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'Man-covery': recession, labour market, and gender relations in Ireland

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Ireland has recently experienced its worst recession in the post-World War II era. The effects on Ireland's labour market have been stark. This article examines more closely the gender dimensions of the recent recession in Ireland. The evidence suggests that there have been gendered shifts in the labour market. With male-dominated sectors, such as construction and industry, suffering significant decline, men have been increasingly taking up part-time and vulnerable employment, which has led to a certain level of re-structuring and competition within these sectors. In terms of response to the recession, women and men in Ireland have displayed different trends. Among men, the data suggest that there has been largely a discouraged worker effect. For women, however, the response has been much more nuanced. It is older married women who have largely shouldered the burden of recession in Ireland with the strongest evidence of added worker effect among this group.

Keywords

Recession, gender, added worker effect, discouraged worker effect

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Introduction

Ireland experienced a period of extraordinary and sustained growth from 1994 through the early years of the twenty-first century, a boom that solidified Ireland's reputation as the *Celtic Tiger*¹. However, in 2008, the Irish economy went into crisis, triggered by the global financial crisis. While multiple factors fuelled the crisis globally, in Ireland the trigger was the bursting of the property bubble, which caused the main Irish banks to go bankrupt, generating a national fiscal crisis (McGinnity and Russell 2011). The consequences of the crisis on Ireland's labour market have been stark, with the overall unemployment rate increasing from 4.4 per cent in 2006 to 14.7 per cent in 2012 (Kelly and McGuinness 2013).

Ireland's recent recession is different from its previous one in the 1980s, in one fundamental way – the changing position of women in the labour market. Female employment rates have risen dramatically, in line with trends across most EU states from the 1990s (Maier 2011). In Ireland, the Celtic Tiger era was a mixed blessing – on the one hand, women had greater access to tertiary education, experienced dramatic growth in female employment, and were involved in diverse occupations, while on the other hand, women continued to be marginalized in politics, with less than 15 per cent of elected representatives being women (McGing 2011). Female employment in Ireland more than doubled during the boom. Women's share of total employment increased steadily, from just below 37 per cent in 1993 to almost 46 per cent in 2009 (McGinnity and Russell 2011). These changes meant that women were now making greater contributions to family income than ever before (Brewer and Wrenn-Lewis 2011; Harkness 2010).

At the same time, gender pay gaps continued to persist and inequality, both in terms of income and basic wellbeing, continued to worsen. Women, particularly those who were lone parents or had a disability or were older, were at an increased risk of poverty. Thus, throughout the boom period, there was an underlying tension regarding the extent and pace at which patriarchal norms were being shifted. The gender script that shaped social policy was still that of the good woman who should be a wife and mother above all and, yet, is a willing, productive economic agent managing the 'double burden' with no demands of support.

However, the unique circumstances of the recent recession suggest that gender relations may be shifting both within the labour market and the home. More specifically, these trends suggest that the long-held labour market advantages of men over women are declining, and women are becoming increasingly responsible for provision of household income (Boushey 2009).

¹ The term *Celtic Tiger* has been used to refer both to the years associated with the boom in Ireland, and also to the country itself.

Against this background the aim of this article is to explore and outline how the crisis has affected gender relations within the labour market in Ireland. Furthermore, it will discuss the possible consequences of shifting gender relations in the labour market for gender relations within the household. In other words, it will address the following question: has the recession resulted in a challenge of previous gender scripts which served to disadvantage women in terms of economic and overall well-being?

Employment trends across recession in Ireland

Evidence from previous crises suggests that labour market effects may differ by gender (Rubery 1988). The latest global recession has been no exception with notable differences in its effects by gender (Hoynes et al. 2011). The recent recession has been referred to as a 'man-cession', given the common perception that men were more adversely affected during the downturn due to the large decline in industries that are largely male dominated (Cho and Newhouse 2013; Pissarides 2013; Sierminska and Takhtamanova 2011). Indeed, this has been the case in Ireland where a large proportion of men (one in five) were employed in the construction sector prior to the recession. However, employment in construction declined by 21 per cent between 2004 and 2009. Reflecting this decline, the fourth quarter of 2008 saw the number of female employees² in the Irish labour market exceed that of male employees for the first time (Russell and McGinnity 2011). Thus, women were initially perceived as having been somewhat protected from the consequences of recession both in Ireland and beyond.

While it is clear that the immediate labour market effects of the recent recession were largely felt by men, consideration of the longer term impacts paints a different picture. The repercussions of a given recession may remain long after the recovery process has begun. There is emerging evidence of a stalled female recovery. This certainly seems to be the case within the United States and United Kingdom. The media in the United States has begun to refer to the recovery as the 'man-covery', whereby labour market statistics show that women's unemployment rate continues to grow whilst men's unemployment rate is declining (Samuels 2013; Kasperkevic 2013). In the United Kingdom, Rubery and Rafferty (2013) reported that from 2009 to 2010 women began to lose jobs in both the private and the public sector once the protective role of the public sector began to decline.

