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**From Hardhats to Nappy Sacks: A Sociological Exploration of The Lives of Irelands Celtic Tiger Construction Workers Who Have Become Stay at Home Dads.**

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For Jenny.

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Abstract

At the height of the boom construction was Ireland’s greatest employer. Many commentators judge the economic growth of the Celtic Tiger years was predicated on a housing bubble, which burst in a spectacular fashion in 2008. Practically overnight the construction industry collapsed following the global banking crises of that year. Developers went bankrupt, building sites were boarded up and two thirds of the men working in the industry lost their jobs. The recession that followed hit male employment much more than female. What this meant to many families was that; due to the lack of employment prospects for Irish construction workers, coupled with Ireland having the most expensive childcare system in the world, it made financial sense to take the children out of the crèches. These fathers took on the domestic duties of the household, while their partners became the ‘breadwinner’. This research is going to examine the lived experience of these men and women, who are now adopting non-traditional gender roles and how do they fit into today’s Irish society.

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**Chapter One: Introduction**

At the height of The Celtic Tiger, construction was Ireland’s greatest employer. Many commentators judge the economic growth of the Celtic Tiger years was predicated on a housing bubble, which burst in a spectacular fashion in 2008 (Fahy 2010). Practically overnight the construction industry collapsed following the global banking crises of that year. Developers went bankrupt, building sites were boarded up and nearly two thirds of the people directly employed in in the industry lost their jobs[[1]](#footnote-1). The recession that followed hit male employment much more than female. What this meant to many families was that; due to the lack of employment prospects for Irish construction workers, coupled with Ireland having the most expensive childcare system in the world (OECD 2010), it made financial sense to take the children out of the crèches. These fathers took on the domestic duties of the household, while their partners became the ‘breadwinner’. This research is going to examine the lived experience of these men and women, who are now adopting non-traditional gender roles and how they fit into today’s Irish society.

The Celtic Tiger is a term that is commonly given to Ireland’s economic boom between the years 1995 and 2008. During this period Ireland went from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the richest. Examples of factors that caused this turnabout have been given as: the realization of earlier social and economic investment such as introducing free education, the stimulation of foreign investment by multi-national manufacturing companies by offering them generous tax incentives, being positioned within the single European market and the careful use of European Union social and cohesion funds (Ní Mháille Battel 2003:100).

The Celtic Tiger was more than just successful economic policy however; the Celtic Tiger was the birth of a new identity for Ireland. A modern, confident identity that Ireland could compete with any country in the world, Ireland was no longer the downtrodden ex-colony of Great Britain or the muse to many sad ballads. Many people when asked what caused The Celtic Tiger will say it began with the 1990 World Cup when the country’s collective mood was lifted out of the depressed decade of the 1980’s, by the national soccer team and Jackie Charlton (Dorney 2012) (Lynch 2012). Others will refer to the moment Riverdance was introduced during the interval of the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest as a heralding of a new Ireland onto the global stage (Ní Mháille Battel 2003).

Foreign Investment led to substantial growth in employment in the manufacturing sectors such as in the Pharmaceutical industry, Chemical production and the Information Technology industry. However it was a homegrown industry, which would come to be synonymous with The Celtic Tiger and that, was the explosion of the Construction sector and a nationwide property boom, unseen in Ireland before. At the height of the boom construction was Ireland’s greatest employer. By 2007, the Irish economy had become increasingly reliant on construction. Construction accounted for 25% of GNP that year (The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland 2012). In 1994, the number of people directly employed in construction was 91,500. In 2007 at the peak of The Celtic Tiger, that number was 270,000. A further 110,000 were indirectly employed in firms supporting and supplying intermediate goods and services to the sector. Direct and indirect employment in the construction industry represented 18% of the total number employed in 2007 (33).

Practically overnight the construction industry collapsed following the global banking crises of 2008 which saw the collapse of major international banking institutions, the revelation that Irelands main banks were insolvent, which in term lead to the Irish Governments now infamous bank guarantee. A major feature of The Celtic Tiger was easy access to credit, offered to both the people buying the houses and those who were building them. When it became apparent in 2008 that Irish banks were no longer solvent, the flow of credit stopped immediately. By 2011 the volume of output from construction reduced by 65% from its peak in 2007, or to put it another way, construction went from 25% of GNP down to 7% (The Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland 2012:12). Construction accounted for 47% of the total job losses in that period (36).

The Central Statistics office does not hold statistics on the sex of households principle earners, so it is not possible to determine how many men became stay at home dads. 11,200 men reported at the end of 2013 (Central Statistics Office 2014:24) that their principal economic statues was ‘home duties’ a 67% rise from 2007 (Central Statistics Office 2013 :39). However there is antidotal evidence that many stay at home dads report their economic status as unemployed, many signing on for yearly unemployment credits even if they do not receive any social welfare assistance. Some insight can be sought perhaps in the amount of men who are no longer in the labour force, which refers to those in employment or had taken specific steps, in the preceding four weeks, to find work. If we look at the number of men who are not in the labour force but had the potential to be, i.e. does not have a physical reason to be unemployed, the number has jumped by 21,000 from 2007 to 2013 (Central Statistics Office 2013 :31) (Central Statistics Office 2014:8). It is fair to assume that many of these men are the stay at home dad’s that this study is interested in.

Another feature of the Celtic Tiger was the mass migration of Irish women into the Labour Market. In the period of 1998 to 2007 female employment grew by 55% (Russell 2009), Education and Health being the two largest sectors (Central Statistics Office 2013 :33). It can be argued that because construction was such a large employer of men, coupled with the fact women tended to work in industries not as adversely effected by the economic downturn; The recession which followed hit male employment much more than female. What this meant to many families was that; due to the lack of employment prospects for Irish construction workers, coupled with Ireland having the most expensive childcare system in the world (OECD 2010), it made financial sense to take the children out of the crèches. These fathers took on the domestic duties of the household, while their partners became the ‘breadwinner’.

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This section shall now outline the most relevant pieces of literature that influenced this study. It is the belief of this research’s author that research needs to be built on a foundation of knowledge on the subject under inquiry. The writings of those who have previously investigated a topic are an important resource to someone undertaking research. The area of theory that this paper shall mainly draw from is the sociology of masculinity. However it will also use examples of work from the sociological literature dealing with the effects of unemployment and the changing nature of modern fatherhood. These three fields have much to offer in looking at Irish ex-construction workers because they used to work in a particularly macho environment, they are fathering in a non-traditional way and they are mostly doing so because they are unemployed. This paper shall focus on qualitative examples because it is concerned with the lived experiences of these men and how they give meaning to their new role in life. It will offer a brief outline of the current discourse by offering examples of notable pieces from each of the fields and discuss how they enlighten this particular study. It will draw from both international research and where possible pieces from Ireland.

The Sociology of Masculinity

The study of gender grew out of Feminist Theory, which understandably initially focused on femininity, women’s role in society and subordination of women by men. The sociological examination of masculinity has only gained momentum as a subject since the 1980’s. In a piece examining the origin of modern masculinity, Victor Seidler argues the traditional archetype of man, who is strong, provides and doesn’t show emotion; grew out of the development of Western Enlightenment thinking, which equated reason and a lack of emotion with authority (1988). This view of masculinity was so dominant it was invisible in terms of thinking about gender because it was the norm. Or as Edley and Wetherell argue in their book looking at contemporary perspectives on masculinity and identity ‘it is the standard case, the usual pattern, synonymous with humanity in general’ (1995:2). Another aspect of the 1960’s civil rights movement challenged the hegemonic notion of masculinity and that was the call for societal acceptance of homosexuality and a ‘coming out of the closet and into the streets’. Gay men do not fit into the traditional view of masculinity but yet they are of course men. If masculinity is ‘defined as the possession of the qualities traditionally associated with men’ (OED 2013), the tradition was now obsolete. Post Feminist man was supposed to be caring, share the domestic duties and be in touch with his emotions.

Nearly every examination of gender inequality has at its core the notion of patriarchy, however they disagree how it operates and to its purpose. Sylvia Walby defines it as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (2010:30). The notion of patriarchy has been dismissed as an unrealistic, universal explanation of gender inequality throughout history. Walby herself criticised earlier feminists for searching for one fundamental cause of women’s oppression. In her seminal work *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990)she argued that patriarchy is the result of six independent processes that operate independently within society, yet interact with one another:

* The division of labour within households
* Lower wages for female paid labour
* State polices that tend to operate under gender bias
* An acceptance of male violence towards women to certain degrees
* Double standards in societal rules for sexual behaviour
* Cultural institutions such as the media and religion that prescribe to certain ideologies of how women should be.

Walby argues that an examination of these areas, offers an answer to the question of how unequal gender relations are in a given society.

Further to this, Walby argues that although western society has changed vastly in the last forty years following the second wave of feminism, patriarchy still exists just under a different form. Where as before it was carried out in the private home, now it exists in the public sphere. For her, private patriarchy was set in the traditional roles of man being the provider and woman the homemaker. While that can now seem out dated, the shift to public patriarchy can be found in work practices where women now go out to work but still have to take responsibility of rearing the children once they are born. 21st century Irish patriarchy, it can be argued, is the jobs that do not adequately support women’s return to work after childbirth, the lack of affordable or state childcare provision, social welfare that still offers women support based on her relationship with a man and the persistent and the distinct social peculiarity of an Irish man being the homemaker while his wife is the breadwinner and provider.

