Lynn)

'But that's only coz his da's business went bust that's the only reason he does a bit more now he doesn't work as much. Before he did nothing only a couple of little bits around the house like' (Nadine and Jason).

Other participants point blank refused to carry on doing certain chores. And for that reason evening up the division.

'Oh he cleans the lad's room coz I refuse to do it anymore' (Nadine and Jason)

Other participants were found that through communication the divide eventually evened out between them but said that unless they fought for it, it would have not changed.

'I've said it a million times and I think that's why we are at the place we are now because I gave out and we fought' (Sid and Nancy)

Discussion

The Aim of this study is to find out how both men and women feel about the divide in household chores. The researcher interviewed six couples. The couples were interviewed together and data gathered. This section will analyse the results of this study. It will also be the discussion of the weaknesses and limitations of the study.

With the data gathered four strong themes emerged with this study.

- 1) Gender
- 2) Communication
- 3) Feelings
- 4) Changes

Gender

Results showed that women wanted the best of both worlds. They didn't want to be seen as cleaners or homemakers especially when they worked outside the home but also the same women wanted their husbands to complete the gendered 'man' chores in the home for example cleaning the windows or putting out rubbish bins. Previous studies support these findings. Sinno & Killen (2009) found that children felt that their parents had roles to take in the home and that it was acceptable for the mother to work outside the home if that is what they wanted but the father's role was to be out working providing the financial stability. Research showed that a number of the participants were supporters of gender equality and wanted the men to do the 'female' jobs but also they wanted their partners to also play the traditional role in the home as well. Some female participants felt that they were expected to fall into the carer's role and that it just happens automatically and that they take a bigger role in the domestic chores and fall into the more traditional roles. This is supported by previous

research by Weismann et al (2008), whose study of 31 Dutch couples found that although they said they think it's fair for an equal divide with regards the domestic tasks that the couples generally found that they developed into the more common roles of Dutch couples as one and a half earners. The men stayed in full time employment while women went part time and took on the domestic responsibilities within the home. The women in the Dutch study said that the division had grown and that they had not discussed it. Parents with children and especially girls felt that that they did not want her slipping into a traditional role in the future and that they wanted a better life for their daughter but yet previous research has shown (Leonard, 2004) that girls are expected to do much more in the home. Results of this study showed that chores in the home were gendered for young children. Girls are more likely to help with a younger sibling when compared to boys, but boys had more outdoor chores like putting rubbish out or gardening. A strong theme throughout the study was the role of the participant's mothers. Both male and female participant's mothers played a more traditional gendered role. Some of our participants found that their partners mothers did too much for them growing up. For example one male participant when moving in with his partner couldn't make toast. This leads to frustration and stress for certain couples. Gender Ideology within couples was apparent. Each of the couples had expectations of the roles their partners should take within the home. A study done by Minnotte, Pedersen Mannon & Kiger (2010) found that egalitarian women had the lowest level of marital satisfaction. Traditional men had the highest level of marital satisfaction when married to traditional women. Donald and Livingston (2008) suggest that men coming from a traditional perspective are less likely to participate in domestic chores but are inclined to accept more responsibility with childrearing.

Communication

The research suggests that the couples had a problem with communication. This caused a lot of strong feelings between the couples. Their answers were different to the basic question of 'have you ever discussed the division of chores?'. This suggests that they are both unsure of the communication between them. The lack of communication between the couples leads to arguments between them. With some participants feeling that their partners didn't listen to them at all. Some participants felt like it was easier to just carry on with the task themselves rather than entering a debate or argument regarding a certain chore they wanted their other half to do. Previous research supports this theme as Weismann et al (2008) suggest that their sample group didn't discuss the division of labour but it just happened naturally between them. The division of housework was only discussed when one of the partners (usually the women) became frustrated with the situation. This suggests that women would rather take the majority of the domestic chores than confronting their partners. Evidence would suggest that good communication is the key to a happy family. Karaka, Dean Lee, and MacDermid (2004) research suggests that good communication is essential for well-being and having a good relationship among family.