So, what explains these vastly different trends for female employment versus male employment? In a seminal discussion of the impact of a recession on female employment, Jill Rubery (1988) outlines three possible labour market outcomes for female employment:

- (a) Women are protected from recessionary impacts as women are concentrated in sectors (such as education and health), which are more immune to cyclical factors. Gender segregation is a common feature of all

² Looking only at employees (i.e. excluding self-employed persons).

labour markets, with men and women's likelihood of being employed varying according to occupation and workplace.

- (b) Sharp decreases occur in female employment as female labour functions as 'reserve' labour to be absorbed or expelled with boom and bust (i.e. the buffer hypothesis). This means that women are concentrated in numerically flexible, labour intensive jobs and therefore can be let go or taken on as employers adjust labour input according to variations in demand.
- (c) Job segregation may undergo change whereby crisis-hit employers will seek to substitute a high-cost workforce for one of a lower cost. The result may be a preference for hiring women over men, even in sectors traditionally regarded as 'male' (i.e. substitution hypothesis).

In a review of research on previous recessions Rubery and Rafferty (2013) conclude that depending on the context, women may take on all three roles; that of buffer, the provision of protected services, and entering new jobs that provide direct or indirect substitutes. This may provide an explanation for the contradictory trends found as a recession unfolds.

There are other equally important trends that influence the impact on female employment apart from the structure of the labour market. Firstly, labour market contexts are strongly influenced by prevailing gender norms (Barry and Sherlock 2008). Therefore, any examination of women's labour supply must place women's decisions within the broad institutional and cultural context in which they are made. Ireland is typically regarded as a patriarchal state, with prevailing patriarchal norms having been produced and perpetuated by the Catholic Church, the state, the economic structure, and the social and cultural construction of heterosexuality (O'Connor 1999; Mahon 1994). Traditionally, state-imposed rules, such as the marriage bar³, have served to re-enforce gender norms, which place men in the role of primary breadwinner and women in that of household production and re-production. Whilst more recently we have witnessed a shift in policy to a model that supports the *adult worker family*, with both men and women expected to be in employment (Lewis 2001), some commentators highlight tensions in Irish Government policy. More specifically, labour-market policy strives to promote increasing labour force participation of women; however, at the foundation of health/welfare policy lies the assumption that there is one unpaid, female adult in the home who does the care work (O'Hagan 2005; Cullen et al. 2004). In other words, women are still seen as society's carers. The effects of these dominant norms are reflected in recent research by the National Women's Council who found that women were responsible for 86 per cent of child supervision over the course of a week, as well

³ *Marriage bar* refers to the policy that was in place in Ireland up until 1974, which stated that women working in the public sector had to resign from their jobs upon marriage. The private sector adopted a similar practice, albeit informally.

as 82 per cent of care to adults (National Women's Council of Ireland 2009). This role is reinforced by public policy which creates a bias towards women adopting caring roles. For example, child benefit is paid to mothers and lengthy parental leave is only optional for mothers. Thus, it appears that male-breadwinner ideology continues to influence public policy in Ireland today.

The patriarchal context has important implications for how we understand the gendered effects of recession on employment in Ireland. Indeed, women are influenced by these prevailing patriarchal norms that place caring responsibilities upon women and often fail to provide adequate supports for working parents⁴. Even when women are in paid employment, the work of caring for children and older people, as well as running the home, typically falls to women (McGinnity and Russell 2008). As such, women's patterns of labour market participation are both produced by, and produce, unequal workloads (Barry and Sherlock 2008). Further, Seguino (2009) argues that gender norms and a traditional male-breadwinner ideology can make women more expendable in the labour market. Her argument is that, in some contexts, men are regarded as being legitimate job-holders and as a result, women are made redundant ahead of men in periods of contraction. Another important mechanism influencing the impact of recession on female labour supply relates to pressure on government to reduce budget deficits (Seguino 2009; Floro, Tornqvist, and Tas 2009). Growing unemployment and declining consumer demand inevitably result in declining revenue. Declining revenue and rising budget deficits in recession can lead to a decline in public sector employment, which is typically female dominated, as governments slash expenditure in attempts to reduce the deficit (Seguino 2009).

This leads us to question the effect of Ireland's programme of austerity on women's ability to make decisions around their labour supply. Beginning in 2008 (but largely taking effect from 2009), the Irish Government undertook a huge programme of austerity. This programme has included a combination of expenditure cuts and tax hikes for the purpose of relieving the national deficit. These expenditure cuts have been targeted towards benefits and services that women disproportionately rely upon. For example, the public sector within which women are largely concentrated, has been subject to pay cuts across the board. This has coincided with the introduction of the Universal Social Charge – a tax of between two and seven per cent on all income. Cumulative budget cuts to widow's pension, one-parent family payment, carer's allowance, maternity benefit, and child benefit also serve to drive down women's income. Cronin (2012:31) is particularly critical of the government's attack on working-class women, lone parents in particular, whom she asserts are portrayed as 'greedy conniving dole cheat[s] raking in hundreds of thousands to fund [their] "welfare queen" existence'. She argues that despite the fact that lone parents have the lowest level of income in Ireland, successive budgets have curtailed the services