One of the most complete theoretical accounts of gender is one that has integrated the concept of patriarchy and masculinity into a single overarching theory of gender relations, this can be found in R.W. Connells theory of The Gender Order. Writing in *Gender and Power* (1987) and later in *Masculinities* (2005), Connell argues that masculinity is a critical part of the gender order and cannot be understood separate from it. From the individual level to the institutional level various types of masculinity and femininity are arranged around a central premise of men’s dominance over women. For her, three features of society interact to form The Gender Order. They work together and have the ability to change in relation to one another. They are

* The sexual division of labour both within and outside the home,
* Power that operates through social relations such as authority, violence, and ideology within institutions, the state and domestic life.
* Cathexis being the dynamics of intimate, emotional and personal relationships.

How gender relations are enacted within these three spheres of any given society, allow us to see a gender regime in action and so analyse the gender order. It also, according to Connell, shows a hierarchy of power in our Society that is formed by different expressions of masculinity and femininity.

At the top of Connells hierarchy is *hegemonic masculinity*, the alpha male. The next level below this is *complicit masculinity*, the sidekicks or vice presidents to the alpha males one could say. The third level is the first to include women. Connell sees this level consisting of *subordinate men* and *subordinate women*. Below these she see’s a level populated by *homosexual masculinities* and *emphasized femininity.* These women Connell argues are supposed to be sexually receptive when they are younger, and ‘mother’ to men in later years. Homosexuals are the men whom have the least power in this model. At the bottom and the least powerful in society are the *resistant females*, those who reject the pressures of what they are supposed to be within this hierarchy but because of that, they loose their voice. Giddens gives examples of women who fall into this category as ‘feminists, lesbians, spinsters, midwives, witches, prostitutes and manual workers’ (2009:612). Their experiences Connell suggests are largely hidden from history.

If we take this theory and look at the population of the study this paper is concerned, it is interesting to speculate where the ex-constructions workers would fit. Construction is an industry with a very macho culture. The housing boom meant tradesmen were in short supply and therefore could command very large salaries compared to other sectors. Construction workers held a dominant position during The Celtic Tiger; they were the VIP’s in Fianna Fáil’s Galway Races tent. The construction workers of this study however now push buggies around parks, change nappies and cook dinners for their partner, before she returns home from work. They are faced with the reality that their partners are more employable than they are and can command higher wages. Where does that leave them in the contemporary gender order? What implication does that have for their masculine identity? These are the type of questions that the literature can influence, and which will be explored in the research of this study.

The Effects of Unemployment

The shrinking of another once dominant area of male employment in Ireland and its effect on the masculinity of those involved; is the subject of research carried out by Caitriona Ni Laoire (2005). In her research she looked at the decline of farming in Modern Ireland, an area much like Construction in so much as it no longer proves viable as an occupation to most. This she argues has implications to the formation of masculine identities. By interviewing many young farmers she found that, the tension between the persistence of traditional masculine values of responsibility on the one hand, and the reduction in men's economic power on the other, could lead to tensions and feelings of anxiety in the young farmers. In the words of one of her subjects, the inability to fulfill traditional masculine duty meant, “You’re not a man at all” (122). It is fair to assume that some ex-construction workers might feel the same way because as Cleary (2005) states when looking at NI Laoire’s piece, the young farmers involved have a lot in common with Irelands young, working class men.

A recent piece has looked at how the recession in Ireland has been framed within popular culture in terms of gender and specifically masculinity (Negra 2014). Negra argues that cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity are central to the current discourses of the current economic crisis in Ireland. She argues that we are encouraged to reflect on unemployment as a blow to male identity constantly in the media. She highlights numerous instances were the anxieties about the potency and viability of masculinity is called into question (226) as a result of the recession. For example, newspapers run stories with headlines such as ‘*Slump in sex for recession hit men’*[[2]](#footnote-2)*.*  Negra highlights a common narrative wheremen are told to ‘man up’ and deal with the difficulties of the recession. The need for action to counter the economic crisis is constantly being framed, in both journalistic and political rhetoric, in terms of a language of toughness and austerity premised on supposed masculine virtues (227). If this is true, this study needs to ask where does this place the men who have taken on the role of caring for the children, or their partners who assume the breadwinner mantle.

As traditional masculinity is based around the role of provider, unemployment can have significant consequences on male identity, a theme that will be explored in this papers proposed study. As David Morgan (1992) states in his book looking at men and masculinity, paid employment as both a means for making money and of getting out of the house, is an important anchor for traditional male identity. Unemployment on the other hand decreases a man’s ability to provide for himself and his family. Therefor unemployment potentially provides a challenge to traditional masculine identities. Willcott and Griffin in a study looking at long-term unemployed men in the West Midlands region of England, found that what was challenged by male unemployment; was a particular form of hegemonic masculinity based on being the provider or breadwinner (1996). This concurs with Paul Willis thesis that long-term unemployment undermines the basis of hegemonic forms of masculinity in a piece looking at youth unemployment (1984). However Page (1999) found in a study of Unemployed Irish men having somewhere to go, a men’s club in her study, can negate such threats to masculinity.

The Changing Nature of Fatherhood

Research looking at the changing nature of the Father role in modern Ireland argues that the relatively quick, albeit long overdue and incomplete, gain in gender equality since the 1970’s; meant men could no longer be like their fathers (Hyde 1995). They could not parent like they were parented, even if their fathers had been good role models by the standards of their time (Daly 1995). Its just society had moved on. In McKeown et al’s (1999) comprehensive examination of the change of fatherhood and family life in Modern Ireland, they show that the traditional view of father being the breadwinner is waning but still very much engrained in the Irish psyche, due to its connection to Catholic teaching of subsistence and the place women had in the home, according to Irelands 1937 Constitution. While they acknowledge that the changing role can lead to stress in fathers due to their lack of role models in this guise, they also point to the positive impact it can have on both father and children to be more involved than Irish fathers once were.

This section only offers only a brief outline of what forms the current discourse. It does however offer examples that it believes extremely relevant. A dominant theme in the literature is that masculinity is in a state of flux. Today’s men cannot draw on the role models they had growing up because the social construct of what it is to be a man has changed. Today’s men are bombarded with conflicting messages in the media. They are supposed to ‘man up’ when things are tough but be in touch with their emotions too. Another common theme is that unemployment threatens how men feel about themselves and how others see them. Today’s men grew up in a time when predominantly men were seen as the providers for the family, yet for many that is not possible in the current climate. Today’s men face the fact that in many cases their partner’s are more employable than them. What it means to be a man today is unclear; once it was so ingrained in society, it was invisible. Finally Connell’s Theory of the Gender Order gives to us a lens in which to examine modern Irish society and the men of this research’s position within it. These themes that emerged from the literature, formed the basis of what this study aimed to investigate from those who participated and the solid foundation on which it was built.

**Chapter Three: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of ex-construction workers who have become stay at home dads following the collapse of Irelands construction sector in 2008. After a thorough review of the literature of the research area, it was decided that that a qualitative inquiry was the most suitable approach to take. This section shall discuss the methodology that was deemed appropriate for such an enquiry and how it was undertaken. In addition to outlining what methods were used, it will make an argument as to why they were used. Throughout, it will reference what others have said on research methods when investigating within the Social Sciences. This section shall: describe the research approach used, the methods that were needed for that approach, how the interview and focus group participants were chosen and for what purpose, it will discuss the data collection methods and how it was analysed. It will reflect on the limitations of the methods used as well and will finish on a discussion of the ethical considerations that presented in this research.

The author of this study decided that the most effective method to explore the topic of the research question posed; was to undertake an exploratory, qualitative analysis. This took the form of a series of semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Three couples were chosen for the interview series. The men in these couples used to work in construction but now stay at home full time and care for their children. Their partners all work fulltime. Six participants were chosen for the focus group. They were chosen specifically for the purpose of forming a heterogeneous group, which could offer opinion on how people from different backgrounds and age groups felt about the roles the interview participants had taken. The sampling method used to recruit these participants will be discussed later in this chapter. First an argument will be made to why this study believed these methods were the most appropriate.

Due to the nature of research exploration into the lived experience of people within a specific social phenomenon, that being ex-construction workers who are now stay at home dads, it was decided that this study should be based within the phenomenological approach to qualitative social inquiry and research. The basic purpose of Phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences within a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (Creswell 2007:58). The purpose of this research was an inquiry into how the participants saw themselves in the situation under inquiry, how their partners saw them, how their partners felt about their own new role and what other people thought about their roles within Irish society. Therefore a phenomenological approach was justified.

A semi-structured interview, or intensive interviewing as some like to call it, is a technique that has much to offer a qualitative study. Its use has the ability to gather data about people’s experiences, thoughts and feelings (Schutt 2012:303). Interviews have been described as *‘a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of elicitation certain information’* (Moser 1971:271). It was decided that two semi-structured interview’s comprising of an identical set of open-ended questions would have two distinct advantages. It allowed the structure to gather data from multiple interviews, which was comparable but also allowed for flexibility and diversity of responses, through the open-ended nature of those questions. Following a thorough review of the literature of the field in question, an interview schedule consisting of ten questions was devised[[3]](#footnote-3). Each of these questions was designed in such a fashion as to elicit lengthy narratives by the participant. Such questions have been defined as *grand tour* *questions* (Miller 1999c). They were concocted to let the participant tell their experience of the subject in question, in their own words. The semi-structured nature of the proposed interview would allow for further, follow-on questions if they were deemed appropriate during the interview itself.