Feelings

The overall feelings in the interviews were of anger. Feelings were expressed more by the females in the group rather than the males. And the feelings expressed by each person was negative for the females within the couple and either happy or indifferent from the males. The general feelings expressed by the females interviewed were of anger and annoyance. This was directed at their partners and was caused by the unfair divide in the household chores. These feelings were then linked to the well-being of the couples as the frustration and anger felt then lead to stress for the females. The outcome of these negative feelings was

that the couples then had arguments rather than discussions with positive communication. Research by MacDonald, Phipps and Lethbridge (2005) has suggested that high stress levels are the result of either negotiations with spouses to do more housework and spouses 'helping out' when their partner are overwhelmed. This results in the increase of stress levels instead of decreasing. Some research suggests that conflict can be an important role in the decision making. Weissmann, Boeijs, van Doorne-Huiskes and den Dulk (2008) research found that it was usually the women that erupted and started the conflict regarding the division of work. The women had eventually become frustrated and dissatisfied with the division. This resulted in communication between couples with then positive outcomes. The men interviewed all seemed happy with the divide of the household chores this could be due to the fact that they have the least amount of domestic chores to do. As Minnote, Minnote, Pedersen Mannon & Kiger (2010) research suggests that mens marital satisfaction is higher when the gender ideologies of both spouses are similar. This suggests that traditional men with traditional women are happier than traditional men married to egalitarian women.

Changes

This was the most unexpected theme to have emerged from the interviews. Most of the couples spoke about the recent changes that have happened in their households regarding the divide of domestic chores. One couple believed that because of this conflict, that positive change has happened. Through fighting, they have reached a happy medium and have regular communication. As suggested before by Weismann et al (2008) conflict can help a situation and can encourage communication between couples with positive results. There has been numerous research studies done on the changes in the divide of domestic chores and it has been proven on numerous occasions that men have increased their share of the domestic chores. These studies do not support the recent changes that couples spoke about. These recent changes are due to the current recession in Ireland and how now that the partners were

at home more that they have increased the amount they do around the house. I would suggest that more research is needed on the effects of the current economic recession in Ireland in households.

Limitations

There are a number of weaknesses and limitations in my research that I would like to address. Firstly the sample used in this research project was general. I feel that results would have been more conclusive if my sampling had been more specific. The participants were general, for instance instead of using a mixture of different employment status; to have interviewed just employed or just the unemployed or an equal number of each may have had more specific findings. Also I would have preferred to interview couples at the same stage in life for example couples who just moved in together or who were about to embark on parenthood to get more generalised findings. A sub theme came through of participants mothers doing everything for them. I feel that it was a missed opportunity not to delve deeper into the issue of participants coming from traditional nuclear families and what they expected from their partners before they moved in with them. More questions could have been asked to those with children what they expected of their children in the future i.e. would they encourage their boys to do more chores or their daughters to do less. When the interviews were over and I had turned off the recorder the participants immediately opened up more. I feel that to get more information or more truthful information I should have arranged follow up interviews with the participants or asked participants to partake in a focus group first and then follow up with an interview when emotions from the focus group were still running high.

The main research question 'How do men and women feel about the divide in household work' I believe was answered in the theme Feelings; the men interviewed seemed happy with

the divide. The women interviewed had quite the opposite feeling. The feelings discussed were anger and frustration. This evolved into stress for the women interviewed which affected their well-being. Subsequent questions were also asked. 'Is there any patterns emerging from the level of education of the participants interviewed?' and 'Is the divide fairer for couples with or without children?' Both of these questions were unable to be answered for the reason that there was not enough data collected to have any conclusive or significant results. A study done on a larger scale may lead to better results.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies on the subject however more research could be done in this field. Results regarding the recent changes in the division of household work within the homes are very interesting as it was a result of the recent economic recession in Ireland. I believe that further research on this topic could be very interesting. Unfortunately due to the small sample used in this study the findings could not be generalised to the entire population and research on a larger scale would be beneficial to the themes emerged from this study.

Conclusion

To conclude four important themes emerged from the data collected. The women interviewed wanted equality to a certain extent. They want their partners to step up and do more of the 'indoor chores' which are seen as women's work, but they still expect their partners to do the 'outdoor chores' which is seen as men's work. Communication between couples is a key issue and the fact couples do not communicate well with each other was evident. Lack of communication can lead to arguments but this can turn out to have positive effects. The research question was answered by the Feelings theme. 'How do men and women feel about the divide in the household work?'. The men interviewed seemed happy with the divide of the household work but the females interviewed were angry and frustrated. This affected their overall well-being as all the females discussed getting stressed by the current situation and by their partner's lack of input into the home. Unfortunately the subsequent questions were unanswered as there was not enough data collected to see any conclusive or significant results emerge. There have been recent changes reported by the couples interviewed. This was the result of the current economic recession in Ireland. Some of the men interviewed had recently lost their job or their hours were cut back giving them more time in the home. This area would benefit from further research.