⁴ Childcare costs in Ireland are amongst the highest in Europe, however the state does not provide direct provision to families for childcare – it is not seen as the government's role – rather, they provide indirect support in the form of grants to encourage private sector and community provision (McGinnity and Russell 2008).

and benefits on which lone parents rely (e.g. fuel allowance, back-to-school clothing and footwear allowance cuts). Indeed poverty rates generally have been on the rise over the course of the recession (CSO 2013). For women, this means that the burden of care will intensify as government expenditure continue to be cut. This picture suggests that women have largely been weathering the blow of austerity in Ireland.

Gender, recession, and labour market outcomes

Over the period of recession in Ireland there has been a significant shift in the employment rates of women and men. The gender gaps in employment/unemployment have narrowed due to a levelling downwards of male employment and increasing male unemployment rates (Russell et al. 2014). The trends in the Irish labour market are consistent with those emerging in the United States and the United Kingdom, in terms of a 'man-cession' and 'man-recovery'. The recession led to declining employment for both men and women; however, the extent of the decline in female employment is significantly slower and lower (see figure 1). Initially, from the fourth quarter of 2007 through to the second quarter of 2008, female employment actually increased whereas men's employment began a steady decline that gained rapid momentum with a steep decline of 7.5 per cent from the fourth quarter of 2008 to the second quarter of 2009. For women, however, the decline in employment did not extend beyond 2.5 per cent, even as the recession spread across the economy in 2009. Furthermore, whilst men's employment decreased more dramatically during the recession, the most recent employment patterns demonstrate that men are benefitting more from recovery with sharp increases in employment to be seen in 2012 and 2013. Conversely, women's employment is increasing at a much slower pace over the same period. This is consistent with the theory that a 'man-recovery' is underway whereby men are experiencing more benefits of recovery than women. These figures lend support to the hypothesis that whilst women were initially sheltered from the effects of the recession due to job segregation (Rubery 1988), the longer-term effects of spending cuts in industries within which women are highly concentrated such as health, social services, and education, could mean slower recovery for women (Seguino 2009).

Figure 1: Change in employment

Figures based on Central Statistics Office data

Given that job segregation has such an important role to play in determining gendered labour market outcomes during recession, we are prompted to look at how various sectors have been hit by the recent recession. The hardest hit industries in the recession include: construction, industry, motor trade, public administration, defence and compulsory social security, finance, insurance, and real estate, and administrative and support services activities⁵. Many of these sectors, including construction, industry, and motor trade, were male dominated and signs of recovery are slow. Other sectors, including accommodation and food service activities, and professional, scientific, and technical activities, also suffered considerable decline in the early stages of the recession. However, both of these sectors have reached recovery, with the accommodation sector having recovered to a level higher than the pre-crisis peak. This is likely to be related to the reduced rate of VAT implemented by the government for tourism and hospitality related sectors.

An analysis of changes occurring within sectors implies that the recession has led to the gendered restructuring of some sectors. Examining the changes in the female share of employment sector-wise from the beginning of the crisis through to recovery, suggests there was some degree of preference for women in male-dominated sectors, such as industry or transport and storage, where the sex ratio⁶ increased over the period. This change could reflect a preference for

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ A sex ratio refers to the relative numbers of men and women in a given population. Each figure listed in the sex ratio table in appendix 1 represents the number of women per 100 men in each sector within the labour market.

women because of their flexibility and lower cost as employers, adjusted to declining or uncertain demand during the recession (i.e. substitution hypothesis). On the whole, women continued to outnumber men in female sectors, such as education and health across the crisis and into recovery, with only slight narrowing in gender gaps. The two sectors of most interest, however, are the accommodations and food services activity sector and the financial, insurance, and real estate services sector. In the previously strongly female-dominated accommodation and food services activity sector, there has emerged a preference for hiring men, with the sex ratio decreasing considerably over the period⁷. This reflects the shift that is taking place whereby men are moving into these more vulnerable and part-time oriented sectors in the absence of employment in traditionally male-dominated sectors. This creates competition between the genders within this sector. A second point of interest from a gender perspective is what has happened in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector over the course of the crisis, the very sectors that were closely involved in the origin of the crisis. There was a clear preference for men in this sector which saw a considerable fall in the sex ratio from 142 in 2007 to 114 in 2009 as the crisis took hold. So, at the time the country was reeling from the impact of risky financial transactions by male leaders, male employment in this sector actually increased. What these findings demonstrate is that 'man-covey' is very much underway, even in sectors where women appear to hold an advantage over men in terms of their majority status. This highlights that recession can serve to make gender inequalities even more pronounced as gender disparities in persons losing jobs or being hired becomes wider. Thus, this provides support for the theory that recession may actually serve to reverse gender equality gains made during the boom (Antonopoulos 2009).