The series of interviews offered the research an ability to document how the men who found themselves in the situation under inquiry saw their role. The interviews with their partners offered the same for their role. However an aim of this study was to gain an understanding how people in society viewed people in these non-traditional roles, for that reason a focus group was identified as the best method to do this. Focus groups are groups of unrelated individuals that are formed by the researcher and then led into a group discussion on a topic (Kruger 2009:3). A focus group of six people is obviously not able to be generalizable to the whole of Irish society but if the participants are chosen wisely it can offer a wide range of views. According to Schutt (2012:310), they can be an indispensable aid for quickly assessing the range of opinion on an issue. It is for this reason that this study decided upon a focus group to supplement the interviews of stay at home dads and their partners. A copy of the group interview schedule is available on page 55

Exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their action and what issues concern them (Schutt 2012:13). The setting of this research’s inquiry was men staying at home and parenting, while their partners worked full time. These roles invert the traditional role of mother and father in Irish society. While the drive for gender equality led to many women entering the workforce since the second wave of feminism developed in Ireland in the 1970’s, their partners kept on working full time. Men staying at home full time to look after the children is still not commonplace in most countries in the world. By asking these men and their partners to describe how this change came about, through interviews, meaning was sought as to how they see their role. The focus groups aim was to understand how other people see them. The research drew conclusions from this data and so was inductive in nature. Explanations developed inductively from research can feel authentic because we have heard what people say in their own words, they can be richer and more descriptive than quantitative studies (Schutt 2012:46). The aim of this research was to seek to find out how a particular role in society evolved for the people under inquiry. Therefore the lived experiences of people who lived this change was worthy of study.

The three men who were chosen to participate in the one to one interviews of this study were all contacted by the studies author in a parent and toddler group in Whitehall, a northern suburb of Dublin City, Ireland. This group was identified as a place where possible stay at home dads might congregate. As the group was held at 10 am on a Tuesday morning, it was anticipated that the men who attend regularly, were not in full time employment and were therefore possible targets for the study. The author of this study began to attend the group with his own two year old son, with the aim of making contact with others fathers in attendance. The group was made up mostly of mothers but there were a number of men who attended regularly. A discussion with the people who run the group revealed that the amount of men attending had grown significantly in recent years. The men in the group tended to gravitate towards each other while the children played and this is how the author, began contact with the men who would eventually participate. After a friendly relationship was established and it was discovered that the men chosen used to work in construction and their partners worked full time, the men were told about this research project and asked if they would like to participate and also would their partners be willing. In total five couples were identified, asked to participate and three agreed.

In research sampling methods, the six people who became the interview participants are examples of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling according to Schutt (2012:157) is a nonprobability sampling method in which elements are selected for a purpose. The sampling frame in this case was male members of the parent and toddler group in Whitehall. Interestingly the author became friendly with eight men who attended regularly of the space of six months, six of whom had previously worked in construction. The other worked part time in retail and the last was a retired man who attended with his granddaughter. The five couples identified as possible participants were chosen because they experienced the phenomenon under inquiry. All three couples could also be classified as key informants because they are knowledgeable about the situation being studied, were willing to talk and were representative of a range of points of view (Rubin 1995:66).

A different sampling method was utilised for participation in the studies focus group. As there was a desire by the author to form a group diverse in nature, an advert was placed in a supermarket notice board in Artane, again a northern suburb of Dublin City. This notice asked for volunteers to participate in an academic research study. Willing participants were asked to contact the author on a phone number, specifically sourced for this research project. In a period of two weeks, seventeen people contacted the author who explained the full nature of the research and how it would be carried out. Fifteen of the seventeen expressed a willingness to participate. Each gave the author some basic details such as age, sex and where they grew up. Seven people were eventually chosen based on their dissimilarity of age, geographic background and sex. Details of each participant will be outlined at the beginning of the findings section. These participants can be described as examples of availability sampling, which is a non-probable sampling method where elements are selected because they are available. This method according to Schutt is appropriate when trying to get a sense of prevailing attitudes (2012:155).

All thirteen eventual participants agreed to their interview/focus group being recorded and signed a consent form[[4]](#footnote-4). The recordings from these interviews/focus group was transcribed and stored along with the original recording in a password protected computer file. Identifiable information was removed from the transcript and not stored with the recordings. It is however known to the author. This was in line with confidentiality that was offered and agreed on. The transcripts were then analysed and coded according to the themes that were emerging from the interviews. Early into this process major themes began to be identified and these shall be discussed later in this paper in the discussion section.

Creswell (2007:159) offers an approach to data analysis using the phenomenogical approach, which influenced the actions of this study. A list of significant statements was sought in the transcriptions, pertinent to this research inquiry. These were then grouped into meaning units or themes. A textural description of what was experienced was then ascribed. A structural description of how the theme was experienced was then noted. This was done in a state of the reflection by the author of the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. These were then combined into what Creswell calls a composite description of the phenomenon and which will be incorporated into the findings and discussion section, later in this study.

The Sociological Association of Ireland (2014) publishes a code of ethics for research, which this study has aimed to adhere to. Included in these are guiding principles, which are: that research should cause no harm to subjects, participation should be voluntary and subjects should give their informed consent to participate in the research, researchers should fully disclose their identity, anonymity or confidentiality must be maintained for individual research participants unless explicitly waived and the benefits of research should outweigh and foreseeable risks. These principles influenced various decisions during this study.

Full disclosure of the aim and purpose of this study was given to everyone contacted as part of the sample frame. The Interview schedule was sent in advance for the examination of potential participants. The participants who did become part of this study were asked to sign a consent form once they had been fully disclosed on what was entailed. The data from the interviews has been dealt with in a confidential manner already outlined and in agreement with participant’s wishes. Identifying markers have been removed from the transcription of the interviews to protect the identities of third parties not involved with this study. Participants were treated with consideration and respect. A particular sensitivity was adopted around the use of language, as to not upset the people participating. Questions were worded in a manner which purposively avoided hinting at there was anything ‘wrong’ with their parenting arrangement, merely it was interesting because it was not traditional.

On reflection, this methodology proved fruitful in gaining an understanding of what was influencing change in the area of adoption social work. The participants were very forthcoming and very informative. The main drawback of the study was the limited scope due to the 10,000-word limit. The author believes that expansion of the study is warranted and feasible. It was decided that given the size of this assignment, three couples as participants in the interview series was the optimal amount, a number where the findings could be comparable and diverse yet small enough to give each a voice in the research. This also applied to the seven people who made up the focus group. An expansion of the study could be undertaken by interviewing more people in the situation being researched as well as more focus groups of people in the wider society. As with all qualitative inquiry, the data of this study is very specific to the participants. However they each offered extremely valuable insight into the topic under examination. It is for that reason that this author believes the methodological approach was sound.

**Chapter Four: Discussion of Findings**

This section is now going to present finding that resulted from the research of this study. It will first discuss the interviews of three couples of stay at home dads and female breadwinners. It will present the findings based upon common themes, which emerged from the data. The first couple is Derek and Fiona. Derek used to be a plumber who now stays at home to mind their child John. Fiona is a beauty therapist who works in a health spa and also runs a mobile therapy business. Tommy and Ashling have two children. Tommy used to be a scaffolder and Ashling is the manager of a post office. Tommy works part-time as a bouncer as well as being a stay at home dad. Eamon was an electrician who now minds his two children. His partner Deirdre works as a laboratory technician. After the discussion of the interviews, the discoveries from the focus group will be presented.

The transition into new roles

To begin, each of the male participants were asked to explain in their own words how they came to the decision to stay at home and look after the children full time. The first participant is Derek. Here he explains why he decided to become a stay at home dad.

*“I used to be a plumber with my own company. I began in 1998 so all I knew was the boom. I was very busy and making money. Then the recession kicked in and work started drying up. People stopped paying you on time, it got very hard to make a living. I kept going for another two or three years but I was only scrapping a living. I couldn’t make as much as she would doing a full week so we decided that she should go back to work and I’d stay at home.”*

Derek then describes how he found the transition from working full time to stay at home dad.

*“I was terrified when Fiona started going back to work. She began on a Saturday, not long after she gave birth. I remember John wouldn’t drink his bottle and I was a wreck, total panic. John was the first baby I ever held. It got easier though, now it’s all second nature. There were many days when I felt like I was stuck in for days with just me and John and I would resent Fiona for going off to work.”*

Tommy describes how he made the decision

*“I used to be a scaffolder; my last Job would have been on the Aviva stadium. It was an amazing job. We had 190 guys working there. Then the job was over and that was that. I’ve been nearly 2 years at home now. It was hard at first. I thought id be able to play with computers all day or listen to music, let the kids do whatever. It’s not like that though. You can’t just throw them in a room and do whatever you want to do”.*

Finally Eamon gives his answer to the same question

*“I was a self-employed electrician. Things had gotten bad but I was getting the odd job here and there. When I wasn’t working I was always trying to drum up work. We were going for a mortgage. Deirdre has a really good job in a lab. Our mortgage advisor said we would have a much better chance of getting a mortgage if we applied under her wages and got rid of the cost of our childcare. So that was that, I stopped working and we took the kids out of the crèche”.*

People’s perception of the new roles

Each participant was asked how they Irish society supported stay at home dads or female breadwinners. They were also asked how they felt other people viewed these roles. This was asked so they could explain, in their own words, how they think people see their current role. This could offer insight into where they see themselves in Irish Society. Fiona gives her answer to begin:

**“***I think everyone has a bit of a thing about a female breadwinner. That it should be the man, it’s a very sexist thing I suppose. I think people see it as strange; it’s not the norm. Man goes to work, woman stays at home and all that*. *Sometimes, I feel like I have to defend him. I felt I had to do that with my mam before. I know that she didn't mean anything by it. She was concerned about me. Sometimes I wonder do people think why isn't he working? He could be trying his best to get a job, and there could be nothing out there but some people would think, why doesn't he work in McDonald's or something?”*