Reference

- Boye, K. (2009). Relatively Different? How do Gender Differences in Well-Being Depend on Paid and Unpaid Work in Europe?. *Social Indicators Research*, 93(3), 509-525.
- Davies, M. B. (2007). *Doing a successful research project using qualitative or quantitative research methods*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Donald, F., & Linington, J. (2008). Work/family border theory and gender role orientation in male managers. *South African Journal Of Psychology*, 38(4), 659-671.
- Erickson, R. J. (2005). Why emotion work matters: sex, gender, and the division of household labor. *Journal Of Marriage & Family*, 67(2), 337-351.
- Evertsson, M. (2006). The reproduction of gender: housework and attitudes towards gender equality in the home among Swedish boys and girls. *British Journal Of Sociology*, 57(3), 415-436.
- Fahri Karakas, Mary Dean Lee, Shelley M. MacDermid, (2004), "A qualitative investigation into the meaning of family well-being from the perspective of part-time professionals", *Equal Opportunities International*, Vol. 23 Iss: 1 pp. 57 – 77
- Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Hochschild, A. (2003). *The Second Shift*. New York. Penguin.
- Hook, J. L. (2006). Care in Context: Men's Unpaid Work in 20 Countries, 1965–2003. *American Sociological Review*, 71(4), 639-660.
- Image Retrieved April 17, 2012, from <http://www.debbieschlussel.com/10889/men-the-new-women-alert-husbands-housework-sex/>
- Leonard, M. (2004). Teenage Girls and Housework in Irish Society. *Irish Journal Of Sociology*, 13(1), 73-87.
- Lewis, J. R. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice A guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- MacDonald, M., Phipps, S., & Lethbridge, L. (2005). Taking Its Toll: The Influence of Paid and Unpaid Work on Women's Well-Being. *Feminist Economics*, 11(1), 63-94.
- Minnotte, K., Minnotte, M., Pedersen, D., Mannon, S., & Kiger, G. (2010). His and Her Perspectives: Gender Ideology, Work-to-Family Conflict, and Marital Satisfaction. *Sex Roles*, 63(5/6), 425-438.
- Sayer, L. C., England, P., Bittman, M., & Bianchi, S. M. (2009). How Long Is the Second (Plus First) Shift? Gender Differences in Paid, Unpaid, and Total Work Time in Australia and the United States. *Journal Of Comparative Family Studies*, 40(4), 523-545.

Sayer, L. C. (2005). Gender, Time and Inequality: Trends in Women's and Men's Paid Work, Unpaid Work and Free Time. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 285-303.

Sigle-Rushton, W. (2010). Men's Unpaid Work and Divorce: Reassessing Specialization and Trade in British Families. *Feminist Economics*, 16(2), 1-26.

Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Sinno, S. M., & Killen, M. (2009). Moms at Work and Dads at Home: Children's Evaluations of Parental Roles. *Applied Developmental Science*, 13(1), 16-29.

Watson, D., Lunn, P., Quinn, E. & Russell, H. (2012). Multiple Disadvantages in Ireland: An equality analysis of Census 2006. Retrieved 06/04/2012 from <http://www.equality.ie/Files/Multiple%20Disadvantage%20in%20Ireland%20-%20an%20equality%20analysis%20of%20Census%202006.pdf>

Webber, G., & Williams, C. (2008). Part-Time Work and the Gender Division of Labor. *Qualitative Sociology*, 31(1), 15-36.

Wiesmann, S., Boeije, H., van Doorne-Huiskes, A., & den Dulk, L. (2008). 'Not worth mentioning': The implicit and explicit nature of decision-making about the division of paid and domestic work. *Community, Work & Family*, 11(4), 341-363.

Appendix

Appendix 1 Copy of the consent form



Men v Women, feelings towards the gender division in household chores

My name is Patrice Cowap and I am conducting research that explores gender difference in household chores.

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

Participation is completely voluntary therefore 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 Patrice Cowap (patricecowap@gmail.com) or Niall Hanlon (niall.hanlon@dbs.ie) Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2 Copy of interview questions

Interview Questionnaire



Name:

Age:

Status: Married_____ Co-habiting_____

How long are you in a couple?

How long are you living together?

How many (if any) children?

Brief work details (example paid, volunteering, unemployed, part
time_____

Level of Education

Appendix 3 A guide of questions asked.**HOW DO COUPLES FEEL ABOUT THE DIVIDE IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES?**

How would you say the chores are split in the home?

Is there any specific chores either are responsible for?

Have you ever discussed the divide of chores? If yes how did that discussion go?

Are you happy with the divide?

Are there any changes you would make to the divide?

Appendix 4 Poster