Related to these sectoral changes, the recession appears to have resulted in a change in the nature of employment status overall. Full-time employment has declined overall, whilst part-time employment has been rising. What has this meant for gender relations within the labour market? Women historically are seen as a source of flexible labour with a preference for part-time work, which allows them to balance the burden of care work with market activity. Therefore, part-time or vulnerable work has traditionally been the preserve of women. During a crisis, the expectation is that female part-time work will increase as full-time options contract. In this particular recession, the trend in part-time employment does not follow this expected pattern. Men's part-time employment has risen systematically across the recession and into recovery, doubling from the first quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2013. Women's part-time employment, on the other hand, reached its peak early in 2011 (in the same quarter at which their full-time employment was at its lowest)⁸. Further, the rise in women's part-time employment from trough to peak was much less dramatic than that of men, with an increase of less than one fifth. Reflecting these changes, the gender gap in men and women's part-time employment has narrowed. As part-time employment increased across the recession and into recovery, the sex

⁷ See appendix 1.

⁸ See appendix 3.

ratios demonstrate that there has been a preference for hiring men (with the sex ratio decreasing from 347 in the fourth quarter of 2007 to 211 in the fourth quarter of 2013). This reinforces the assertion that a man-covery is underway. In sectors where women previously held an advantage, there is increasing competition from men for employment.

A key feature of the recent recession has been the rising long-term unemployment rate. The long-term unemployment rate climbed from 1.4 per cent prior to the recession in 2007, to a peak of 9.5 per cent in 2012. At its peak in 2012, males accounted for 73 per cent of LTU and females accounted for 27 per cent (Kelly and McGuinness 2013). As with the unemployment rate, the recovery has seen a reduction in the overall long-term unemployment rate (7.6 per cent in 2013) (Kelly and McGuinness 2013). However, further examination of the long-term unemployment rate highlights that despite the reported reduction in long-term unemployment in Ireland, women remain vulnerable to becoming long-term unemployed. Whilst men's long-term unemployment rate has been in decline since 2011, women's long-term unemployment rate has risen most recently (see figure 2). This is further evidence of women's more vulnerable position in recovery, as argued by Seguino (2009).

Figure 2: Long-term unemployment by sex

Figures based on Central Statistics Office data

The recession has led to a shift in employment patterns for both men and women. Whilst the initial effects of the recession were much more pronounced for men, the pace of men's recovery has also been significantly faster than that of women. Men are now entering sectors that were previously largely female dominated in large numbers. The opposite has only been true for a small

proportion of women where their share of employment has increased slightly in construction and industry. Reflecting on these changes at the macro level, the next section explores how they translate into effects at the household level.

Effects of recession on households

The macro level changes in labour market trends are likely to have considerable knock-on effects at the micro level of the household. For instance, reduced employment rates will have led to household income shocks for many families. Equally, austerity measures and policy changes are likely to increase financial pressure as well as constrain choices around employment for certain families. This prompts us to explore how households have negotiated these changes caused by recession. This is an important exercise according to Starr (2013), as an understanding of the effects of recession on intra-household labour supply is vital for both improving how we conceptualize household behaviour, accounting for fluctuations in the economy, and for formulating effective policies that protect household members against economic hardships.

The effects of the recession are likely to differ across different household structures. The data on male and female unemployment across different family formations indicates that married men with children had the highest unemployment rate. This was followed by lone-parent families headed by women (see table 1). Indeed the unemployment rates of lone mothers were considerably higher than that of married men with no children. This suggests that it was not only a 'man-cession' that was happening in Ireland most recently, but a recession that was also adversely impacting lone parents. The reality of these figures is compounded hardship for lone parents in Ireland, of which a disproportionate amount are women. They are the group least able to absorb the burden of austerity due to these low-income levels and constrained choices around labour supply (TASC 2012). Despite this, they have been among the hardest hit groups by recent budgets (Cronin 2012). This, combined with the rise in their unemployment rates, have made it increasingly difficult for lone parents to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Reflecting this, lone parents are the group most at risk of poverty in Ireland (EU-SILC 2012).

Table 1. Unemployment by sex and household composition

	Q4 07	Q4 08	Q4 09	Q4 10	Q4 11	Q4 12	Q4 13
Married male/no children	2.1%	3.2%	6.4%	6.5%	5.8%	5.1%	5.2%
Married female/no children	1.3%	1.9%	3.1%	3.6%	3.2%	3.4%	2.9%
Married male/with children	3.0%	6.0%	10.8%	12.1%	11.9%	11.6%	8.5%
Married female/with children	1.6%	2.4%	3.7%	4.7%	5.3%	5.4%	5.0%
Lone mother	3.9%	4.0%	6.4%	7.9%	9.8%	9.5%	8.4%

Figures based on Central Statistics Office data

Household responses to recession

How do we make sense of these diverse employment and unemployment trends for women and men in Ireland over the period of the crisis? Economic theory provides a basic model of family labour supply decisions (Ashenfelter and Heckman 1974). According to this model, recession may result in an *added worker effect* and/or a *discouraged worker effect* (Lundberg 1985).