Her partner Derek gives his perspective:

“*There are times though when you feel like people think you’re a waster. I worry that the in-laws think I’m lazy. Sometimes I think people find it weird, or you have to explain the situation to them so they don’t think you’re just lazy. No one ever offers to help you off the bus with the buggy or help you with a door. A lot of the times changing facilities are in the women’s toilets and I’ve had to change John on the floor of a disabled toilet”.*

Ashling on how society views stay at home dads:

*“I suppose a few years ago people would have looked at a man out of work and thought he was lazy. Now its just normal. When I go to the school there is lots of men picking up the kids where there wouldn’t have been before. I suppose its more acceptable now.”*

Then on how female breadwinners are viewed:

“*I did a child psychology course and one of the big issues was the mother going out to work and how that effected the child. Maybe people see it as psychologically affecting the children or family life. I don’t really know. I have never run into any negative comments personally. I never had someone say fair play to you either for doing it”*

Deirdre tells of her experience:

*“I always feel I have to explain why we choose to do this. I love my job but sometimes I feel people think less of you for choosing to work rather than stay at home. I worked my arse of in college and I work my arse off today. Why should I give up my job but sometimes you feel like you’re supposed to”.*

A Sense of Loss

During the interviews, a common theme of loss emerged from most of the participants. Both Derek and Tommy spoke of missing working on the building sites. While they spoke it was obvious that they felt very proud of their past careers. Derek begins by answering if he missed working full time:

**“***Sometimes you feel useless because you’re not paying for anything. I get the odd job every now and then and that feels great but then I worry I’m not sharp enough anymore. If you make a mistake in plumbing you can flood a house or cause a gas leak. I get nervous now and I never did in the past. Sometimes I even forget I used to be good at my job. I miss the craic and the messing with the lads. I miss having a fag break after working hard for the morning. I miss plumbing if that doesn’t sound crazy. I miss my van something terrible. I used to go everywhere in it”.*

Tommy gave a similar response when asked if he would return to the building sites if the economy picked up again:

*“If the phone rang, I’d love to go back to the sites. I was a scaffolder since I was 18. I was good at it. I was an advanced scaffolder, the best you can be. I had a squad. I was squad leader. I did magic up there. Id be 100 foot up standing on a bar, I loved it. That was the drive, you were always scared, if you weren't you were dangerous”.*

What comes through in both these responses is a sense of identity that has changed. Derek seems to have lost confidence in his ability as a plumber and Tommy speaks wistfully of his time as a scaffolder. It is obvious as the career was very important to them. All three participants identified themselves by their job title when they began to talk about themselves. None said “I used to work as…”, they all said “I used to be a…”. None of the participants choose independently to be a stay at home dad or female breadwinner, each had ended up in this situation as a result of the recession. An argument could be made that the men of this study show a sense of grief when talking about their past careers. They have lost part of their identity.

Fiona talks of how she believes Derek found the transition:

“*He thought he wasn’t a man; [he thought] he should be the one providing. He loves the time with our son but I know he would prefer to be the one thinking, I did a hard days work there and here is the wage packet”.*

When asked how she would feel about having the role of breadwinner indefinitely, Fiona also conveyed a feeling of sadness:

“*I’d find that very upsetting, well I’d deal with it. I’d feel an awful lot of pressure. I’d feel like I wasn’t seeing my son and I’d feel detached from the family”.*

Ashling expressed similar emotions:

*“Id love to stay at home, I really would but its just not feasible at the moment. Its hard not being with the kids all day and getting a phone call saying, "guess just what happened".*

Here both women also talked of loss. Both are extremely successful in their jobs, but both would choose not to be the main income provider. They expressed sadness at missing their children and events in their child’s life. They also expressed a degree of unease about their role as breadwinner. Much of the literature on gender inequality cites the nurturing role given to women in society as processes that breed’s inequality and holds women back. Both these women have broken that restriction; yet express a feeling of loss and a desire to become the primary career of their children. Some could point at this, as proof of the biological model of looking at gender, that women give birth therefor should stay at home. This author however believes there is more to it than that. It is the contention of this author that what is evident in this quote, is the extent of how much patriarchy is internalised by people. Perhaps this is an example of Walby’s notion of private patriarchy (Walby 2010), which in fact hasn’t totally given way to public patriarchy. Women are no longer told to stay in the home. However there are still unsaid processes at play, which makes them feel like they should. Take these quotes from Fiona when asked would she prioritize her partner’s career over her own:

*“I’d see it as he supported me while I got my little business off the ground. He will always have the support of me. I feel that this is something that he would love. He’d want to be working and he’d want to be the one earning the money for his family. I wouldn’t mind sacrificing a bit of mine. I just think it would be the right thing to do*”.

“Would you feel pressure to do so because it is more traditional or is it something you would prefer?”

*“Maybe, it’s because of a bit of pressure, maybe both. I don't mean its because he would pressurize me to give up work, because he never would, but I would feel like it would have to be me or him, so it would be me”.*

Although Fiona is the main breadwinner of the house, as her wages support her partner and her son, she see’s Derek’s career as more important. When asked if they had to prioritize one of their careers once he finished college, she said she would sacrifice hers, as ‘*it’s the right thing to do*’. Although she is successfully setting up her own company, as a mobile therapist, she refers to it as her *‘little business’*, while at the same time stating how important she feels it is that Derek goes back to work.

Masculinity in Flux

The participants were asked about their views on masculinity. Specifically if they thought the way we view masculinity is changing and did they think being a stay at home dad impacts on personal masculinity. Derek begins with his thoughts on the matter:

*“I remember even ten years ago a lot of fellas wouldn’t push a pram. It doesn’t seem that big a deal anymore. I was with my son in the playgroup one day and he kept playing with a small buggy for dolls. Three different women tried to stop him, not in a bad way but kept saying, “Oh that’s not for you” etc. I let him play with what he wants so I was letting him do it. It seemed to bother those women. He has seen me push his buggy since he was born; I pushed his buggy on the way to the playgroup. In his eye that’s what men do, he didn’t think anything of it and just wanted to have fun. I suppose for him, being a man means something different now”.*

However Derek also talked of how he sometimes feels his masculinity is under threat:

*“I sometimes feel like men are laughing at me and I get angry, just the way they might look at you or if they are laughing about something. I want to ask them what their problem is and get stuck into them but I don’t because I am with John. Most of the time it is probably in my head though. I don’t mean to sound funny but I know I am a man. That hasn’t changed”.*

Tommy discussed how macho an environment building sites are and how he felt in that environment:

“*We had these tubes that weight six or seven stone and we would flip them up on our knees. I could do it with ease; I was a big boy back then. It was great. If a labourer carried two boards, you carried five. My record was 9; I put them on my shoulders and walked. Some guys were asking 'what are you doing?' and my answer was 'because I can’. I was capable back then. I miss that, I miss going up as high as you can and looking down, looking around”.*

He was then asked if he felt our notion of masculinity is changing:

*“Definitely. I do the cleaning, ironing, washing. The roles have definitely changed. When i was a scaffolder I wouldn’t have dreamed of doing it. I would expect them [women] to do it. Now Ash is out at work all day and I cant expect her. It does take masculinity from you but I work on the doors at nighttime. I’m supposed to be a big hard doorman but I’m not. I stand there and do a job. My Masculinity is still there but it’s only at nighttime”.*

When asked if she thought masculinity was changing, Ashling offered insight into how she feels his masculine identify is important to him but also how it can sometimes come under threat:

*“I know before Tommy minded the kids he didn’t do as much exercise and working out, where as now he is doing a lot. I don’t know if that is about him keeping his masculinity or a masculine appearance or if it’s just to de-stress. His friends sometimes take the piss[[5]](#footnote-5) about doing stuff with the kids or they ask him where his pink dress is”.*

Eamon offered insight on what masculinity means to him and how it fits into his current role:

*“Sometimes you just don’t feel like a man anymore. I got into a lot of fights when I was a teenager, I know this sounds stupid but I miss that sometimes. Sometimes I just want to feel fierce again. You don’t feel like that when you’re in a park with a buggy and flowery nappy bag. Or you have to ask your wife for a few pound to buy a magazine. I suppose it’s a feeling of uselessness or helplessness”.*

Finally Fiona discusses her views on masculinity and how she believes it is linked to the breadwinner role:

*“The man is supposed to be making the money, the man is supposed to be the breadwinner and the man is supposed to be the one that holds the house. I know he will be again, it’s just my time at the moment and I have to do this for my family.*

*It’s like the trousers have changed, the woman is wearing the trousers now”.*

It is apparent that the findings from this study confirm that there is a strong link between the breadwinner role, unemployment and masculine identity, even if we are living in a time of supposed change with regard to gender inequality. Seidler’s (1988) traditional archetype of man is not yet extinct. All three men felt that their masculine identity became threatened by their decision to stay at home and mind the children. This echo’s the sentiments of the farming men of Ni Laoire’s study (2005). Conceivably this process could be heightened due to the macho nature of construction work. If that is the case many thousands of men in Ireland could also be feeling this threat. This would correspond with Morgan’s statement that paid employment as both a means for making money and of getting out of the house, is an important anchor for traditional male identity (Morgan 1992). As well as Willis’s thesis that long-term unemployment undermines the basis of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Willis 1984).

Hegemonic masculinity brings us back to Connells theory of The Gender Order (1987) (2005). The men of this study would all have fitted into Connells model of hegemonic masculinity. Eamon and Derek both ran their own companies and Tommy held a management position where he was in charge of many men. However the recession has changed this, their hegemony has been taken from them. Now their partners are the providers in their household and this is replicated in thousands of Irish homes in the current climate. This has had implications on how these men see themselves and how they judge others view them. Their partner’s role has also changed from the traditional. Each couples referred to arguments that had taken place in the past. Each man expressed sometimes resenting his partner for being the breadwinner. The Gender Order of these households is in flux and Connell was at pain to express in her work that this would always be the case.

The Focus Group

The focus group of this study had two main aims. To see how other people regarded men who are stay at home dads and to see how female breadwinners are viewed. The full transcription of the focus group can be found as an appendix on page 56. Due to constraints imposed onto the size of this research study, only the most pertinent findings shall now be discussed. The focus group consisted of seven people plus this author who facilitated the group. Originally it was to be made of three men and four women but one of the men withdrew at the last minute and no male replacement could be sourced on such short notice. The group therefore consisted of five women and two men. Ideally the group would have had a better gender balance. In this discussion, the participants shall be referred to by their initials:

* MC is a 28-year-old woman. She is a manager of a large retail store. MC has no children and comes from Dublin.
* AG is a 25-year-old man who comes from Birmingham in the UK. He works in logistics. He has no children.
* JM is 26-year-old who works in a salon. She has one child. She comes from Dublin
* CW is a 23 years old woman from Dublin. She has one child and works part-time an optician.
* OW is a 39-year-old male from Cork. He is a mature student. He has no children.
* MK is a 34-year-old teacher. She comes from Dublin and has no children.
* FK is a 60-year-old retired civil servant. She has two children and one grandchild. She comes from Co. Clare.

The group was asked if they felt it was unusual for a man to stay at home and mind the children, while his partner became the breadwinner:

MK. “*its unusual because we find it hard to get into our heads but it is changing and becoming acceptable”.*

MC. “*yea but even when you hear "oh she's out working and he's at home" you do still go "oh", its still not the norm”.*

*AG. “These days in the 21st century, everything should be equal; it’s a bit old fashioned really. A lot of people are set in their ways thinking women should stay at home and men should be the breadwinners. It shouldn’t have to be like that”.*

MK. “*I think for the next couple of generations it won’t be seen as strange, but for us it still is. When we grew up both of our parents worked or only the dad did. It would have been very unusual for the dad to stay at home and the mam to go to work. For todays teenagers and the younger kids, it will be normal because they don’t know any different”.*

CW. “*Everyone knows someone in that situation. I never heard anyone give out about the fella's staying at home to mind the kids”.*

FK. *Yea, but everyone says "oh isn’t he great, staying at home" they never say that about the women though. They never comment on all the work they did.*

MC. “*I agree, it’s never looked on as the woman is doing anything special. It’s just natural for her. She should be doing that anyway”.*

The group was in agreement that the roles of stay at home dad and breadwinner for women is becoming more and more common in Ireland today. All knew someone in the situation. There was a consensus that Ireland is in a state of transition when it comes to traditional gender roles. However there was mixed feelings if this was a good thing or not. Everyone at the beginning expressed that they believed things should be equal but as the conversation went on, more traditional expressions of gender roles became apparent. For example:

[Interviewer] Do you think this transition is being forced onto society? Do you think it is unnatural?

CW. “*I don’t think it is natural”.*

MC. “*I don’t think any families would choose that situation. Especially in Ireland, most men were in trades. That’s why this has happened. I know a couple were the girl is a nurse and kept working and the man has now gone back to college to become a nurse too. He was a plumber. Its forced rather than natural I think”.*

MK. *“I think it is going to be a problem for the men it has happened to, like psychologically. That’s not the way they were brought up. That’s not how they saw themselves. They saw themselves as going out to work whether the woman was working or not. They were breadwinners”.*

CW. “*I feel sorry for men who started from scratch with their trade, worked their way up, worked themselves into the ground and was earning loads of money and because of the recession its all gone. They lost not only their jobs and they were forced out of their homes. It’s more than just the woman in the relationship is working”*.

One of the participants discussed how her own father was stay at home dad when she was young:

J*M “My mam worked when I was young and my dad stayed at home, that was 25 years ago”.*

[Interviewer] How did people see him?

JM. “*I think everyone thought he was a waster”.*

[Interviewer] Would people think that now?

MK. “*No, well depends on the person”.*

AG. *People might assume the woman is going out to work and then doing all the work at home too. If he is in the home doing all the child stuff, people would assume he is watching TV all day having a beer.*

CW. “*People would go by the look of him”.*

JM. “*I still think there is a bit of it though”.*

MC. “*At the back of peoples mind, people might think he should be at work”.*

[Interviewer] Would a man who decided to be stay at home dad now be viewed differently from someone who decided to do it at the height of the boom?

JM. “*In the height of the boom, yes I think he would. You would think he was a hippy, father earth type”.*

Everyone agreed that being a stay at home dad was acceptable because it was a result of the recession. What becomes apparent is that the movement of men into the arena of domestic duties was not due to a rebalancing of gender inequality but because of financial necessity. Traditional gender roles with regard to nurturing and providing are still very strong in Ireland it would seem. For example look at this statement made by MC, who rose to the position of manager in a busy Dublin city center retail outlet, after starting at entry level:

MC. *Yea, they [women] are taken more seriously but still in big business they will choose men over women. Women are still going to have to go out on maternity leave. That’s why they can’t go for power jobs. I suppose it makes sense. If I was an employer I wouldn’t want to hire a woman if she is the age to have kids, over a man with the same qualification who wont have to leave on maternity leave”.*

This statement is interesting because MC has a successful managerial career. If a man had made this statement he would be accused of being sexist. However what is apparent, once again, is the extent into which patriarchy is internalized into people’s values. This also was the case when the discussion turned to how female breadwinners are perceived by Irish society:

[Interviewer] If a women chooses not to stay at home with the kids because she wants to build on her career, how is that viewed by people?

JM. “*I suppose you'd look at her a small bit and think has she not got a connection with her kids?”*

CW*. “People would be wondering what kind of mother is she is”.*

MC. “*Women are the only ones who feel guilty about going out to work. The men can easily just leave the kids and go to work, see the kids for ten minutes, or not even see them because the kids are asleep. That’s the norm. If a woman does that you have to look down on them. I think that is kind of bad”.*

**Chapter Five: Conclusion**

This study has found that there are still a lot of pressures on people who adopt non-traditional roles within the Irish family. The stay at home dads of this study felt part of their identity was lost due to them relinquishing the breadwinner role. They felt less like men than they used to. They felt people were laughing at them. The female breadwinners felt forced into becoming the families income provider, they felt they were missing out aspects of motherhood. The focus group revealed characteristics of societal attitudes that push people into the traditional gender order. Successful career women are still viewed by many as being bad mothers. Men, who take on the domestic duties to support their partner’s careers, have their masculinity questioned. What this study proves is that true gender equality is still a long way off

in Ireland. The focus group was asked if they could name a fictional character that was a stay at home dad, no one could. Every example of a man who was the primary care giver was either a widow or his partner had ran off.

The collapse of Irelands construction industry in 2008 might have a silver lining in the form of a cultivating of gender equality in Ireland. Although the men of this study talked of difficulties that arose as a consequence of their new role, they also discussed the joy they had at spending time with their children. They are proving that men can take on the domestic duties successfully. They are also showing their children, and the rest of us, that being a man can be about changing nappies, just as much as it is about wielding a sledgehammer. The female breadwinners are showing their daughters, and the rest of us, that women can be successful in their careers, provide for their families and be good mothers. The current recession might have forced people into these new roles but they are proving that these new roles are possible. The gender order in Ireland has been challenged by the people under inquiry in this research, this challenge will be most felt in the next generation. The participation on men in the role of nurturer will hopefully mean the next generation of women face the same restrictions that their mothers still do.

This research was an exploratory study aiming to find out about the lives of the men and women who find themselves in the situation outlined above. It took an inductive approach to research, as it drew conclusions from the data it finds. That does not mean however that it ignored theory or was not influenced by the findings of others. It is the belief of this study that because Irelands boom was so dependent on construction and the sheer amount of men involved who lost their jobs, Ireland experienced an intense shake up of the gender order. It was the dual effect of the tremendous growth in female employment, added to the sudden collapse of the industry which was the greatest employer of men, that makes this period in Ireland unique and worthy of documenting.

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**Appendices**

Copy of Participant Consent Form

* I have read and understood the Research Information Sheet YES ⁯ NO ⁯
* I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study YES ⁯ NO ⁯
* I have received enough information about this study YES ⁯ NO ⁯
* I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time YES ⁯ NO ⁯
* I agree to take part in the study YES ⁯ NO ⁯

Signed,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Participant Signature)

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(Participant Name Printed)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Interview Schedule of a Stay at Home Dad

1. Could you explain how you became a stay at home dad?
2. Would this family arrangement be different to your own growing up?
3. How do you feel about the situation?
4. How does you partner feel about it?
5. Could you explain how it felt making the transition from working on building sites to staying at home with the kids?
6. Do you miss working on the sites?
7. Do you think Irish society is supportive of stay at home dads?
8. How do you feel stay at home dads are viewed by people in Ireland?
9. If the economy picks up would you like to return to working in construction?
10. Do you think our ideas about masculinity have changed since you were a child?
11. In terms of masculinity, do you believe being a stay at home dad effects how we see masculinity in society?