The added worker effect refers to a situation in which married women currently not in the labour market enter it and those already in the labour market increase their labour supply in response to their husband's job loss, coupled with an inability to borrow against future earnings (Starr 2013; Mattingly and Smith 2010). This labour supply response is a method of smoothing a family's income or consumption. The wife's labour supply is only one of several ways to smooth the family's consumption in a period of hardship (e.g., there is the option of borrowing or a more intensive job search by the husband (Lundberg 1985)).

The discouraged worker effect hypothesis, then, assumes that workers cease their search for employment during recession as they perceive jobs to be unavailable and therefore withdraw from the labour force (Baslevant and Onaran 2003; Benati 2001). For women, a discouraged worker effect or a decline in women's participation could occur because the opportunity cost of working for women rises with wage gap, discrimination in benefits, and social costs of childcare, as well as employers' perceptions of women workers as unreliable, unavailable, and requiring additional costs. The presence of a discouraged worker effect is significant for policy makers and academics alike as it means there is a likely substantial undercount of the unemployed due to individuals' withdrawal from the labour force (Schweitzer and Smith 1974).

Both the added worker effect and the discouraged worker effect can exist concurrently. Indeed in the Irish labour market, there appears to be a mix of the two.

The labour force participation data imply that there may be the presence of a discouraged worker effect for men, in general, whereby their attachment to the labour market decreased. Married men were less likely than their single, widowed, and separated counterparts to withdraw from the labour force. This may be due to the fact that married men are more likely to have a commitment to support dependent children or spouses and are therefore less likely to retreat from the labour force in times of recession. On the other hand, there was an increase in the number of married women participating in the labour force as the crisis took hold, particularly in 2007 and 2008, indicating that there may be the presence of an added worker effect for married women. Importantly, married women are the only group to have increased their labour supply across the period of the recession. For single women, there was a considerable reduction in participation rates (5.7 percentage points) whilst for both widowed and separated women, participation rates remained relatively stable, with only marginal fluctuations overall⁹. This is indicative of the presence of an added worker effect for married women in Ireland over the period of the recession.

Similarly, if we consider participation rates broken down by age group we see a largely downward trend in men's participation rates from the beginning of the crisis in quarter four 2007 through to quarter four 2012¹⁰. The magnitude of this effect varies according to age with the youngest (20–24 years) and oldest (60–64 years) groups showing the largest preference for withdrawal from the labour force. For women, the trends are much more nuanced whereby labour force participation rates remain relatively stable for midlife women, in general. At the same time, labour force participation becomes considerably less likely for young women (20–24 years) and increasingly likely for older women (55–59 years).

These varying trends across women of different age groups prompt us to look more closely at married women, in particular, to examine whether they may reflect an added worker effect at play. One hypothesis is that the magnitude of added worker effects is likely to be strong for younger married women than midlife or older married women. The idea is that the younger the couple, the less likely they are to have assets to draw upon to smooth consumption upon experiencing an income shock. Thus, younger women are more likely to have to resort to increasing their labour supply in order to smooth consumption during a crisis (Starr 2013). However, the opposite trend has occurred. Certainly every age group has seen an increase in labour force participation across the crisis, however the 55–59 year age group had the sharpest increase at 13.2 percentage points from quarter four 2006 to quarter four 2013 (see table 2).

⁹ See appendix 2.

¹⁰ See appendix 2.

Table 2. Married women's ILO participation rates by age group

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q4
25–34 years	70.4	71.1	70.3	72.8	72.5	73	74.2	73.8
35–44 years	64.6	66.4	68.1	66.7	67.1	68.3	69.4	72.9
45–54 years	63.5	66.1	65.7	66.2	66.2	66.6	65.4	66.4
55–59 years	45.6	46.7	51	50.9	52.4	56.2	55.8	58.8
60–64 years	27.6	32.2	30	29	31.6	31.7	33.9	35.4

Figures based on Central Statics Office data

Some researchers have found that added worker effects are stronger among women with children than among those without children (Starr 2013; Duflo and Udry 2004; Bettio et al. 2012). This is because women's labour supply is thought to be sensitive to the need to support the material living standards of their children. In the first half of the recession,¹ women with older children have been found to be more likely than women with younger children to increase their labour supply. This has been attributed to the reduced opportunity cost of working when children are older as childcare expenses are lower (Berik and Kongar 2013; Mattingly and Smith 2010). The Irish data show that women with young children were increasingly likely to be outside the labour force as the recession deepened from 2007 through to 2010. The same trend can also be seen among lone parents, with a sharp increase of 18 per cent to be seen among those with children below 15. These findings must be interpreted in light of the reduced supports for women with children due to austerity. On the other hand, the number of women with children over 15 and outside the labour force in fact declines by around nine per cent over the same period.