Transcription of Interview with Derek

**Could you explain how you became a stay at home dad?**

*I used to be a plumber with my own company. I began in 1998 so all I knew was the boom. I was very busy and making money. Then the recession kicked in and work started drying up. People stopped paying you on time, it got very hard to make a living. I kept going for another two or three years but I was only scrapping a living. Any savings I had got eaten up. In 2011 my son was born. Fiona worked as a beauty therapist and took six months maternity leave. Financially that was the lowest point we ever reached. I wasn’t getting much work in maybe one or two jobs a week, some weeks nothing. When Jen’s maternity leave was up, we looked at getting childcare but it seemed too much. Fiona was offered fulltime work back in her job, I couldn’t make as much as she would doing a full week so we decided that she should go back to work and I’d stay at home.*

**Would this family arrangement be different to your own growing up?**

*Yea, when I was a kid, my dad went to work. There was times when my mum worked but it was part time. I don’t think I know of any men back then who stayed at home. Suppose they would have been thought of as layabouts or lazy. There was a spell when my dad didn’t have work but he was miserable and it wasn’t out of choice. Actually he got laid of four years ago and my mum started working full time. He was 62 and found it impossible to get work. She had gone back to college in her 50’s and had been working part time, she got offered more hours and that was that. They lived off her wage. When he got his pension recently, you could tell he was delighted to be bringing in some money again. He even calls it his wages.*

**How do you feel about the situation?**

*Most of the time I feel ok. I love spending time with my son. I suppose I am lucky to spend so much time with him. My dad was always working when I was young, he worked long hours. There are times though when you feel like people think you’re a waster. I worry that the inlaw’ think I’m lazy. Sometimes you feel useless because you’re not paying for anything. I get the odd job every now and then and that feels great but then I worry I’m not sharp enough anymore. If you mistake in plumbing you can flood a house or cause a gas leak. I get nervous now and I never did in the past. Sometimes I even forget I used to be good at my job.*

**How does you partner feel about it?**

*She’s great about the whole thing. Like she is very conscious that I have money so I don’t have to come to her all the time asking for it. She looks after all the bills and stuff too, I’m not good at that. She works incredibly hard for us, totally selflessly. She is very good at what she does and is building a good career. I think she gets stressed sometimes. The only time we ever real have any fights is over money. Her hours aren’t 9-5 either, so she gets to spend time with John. She’d defend me to the hilt if anyone ever said anything about me not working.*

**Could you explain how it felt making the transition from working on building sites to staying at home with the kids?**

*I suppose it was hard at the start. I was terrified when Fiona started going back to work. She began on a Saturday, not long after she gave birth. I remember John wouldn’t drink his bottle and I was a wreck, total panic. John was the first baby I ever held. It got easier though, now it’s all second nature. There were many days when I felt like I was stuck in for days with just me and John and I would resent Fiona for going off to work. We had a bad fight one time and she was saying its hard for her too, having to work all the time and all I could think was what I wouldn’t give to go off to work for a day. Sometimes I just wanted some time for myself. I felt like she was swanning off having a great time, even though she was going to work not out having fun. I suppose that’s normal enough. She is great though, its easier now, I think it was just hard being new parents too. I don’t feel as self-conscious now as I used to. I have a routine and it helps. I know it sounds terrible though but sometimes, especially at the start, I thought the whole being a parent thing was easier for a woman than a man. I know that’s not true but I felt it sometimes.*

**Do you miss working on the sites?**

*Yea, a lot of the time I do. I miss the craic and the messing with the lads. I miss having a fag break after working hard for the morning. I miss plumbing if that doesn’t sound crazy. I miss my van something terrible. I used to go everywhere in it. I had to sell it when Fiona got pregnant to buy a car. We used to joke about anything on the sites, shocking stuff and I miss that. I miss the money of course.*

**Do you think Irish society is supportive of stay at home dads?**

*I don’t know, sometimes maybe. Like no one ever offers to help you off the bus with the buggy or help you with a door. A lot of the times changing facilities are in the women’s toilets and I’ve had to change John on the floor of a disabled toilet. You see a lot of dads around in the parks or pushing buggies. A friend of mine lives in Australia and he takes his little fella to a daddy toddler group, I’d love something like that. I go to toddler groups and it’s usually all women. There are some men who go, usually builders too, but sometimes I’m on my own. I don’t know things always seem to be geared towards mothers rather than fathers*.

**How do you feel stay at home dads are viewed by people in Ireland?**

*Sometimes I think people find it weird, or you have to explain the situation to them so they don’t think you’re just lazy. Maybe that’s just me though. Most people are ok with it I suppose. I know a lot of people I used to work with in the same boat so its not that unusual anymore maybe. Its like if a man choose to do this even if he could get work, that would be weird or you’d be seen as a bum but if you explain it people they don’t think that. I suppose it shouldn’t be like that. Sometimes I just feel uncomfortable in places. I love taking John to play centres but I only go when it is quite in the mornings during the week. He loves me to go into the maze with him and he is still quite small for them but if there is a load of kids I feel uncomfortable. I worry people don’t like a man being in the maze, like they think I am a pervert or something. Fiona would never feel that but I do, I know its stupid but I just do.*

**If the economy picks up would you like to return to working in construction?**

*Yes, definitely. I miss it a lot. I miss the craic with the lads. I miss having money. I miss feeling useful. I feel guilty though when I do feel like that. Fiona’s career is taking off, she is really good at what she does and is building a big client list. I feel guilty thinking my job should come first. The last two holidays we had was because Fiona paid for them, I wish that was me sometimes. When I do plumbing jobs I feel great because I remember I’m good at it. I love solving a problem and feeling like an expert in something. Then I feel guilty because it’s not like I don’t love spending time with my son, I do but sometimes I just want to be around a load of lads talking about football or having a wind up.*

**Do you think our ideas about masculinity have changed since you were a child?**

*I suppose. I see young fellas talk about stuff on facebook, we never would have talked about when I was a teenager. They seem to embrace each other more when they meet. That whole metrosexual thing came in and changed things maybe, David Beckham and all that. A lot of fellas seem to get very big in gyms now, like that seems to be a macho culture but when I was a teenager, if you showed you cared about the way you look, you would have got beaten up.*

**In terms of masculinity, do you believe being a stay at home dad effects how we see masculinity in society?**

*I think its accepted now by most people so its not that big a deal. I remember even ten years ago a lot of fellas wouldn’t push a pram. I used to work with fellas like that; they would never be seen doing it. It doesn’t seem that big a deal anymore. I was with my son in the playgroup one day and he kept playing with a small buggy for dolls. There were a few of them there and three or four young girls were running up and down playing with them. John had one too and kept wanting to join in. Three different women tried to stop him, not in a bad way but kept saying ‘oh that’s not for you’ etc. I let him play with what he wants so I was letting him do it. It seemed to bother them women though, two were old women who ran the group but the other one was my age. He has seen me push his buggy since he was born; I pushed his buggy on the way to the playgroup. In his eye that’s what men do, he didn’t think anything of it and just wanted to have fun. I suppose for him, being a man means something different now. We play football, we play with cars, and I don’t care what he plays with. In fact I don’t feel comfortable with him playing with guns. I sometimes feel like men are laughing at me and I get angry, just the way they might look at you. I want to ask them what their problem is and get stuck into them but I don’t. Most of the time it is probably in my head though. I don’t mean to sound funny but I know I am a man. That hasn’t changed.*

Interview Schedule of a ‘Female Breadwinner’

1. Could you explain how you became the breadwinner?
2. Would this family arrangement be different to your own growing up?
3. How do you feel about the situation?
4. How does you partner feel about it?
5. Did your partner find it hard making the transition from working on building sites to staying at home with the kids?
6. Did you find it hard to become the main income provider?
7. Do you think Irish society is supportive of stay at home dads?
8. How do you feel stay at home dads are viewed by people in Ireland?
9. How do you feel female breadwinners are viewed?
10. In terms of masculinity, do you believe being a stay at home dad effects how we see masculinity in society?

Transcription of Interview with Fiona

**How do you feel about the situation?**

*Sometimes its nice to feel like I am providing for us all, then other times it stressful as your the one thinking about the money, especially coming up to Christmas. We want to get married so we are saving up for that and further down the line we want a house, so you are always thinking about that.*

**How would you feel about being the breadwinner indefinitely?**

*I’d find that very upsetting, well I’d deal with it. I’d feel an awful lot of pressure. I’d feel that if I weren’t getting enough money in, we'd fall below the breadline. I’d feel like I wasn’t seeing my son and I’d feel detached from the family*

**Would you say there are positives and negatives then?**

*Yea, especially when you are doing what you love, like I do, I love that I am making the money but I know it’s hard on him. The man is supposed to be making the money and the man is supposed to be the breadwinner and the man is supposed to be the one that holds the house. I know he will be again, it’s just my time at the moment and I have to do this for my family. In an ideal world, I’d have a fabulously paid job, part time, and my partner would have a fabulously paid full time job. I’d like to choose the hours I work so I could fit it around looking after the kids.*

**How does you partner feel about it?**

*At first I know he didn’t like it. He didn’t. He felt very like.... he wasn’t worth.... He thought he wasn’t a man; he should be the one providing. It’s not like he is sat on his arse. He is busy with John and he’s a great dad. I think he would prefer to be the one working. He loves the time with our son but I know he would prefer to be the one thinking, “I did a hard days work there and here is the wage packet”. He wishes he had a great job, getting a great wage. I think at first he didn't like the situation and felt that he wasn't like a man. I think he has come to terms with it now but I know he is dying to get back out working.*

**If your partner found a job but it only covered the price of childcare, as in financially you would not be better off with him working full time than staying at home, Would you prefer that?**

*Id cut back work in that case,*

**Why would you prioritize his career over yours, or would you see it that way?**

*No I wouldn’t. I’d see it as he supported me while I got my little business off the ground. He will always have the support of me. I feel that this is something that he would love. He’d want to be working and he’d want to be the one earning the money for his family. I wouldn’t mind sacrificing a bit of mine. I just think it would be the right thing to do*.