According to Berik and Kongar (2013) a consequence of the recent recession should be that as more women increase their paid working time and more men reduce their paid working time, men will increase their involvement in the care work and unpaid labour that women gave up in order to take on paid work. Over the course of the recession there has been a reduction in the number of women who cite their principal economic status (PES) as being engaged in home duties, while there has been an increase in the number of males citing their PES as engaged in home duties. However, on closer inspection, it would appear that relative to the changes in men and women's employment status generally, the increase in the proportion of men citing 'engaged in home duties' as their PES is almost negligible. This would suggest that whilst small gains are being made in terms of shift in gender roles within the home at a very small scale, these changes are not reflective of the concurrent changes which have taken place in the public

sphere of employment. One reason for this may be the context within which these changes have taken place. Women have gained increased bargaining power through their entry into the workforce in a time of stagnant or declining wages. This is likely to constrain women's bargaining ability.

Added/discouraged worker effects: what are the implications?

An added worker effect essentially means that women are shouldering the burden of their family's income shock in an effort to maintain their standard of living. In other words, women's labour supply is being used as a coping mechanism for many families. Whilst in some circumstances this could serve to promote gender equality within the home through improving women's access to bargaining power within the household, initial analysis suggests this is not the case in the Irish context. Gender norms around care and unpaid household work persist. Thus, at the same time as women in Ireland are increasingly taking on the role of primary breadwinner, they have been expected to pick up the pieces as the state has proceeded to relinquish its responsibility for those in need of care. The result is that many women are likely to find themselves doing 'double-duty'; being responsible both for earning the household crust and for running the household concurrently.

Worryingly, the policy response to recession has served to place further obstacles in the way of these women who have shouldered the burden of recession. Measures in place to facilitate women's labour market participation, such as child benefit and maternity benefit, have been cut. Further, the public sector, dominated by women, has been subject to pay decreases along with universal tax hikes (USC). Thus, it would appear that austerity has served to disproportionately exacerbate women's hardship as they try to negotiate the challenges posed to their households by the economic downturn. Cronin (2012:33) echoed this sentiment when she stated that women 'have been on the front line to the suffering'.

The presence of a discouraged worker effect also has significant consequences for how we understand the effects of the recession on gender equality in Ireland. This relates to the fact that unemployment rates alone are thought to underestimate the true impact of the recession, due in part to discouraged worker effects. Discouraged workers who perceive there to be a lack of employment opportunities often remove themselves from the labour market entirely and so are discounted in unemployment statistics. Therefore, the statistics often disguise feminized patterns of behaviour shaped by national rules and norms around labour market activity, as well as the constrained labour supply decisions women face (Maier 2011). This can be the case for women who, due to employment loss and benefit cuts, find that the opportunity cost of working outweighs that of not working. However, this underestimation is true for men also, many of whom have chosen to emigrate in order to attain employment. The recession in Ireland resulted in a surge of outward migrations which also served to maintain lower unemployment rates, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2012). Confirming these effects, the IMF in 2012 reported

that had all employees who lost their jobs since the beginning of the crisis remained in the labour force, the unemployment rate would have been approximately 20 per cent (rather than 14.8 per cent). Furthermore, the media documented a surge in what have been termed *extreme commuters*. This term was used to describe the growing number of workers who commuted to the United Kingdom during the recession to work. However, as noted by Gilmartin (2012) records of Irish nationals migrating to the United Kingdom are limited, as they do not include people who maintain a residence in Ireland but commute for the purpose of work. We cannot, therefore, get a true measure of the impact of the recession on gender equality by examining employment/unemployment rates alone.

Conclusion

First of all, it is clear that the recession has led to shifts in the labour market. Previously male-dominated sectors, such as construction and manufacturing (i.e. broadly classify as industry), have taken large hits and are failing to enter recovery. Due to this, men are now increasingly taking up part-time and vulnerable work, which has led to a certain level of re-structuring within sectors and closing gender gaps to the disadvantage of women. The playing field is becoming more even in the context of deteriorating employment conditions overall and where job growth is occurring, competition is taking place.

The evidence shows that the Irish crisis has had a severe impact on the working lives of women and men. Men were hit harder than women in terms of loss of employment across the period. The broad patterns for men demonstrate the general response to recession was to withdraw from the labour force – with outward migration and re-training of men previously specializing in construction likely to account for these trends. For men remaining in the labour market, whilst the initial blow of recession was considerable, male employment overall appears to be benefitting swiftly from the recovery. This is probably due, in part, to the fact that export-oriented, male-dominated industries including information and communication, professional, scientific, and technical activities are recovering faster than other sectors (O'Farrell 2014). However, another reason for the male recovery has been the growing preference for hiring men in sectors that would have been previously female dominated (i.e. finance and accommodation sectors). The accommodation and food services activities sector has experienced significant growth, reaching employment levels above the pre-crisis peak. This has created competition between men and women, with increasing numbers of men entering this sector as it began to recover. Thus, the 'man-covery' is sector wide.