**Would you feel pressure to do so because it is more traditional or is it something you would prefer?**

*Maybe, it’s because of a bit of pressure, maybe both. I don't mean its because he would pressurize me to give up work, because he never would, but I would feel like it would have to be me or him, so it would be me.*

**How do you feel stay at home dads are viewed by people in Ireland?**

*It depends on the situation; I think everyone has a bit of a thing about a female breadwinner. That it should be the man, it’s a very sexist thing I suppose. I think people see it as strange; It’s not the norm. Man goes to work woman, stays at home and all that. I hate cooking though so there is no stereotype in our house. In the Celtic Tiger, there had to be two people working in most houses, to get a mortgage. It’s nearly strange now for one parent to be at home. That’s unusual now and its even stranger for it to be a man. Sometimes, I feel like I have to defend him. I felt I had to do that with my mam before. I know that she didn't mean anything by it. She was concerned about me; she felt I was taking on too much work. I don't feel I have to defend him to my friends; it’s just my mam even though she was in the same situation. Sometimes I wonder do people think ‘why isn't he working?’ He could be trying his best to get a job, and there could be nothing out there but some people would think, ‘why doesn't he work in McDonald's or something?’. I don't think a lot of people see it as unusual because we have a few friends in the same boat. I doubt most people would want it to be their situation though.*

**In terms of masculinity, do you believe being a stay at home dad effects how we see masculinity in society?**

*I suppose because the breadwinner is usually a man, it's like the trousers have changed, the woman is wearing the trousers now. I think masculinity is linked with being the breadwinner. I do think it is important for the man and I don’t know if that is only going back to when your a kid. I know it has changed so much and men are so progressive, that they are great with the kids and cook; they’re not just demanding their dinner when they get in from work. It’s not like that anymore. There are usually two people working. There is not many stay at home mothers, unless she has a load of kids.*

Interview Schedule of Focus Group

1. Do you think it is unusual for a man to stay at home and look after the kids while his partner works full time?
2. Do you think women are better than men at looking after the children?
3. How do you think stay at home dads are viewed by society?
4. How do you think female breadwinners are viewed by society?
5. Do you think a stay at home dad should keep looking for work while he is minding the children?
6. Do you think the role of father has changed since you were a child?
7. How would you feel about becoming a stay at home dad/ female breadwinner?
8. Do you think being a stay at home dads impacts on the mans masculinity?
9. Do you think the role of father has changed since you were a child?
10. Can you name any fictional characters that are stay at home dads?

Transcription of Focus Group

**Do you think it is unusual for a man to stay at home to mind the kids?**

MC. *it is unusual, (agreement*)

CW. *Its unfortunate, but society says it is unusual; I do want it to change though because I very much see women and men as equal*.

AG. *These days in the 21st century, everything should be equal; it’s a bit old fashioned really. A lot of people are set in their ways thinking women should stay at home and men should be the breadwinners. It shouldn’t have to be like that (agreement*)

FK. *If you think 60 years ago, a woman had to give up her job. All [female] public servant workers had to give up their jobs when they got married. It was called the marriage ban. That was only 60 years ago. The man was always the breadwinner. You’re right though everything is changing. I think people accept it much more now.*

MK. *its unusual because we find it hard to get into our heads but it is changing and becoming acceptable*.

MC. *yea but even when you hear "oh she's out working and he's at home" you do still go "oh", its still not the norm*.

AG. *The problem is people are brought up by people who are usually about 30 years older than you; Ireland 30 years ago was very different. Even though things are changing people are still brought up in a certain way*.

MK. *I think for the next couple of generations it won’t be seen as strange, but for us it still is. When we grew up both of our parents worked or only the dad did. It would have been very unusual for the dad to stay at home and the mam to go to work. For todays teenagers and the younger kids, it will be normal because they don’t know any different.*

MC. *There is also a lot more lone parenting and stuff as well rather than it was in our parent’s day. (Agreement)*

MK*. Our generation is kind of in the transition. The next generation though just wont know any different.*

CW. *I think they will be brought up with a broader mind. It will just be normal.*

MK*. we are just still stuck with the old way in our minds*.

FK. *Like you say a transitional period. It’s down to circumstances. A lot of people worked in construction in Ireland. Suddenly they had no jobs and their wife worked in a shop or was a teacher or worked in the civil service. They still had their jobs.*

CW. *Everyone knows someone in that situation. (Agreement). I never heard anyone give out about the fella's staying at home to mind the kids.*

FK. *Yea, everyone says "oh isn’t he great, staying at home" they never say that about the women though. They never comment on all the work they did.*

MC. *I do agree, it’s never looked on as the woman is doing anything special. Its just natural for her. She should be doing that anyway but if the man stays at home they get "oh well done, look at all the washing you did today" (laughing in agreement).*

MK. *Its normal for women but men get the praise for it.*

MC. *Exactly because it is not the norm.*

MK. *A man is great if he cooks but women always fecking cook.*

**How do you think people view female breadwinners?**

MC. *Its a bit like if the man stays at home, its like "oh well done, go you doing that*"

AG*. If your wife goes build a shed at the end of the garden, she is going to get praise because of shock factor. If a bloke does it no one care, just another bloke building a shed. It's the same if a man is doing the cleaning or vacuuming. Its not perceived as a mans job. We are in a transitional period though. Now if a woman joins the army its not seen as that big a deal anymore, in the past everyone would have been shocked because blokes are supposed to be there. As times go on that will just change. If there is a 50/50 split in the army, when the kids are brought up they'll just see it as being supposed to be about that*.

MK*. Our generation very much has established social roles. Look at things like colours, pink and blue. (Agreement). That is all changing now. Gender as a social role is changing completely and that is going to leak into jobs, where they work, how they work, whether they stat at home or go out to work. It is very much a transitional period at the moment.*

**Do you think this transition is going to have an effect on what we see as masculinity?**

CW. *I suppose that depends on the person, but when society accepts it more, people will personally.*

MC*. I don’t think my partner would feel happy with me going and making all the money.*

AG. *See women see it logically, like if she had the better job then why not him stay at home but men because of testosterone would feel emasculated by that. Even if she is only earning slightly more that you it mightn’t be a big deal but if you are at home and you have to ask her for "some money, please”, you would feel like you are not doing right by your family. I know it’s not true because you could be looking after five kids, while your wife is working but blokes feel like that. Not every bloke of course but it comes into the back of your head "I should be the one providing"*

**Do you think earning is linked to a mans identity?**

AG. *Yea it goes back to prehistoric times, the man goes and hunts. it doesn’t matter how much things change we are all naturally built like that. Its getting less and less i suppose and it is acceptable now to stay at home but blokes will still feel like that*.

**Do you think this transition is being forced onto society? Like do you think it is unnatural?**

CW. *I don’t think it is natural.*

MC. *I don’t think any families would choose that situation. Especially in Ireland, most men were in trades. That’s why this has happened. I know a couple were the girl is a nurse and kept working and the man has now gone back to college to become a nurse too. He was a plumber. Its forced rather than natural I think.*

MK. *I think it is going to be a problem for the men it has happened to, like psychologically. That’s not the way they were brought up. That’s not how they saw themselves. They saw themselves as going out to work whether the woman was working or not. They were breadwinners*

CW. *I feel sorry for men who started from scratch with their trade, worked their way up, worked themselves into the ground and was earning loads of money and because of the recession its all gone. They lost not only their jobs and they were forced out of their homes. It’s more than just the woman in the relationship is working*.

OW. *I think it depends on how you were brought up. If I am the ones looking after my kids, they will just see it as normal. Where as my dad worked full time and my mum works a couple of days a week. I just see dads are supposed to work, that’s how it is supposed to happen.*

CW. *Some boy’s schools don’t have an option of home economics. If I boy wanted to study that everyone would be like "What?"*

JM. *It’s the same if a girl wants to study woodwork or metal work.*

MK. *It comes from society; your gender roles are established at a young age*.

OW*. If you look at toys, little kitchens and dolls for girls and fellas have guns*,

MK. *boys are supposed to be strong*.

CW. *That’s engrained since birth.*

MK. *Them roles are given to you by simple things like toys and colours. What movies you watch, what subjects you take in school. You are bred like that.*

MC. *That’s why boys are the breadwinners and the girls are doing home-ec.*

FK. *That’s the thing with the men now, they are being forced to stay home. If you choose to do something you would be ok with it but if you are forced to you wont. If they choose to give up work it would be fine. But if his work is gone and that’s why he is at home, that is where the problems are. A lot of people are in that position*

**Do you think stay at home dads should be looking for work, while they are in that situation?**

CW. *Depends on the individual. Everyone is different*

MC. *Everyone’s situation is different. If the girl is making enough money, to pay the rent and everything then it is fine. In the end they will save on crèches. The amount you pay on a crèche is nearly a wage anyway.*

JM. *Especially if you have two or more kids.*

MC. *My sister has two kids and she comes out with about €200 at the end of the month after the crèche is paid.*

AG. *It depends on your qualification. If I use my uncle as an example, He was highly paid and his wife was making good money too. They could cover everything on her wage but he keeps looking for big roles because he doesn’t want to lose his lifestyle.*

MK. *If a man was making loads of money and lost his job, and the only job he could get was in McDonalds, or jobs on minimum wage that would make him feel emasculated*

MC. *he'd feel worse.*

**If he found a job that just covered the crèche, do you think he should take it?**

MK*. maybe if it made him feel better but there i don’t feel there is a need for him to go out to work.*

MC. *I would feel he would constantly have to tell people, "well I used to be in a good job"*

OW*. Everyone is being made redundant and not getting paid as much as they were.*

MK*. If the man feels the need to work, or he wants to then fair enough. I would not look down on a man who was not working, looking after the kids and not actively seeking work, if there is no work available*.