Women's experience of recession has been more nuanced. The process of recovery has been much slower. Further the actual effects of recession on women's labour market experiences have varied considerably according to factors such as age, marital status, and so on. Lone mothers experienced high rates of unemployment over the period of the crisis which implies that Ireland experienced not only a 'man-cession' but a 'lone-parent-cession' also. Added

worker effects were found to exist among married women of all ages, though the magnitudes varied. This demonstrates that married women took on the burden of recession as men, who took the blow in the initial stages, became discouraged. The literature suggests that the presence of added worker effects can reduce gender inequalities overall through leading to gains in women's ability to generate income, human capital, and, in turn, bargaining power. However, the context of austerity, which has served to disproportionately disadvantage women, has actually led to a reversal of gender equality gains previously made in Ireland. Indeed public policies that have previously served to ease work-family conflicts for women are now exacerbating such dilemmas through reducing benefits and services available to women that facilitate their participation into the workforce. Such policies are typically based on an outdated set of patriarchal assumptions about how families live and work. The result is that women's unpaid labour is now central to Ireland's recovery and, as such, women are likely to find themselves increasingly involved in double-duty work.

The most significant finding relating to the presence of the added worker effect is that it is strongest among women in the 55–59 year age category. This is somewhat surprising as this age group should be more likely than the younger age groups to have assets or savings to draw upon against household income shocks. We posit that this may be due to two factors. Firstly, as with the other age groups, it may be a response to declining income security for both the household and their own future. Women certainly have less access to pensions (both occupational and personal pension plans) and, as such, for some women their main strategy for provision in later life is to continue working as long as possible (Duvvury et al. 2012). Another possible explanation for the stronger added worker effect among the 55–59 year age group is that of intergenerational transfers. Indeed, research shows that the recent recession in Ireland has been characterized by increasing financial and material transfers from older adults to their children. Older people in Ireland have, in many cases, shouldered the financial burden of recession for their children and/or grandchildren who have been hit hard in terms of loss of employment, austerity, and decline in value of assets such as houses (Scharf et al. 2013; Walsh et al. 2012). The findings here suggest that it is older women, in particular, who are creating the means to support the younger generations through increasing their own labour supply. This is contrary to the portrayal of intergenerational warfare which has been depicted in the media, suggesting that younger generations are being disproportionately affected by the recession, whilst the older generation are merely onlookers, unaffected by austerity and falling employment. Rather, our findings suggest that it is older women workers who are the unsung heroes of the recession in Ireland, shouldering a large part of the burden, both for their own generation and the younger generations.

A concluding thought on the initial analysis of the situation in Ireland is that Maier (2011) was correct in suggesting that the idea that the actual decrease in male employment will lead to a dramatic change in gender relations and a re-balancing of economic and social power so that women will be 'winners' of the recession and men losers is somewhat naive. Women have not been winners of

this recession thus far. Rather, they have shouldered a considerable burden with the crisis accentuating the underlying gender norms that shape the course of women's experience in the labour market and in doing so reinforcing the economic insecurity of women.

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Résumé

Récemment, l'Irlande a connu la plus mauvaise récession depuis la deuxième guerre mondiale. Les effets sur le marché du travail irlandais en ont été très durs. Cet article examine de plus près les aspects de la récession récente en Irlande du point de vue genre. Des études prouvent qu'il y a eu des changements au niveau de genre dans le marché du travail. A cause du déclin important subi par les secteurs dominés par les hommes comme la construction et l'industrie, ceux-

ci ont commencé à travailler de plus en plus à temps partiel et à prendre des postes sensibles, ce qui a conduit à un certain niveau de restructuration et de concurrence entre secteurs. En termes de réponse à la récession, femmes et hommes en Irlande ont montré des tendances différentes. Pour les hommes, les données indiquent qu'il y a eu un effet largement répandu de *decouragement de travail*. Pour les femmes en revanche, la réponse a été beaucoup plus nuancée. Ce sont les femmes mariées et plus âgées qui ont le plus souffert du poids de la récession en Irlande et présentent l'indication la plus forte d'un de surcharge de travail dans ce groupe.

Resumen

Recientemente Irlanda ha sufrido la peor recesión desde la era de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Los efectos en el mercado laboral Irlandés han sido muy duros. Este artículo examina de cerca las dimensiones de género de la última recesión en Irlanda. La evidencia sugiere que ha habido algunos cambios de género en el mercado laboral. Con sectores dominados por varones como la construcción y la industria, que están sufriendo un considerable debacle, los varones cada vez más toman parte en trabajos a medio tiempo y en condiciones vulnerables, lo que ha ocasionado un cierto nivel de re estructuración y competitividad en estos sectores. Desde el punto de vista de la reacción a la recesión, mujeres y varones han mostrado tendencias diferentes. Entre varones los datos sugieren un efecto de desánimo en el trabajo. Sin embargo para mujeres la reacción ha sido más sutil. Para las mujeres, sin embargo, las respuestas han sido mucho más mixtas. Son las mujeres mayores y casadas quienes han sufrido más debido a la recesión en Irlanda, con la evidencia más fuerte de efecto laboral adicional entre este grupo.