MC. *Not if there is no need for it.*

MK. *You wouldn’t have looked down on a woman for doing it.*

**If a women chooses not to stay at home with the kids because she wants to build on her career, how is that viewed by people?**

JM. *I suppose you'd look at her a small bit and think has she not got a connection with her kids?  (Agreement)*

CW*. People would be wondering what kind of mother is she*

MC. *Women are the only ones who feel guilty about going out to work. The men can easily just leave the kids and go to work, see the kids for ten minutes, or not even see them because the kids are asleep. That’s the norm. If a woman does that you have to look down on them. I think that is kind of bad.*

CW. *Or question her*

MC. *If the man is at home and the woman is out all hours because she is a director or something, I wouldn’t look down on her but society would. When I was younger I never saw my dad. He was a carpenter all day and played in a band five nights a week, I'd see him for half an hour. Never damaged* me

**So what if a woman did that?**

MK. *people would wonder where her nurture side is?  Does she not have motherly instincts? Why doesn’t she want to be with her child?*

FK*. They [women] are supposed to be more nurturing my nature. I don’t know how true that is.*

CW. *It is slowly but surely changing and I think it is about time. Look at gayness, that has come on leaps and bounds. Look at how people accept that now. People are more open and honest but it has taken a long time. Now we are at the start of this, who should go to work thing and it is good. Women are valued more and taken more seriously.*

MC. *Yea they are taken more seriously but still in big business they will choose men over women. Women are still going to have to go out on maternity leave. That’s why they can’t go for power jobs. I suppose it makes sense. If i was an employer i wouldn’t want to hire a women if she is the age to have kids over a man with the same qualification who wont have to leave on maternity leave.*

AG. *Some people sill have a perception of women that they aren’t as good as blokes. If you have a highly paid woman I bet a lot of higher up people in a boardroom are still a bit snobby. I bet they still don’t give her the time of day in the boardroom. They dismiss her as a girl or comment on her looks. They don’t respect her as a person, as being really clever. If an old bloke walks into the boardroom he is seen as wise.*

CW. *People would question how a woman got into that position.*

**Men would question it, or men and women would?**

CW. *I think men.*

JM. *I think both (agreement)*

MK. *especially if she is a good-looking woman.*

MK. *With the transition at the moment it is going to boil down to nature vs. nurture. Women are supposed to be looking after the kids and men are the hunter-gatherers. But society is what builds us, and society is changing. So people are going to argue nature vs. nurture. We are the first ones to go through it, forced upon us, not by choice. The next generation will have the choice. it will start becoming the norm*

JM. *I don’t think it will be the next generation.*

AG. *Yea me too, I think it will take hundreds of years. There will always be people saying its ok but people believe in different things. We might all think one thing and the media tell us what is supposed to be socially acceptable but it depends on what the parents think.*

**Do you think a man parenting alone is viewed differently from a woman doing it?**

JM. *I think he is given a lot more praise.*

MC*. 100% a lot more sympathy and a lot more praise. Women are expected to just get on with it.*

**Do you think the role of father has changed since you were children?**

OW. I don’t think so that much.

MC*. Not maybe not that much, my dad worked but he always did a lot of the cleaning.*

AG. It used to be the women’s job to do the cleaning but now its not. There’s a discussion about it. I do it on my day off and you do it on yours. It’s 50/50. Whoever has the time.

JM*. My mam worked when i was young and my dad stayed at home, that was 25 years ago.*

**How did people see him?**

AG. *I think everyone thought he was a waster.*

**Would people think that now?**

MK. *No, well depends on the person.*

CW. *People would go by the look of him.*

JM. *I still think there is a bit of it though.*

MC. *At the back of peoples mind, people who think they should be at work.*

AG. *People might assume the woman is going out to work and then doing all the work at home too. If he is in the home doing all the child stuff, people would assume he is watching TV all day having a beer.*

MC*. I think it has evened up with man and women cooking and cleaning and stuff but I still think there are women and men’s jobs. Like putting out the bins or doing the washing.*

CW. *I'm used to doing the lot as a lone parent. The cooking, the cleaning, the accountant. You have to.*

**Would a man who decided to be stay at home dad now be viewed differently from someone who decided to do it at the height of the boom?**

JM. *In the height of the boom, yes I think he would. You would think he was a hippy, father earth type. If you wanted a mortgage back then you needed two incomes anyway.*

AG. *I think women don’t think it matters if they earn more money but they still liked to be treated and stuff. If I go out with my partner and keep telling her to get her credit card out at the end, she wouldn’t like it. Like if i wasn’t working how could I get her flowers or take he out and stuff. I can’t do it on her credit card.*

MK. *I don’t think women want the roles to be reversed. I like to be spoilt.*

MC*. I want to be a yummy mummy in the future.*

JM. *I am the breadwinner at the moment and I can’t wait till he finds work. It’s an awful lot of pressure.*

MC. *My partner’s job at the moment means he has to drive all over Ireland. Honestly if I had to do that somebody would be killed. The time I got home I wouldn’t want to look at anyone. I couldn’t do that.*

AG. *I think realistically if a man loses the job and is the one staying at home, he will only see it as temporary deep down. No matter how long it lasts, they will want things to change. That’s the way it is. Doesn’t matter what society says, women are more emotional. They are better with kids. From my own perspective, a woman takes a baby and just knows what to do with it. Whereas I would just feel awkward. Id learn it and but it will never come as easy.*

CW. *I don’t think it is women are better, they just enjoy it more.*

AG. *I think it goes both ways. Because of women’s emotions, they can’t do the same jobs as men. Like Michelle says about the driving, A man just does it and doesn’t think about it.*

JM*. I think though if you were left at home with a baby, you would be tearing you hair out.*

AG. *I agree, what I am trying to say is that women are better with children.*

CW. *I don’t think it matters if you are the man or the woman. If you are stuck at home with the kids, it is hard. You don’t get anything back. I mean mentally, that kind of stimulation. Or just the ability to let your hair down or have a break. You need to be able to recharge your battery’s, to be the best for that child.*

JM. *I don’t know how kids stay at home with 3 or 4 kids.*

AG. *If I was in the situation of having a child I think I would stress it much more than a woman would.*

MC. *Definitely*

AG. *On the other hand if it was a really stressful job, I think I would handle that better than a woman would.*

MC. *yea.*

CW. *I don’t know I think it boils down to personality. Plenty of women would be able for it. I don’t think a man should feel less of a man for staying at home either.*

MC. *yea, definitely not. That is the hardest job there is.*

MK. *women who go out to work and the men who stay at home, it’s the women who have children sympathize with the man. They know what he is going through. Maybe other men don’t, if they don’t realize.*

CW. *That goes the same for women who don’t have kids. They don’t see what’s involved either. I think people are more understanding these days.*

MK. *Most of the people who have committed suicide in this recession have been men.*

MC. *Yea, they feel they can’t provide for their families.*

AG. *That’s because of the testosterone; there is a much higher mental imbalance.*

CW. *Yea and men don’t talk. Suicide has always been higher in men.*

**We have been talking about how it is the man or woman’s responsibility to look after the children, do you think the state should provide a bigger role, like with state run childcare?**

JM. *I think it would be a huge help.*

MK. *I know a lot of them Scandinavian countries are great with childcare. They are amazing.*

JM. *If you had cheep childcare you could work as much as you want. You could go for better roles. Working part time it is very hard to get a decent job.*

MC. *yea and a good paid job. Part-time is always looked as for students.*

CW. *Any couple of with kids or for single parents, their biggest problem is childcare. Everything goes back to childcare.*

MK*. I think it is good for the kids too, like for being social for a young age. Its good for their development. Now people cant afford to put them into childcare.*

MC. *Yea, they are always stuck with their parents or grandparents*.

MK. *If they don’t interact with other kids till primary school they are going to fall behind with some things.*

AG*. I think the main problem is when people have kids young. They aren’t in a job good enough where they can afford childcare.*

MC. *My sister is in a god job and if you look at the hours she works, it barely covers childcare for 2 kids*.

CW. *Its ridiculous here. They’re a lot of lone parents who would love to get out there fending for themselves but the childcare to too dear.*

MC. *In Australia every gym had a crèche so the moms could come in.*

MK. *If the government invested in childcare, they would have more people going out to work; less to pay for social welfare and it would benefit everyone. Sweden has great childcare but there taxes are higher*.

CW. *We’re still paying a lot in tax.*

AG. *Yea, but the thing about Ireland is, there a lot of people getting qualifications and leaving. Doctors can go to Australia and get double. They're [Australia] not paying for any education and getting the benefit*.

**Do you think that we as Irish people would be OK about putting children into childcare early and going off to work, if the childcare was free?**

CW. *I don’t think people should have to, it should be optional.*

JM. *It would bring so many people back into the workforce.*

AG. *If there is change people get annoyed it, people don’t like change.*

1. 273,000 employed in 2007 compared to 103,600 at the end of 2013. A 62% decrease in employment. (Central Statistics Office 2013) (Central Statistics Office 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dublin Metro Herald, 19th November 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Please see page 48 and 53 for copies of the interview schedules. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See page 46 for a copy [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A slang term meaning to ridicule [↑](#footnote-ref-5)