Appendix 1.

	Total Population				Sex Ratio			
	2007Q4	2009Q4	2013Q4	% Change 07/09	% Change 07/13	2007Q4	2009Q4	2013Q4
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	114.3	89.6	116.8	-22%	2%	12	10	15
Total Industry (B to F)	551.6	390.6	347.2	-29%	-37%	20	26	28
Industry (B to E)	285.4	251.6	243.6	-12%	-15%	37	38	39
Construction (F)	266.2	138.9	103.6	-48%	-61%	5	8	8
Services (G to U)	1482.9	1434.1	1444.6	-3%	-3%	126	125	117
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	316.8	273.8	270.4	-14%	-15%	102	106	96
Transportation and storage (H)	98	94.7	89.6	-3%	-9%	22	23	23
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	132.2	127.1	135.7	-4%	3%	144	118	104
Information and communication (J)	70.7	73.9	82.5	5%	17%	43	44	37
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	105.4	107.3	97.1	2%	-8%	142	114	114
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	114.6	104.6	115.2	-9%	1%	74	67	70
Administrative and support service activities (N)	81.5	64.5	64.5	-21%	-21%	99	108	91
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	104.5	106.8	95	2%	-9%	100	97	95
Education (P)	141.5	148.4	146.9	5%	4%	277	278	258
Human health and social work activities (Q)	222.1	236.1	249.6	6%	12%	477	447	406
Other NACE activities (R to U)	95.5	96.9	98	1%	3%	171	159	142

Appendix 2.

			2007Q 4	2008Q 4	2009Q 4	2010Q 4	2011Q 4	2012Q 4
Labour Force Participation (%)	Male	20–24 years	81.1	77	71.7	66.8	68.5	65
		25–34 years	92.6	92	90.5	89	89.4	88.3
		35–44 years	92.5	92.3	91	91	91.3	90.6
		45–54 years	89.3	89.6	87	86.7	86.1	87.3
		55–59 years	76.8	77.5	73.1	74.9	74.6	74.7
		60–64 years	60	59.7	55.6	54.4	54.5	54.6
	Female	20–24 years	71.4	68	67.7	64.7	61.5	59.5
		25–34 years	77.4	77.3	77.3	77	76.9	77.4
		35–44 years	69	70.1	68.6	68	70.2	70.1
		45–54 years	67.6	67.5	67.8	67.6	66.7	66.9
		55–59 years	48.1	52.1	52.6	53.7	57.1	56.4
		60–64 years	33.3	30.7	31.2	32.7	33.1	34
Principal Economic Status (000's)	Male	At work	1189	1127.9	1004.3	963.3	963.4	960
		Unemployed	90.9	152.8	254.4	267.8	266.3	252.3
		Student	170.9	184.2	189.9	204.5	191.6	208
		Engaged in home duties	7.4	7.2	7.4	7.8	8.4	8.3
		Retired from employment	219.1	223.8	236.4	241.6	247.6	251.7
		Other	81.3	80.5	82.9	86.3	88.4	82.4
	Female	At work	884.2	886.1	855	831.2	830.5	828
		Unemployed	35	53.4	92.5	99.3	106.1	105.4
		Student	200	201.9	190.5	196	195.9	205.1
		Engaged in home duties	527.4	537.9	540.1	536.8	521.5	491.2
		Retired from employment	86.9	85.5	91.6	104.7	114.5	140.3
		Other	51.6	47.8	54.4	59.6	60.5	63.9
Employment Type (000's)	Male	In employment	1,221.8	1,158.5	1,034.3	994.1	987.3	988.0
		Full-time	1,134.3	1,062.7	911.8	869.0	853.6	845.7
		Part-time	87.5	95.9	122.5	125.1	133.7	142.3
	Female	In employment	934.2	924.9	887.2	863.2	860.4	860.9
		Full-time	631.0	619.8	578.9	553.9	557.8	553.0
		Part-time	303.2	305.1	308.2	309.3	302.6	307.9

Appendix 3: Peak to trough changes in ILO economic status

ILO Economic Status	Q 1 07	Q 2 07	Q 3 07	Q 4 07	Q 1 08	Q 2 08	Q 3 08	Q 4 08	Q 1 09	Q 2 09	Q 3 09	Q 4 09	Q 1 10	Q 2 10	Q 3 10	Q 4 10	Q 1 11	Q 2 11	Q 3 11	Q 4 11	Q 1 12	Q 2 12	Q 3 12	Q 4 12	Q 1 13	Q 2 13	Q 3 13	Q 4 13
Males																												
In labour force			P																						T			
In employment			P																		T							
Full-time			P																			T						
Part-time	T																					T						P
Females																												
In labour force	T						P																					
In employment						P															T							
Full-time							P										T											
Part-time	T																P											

Note: P = Peak and T=Trough