Older Men's Lives –

A Qualitative Study

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in consideration of any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations.

Signed …………………………. (Candidate)

Date …………………………….

Abstract

This study explores the experiences of older single men living alone and in poverty in a post-Celtic Tiger society. It traces the lives and living environment of twelve older men many of whom were born around the foundation of the State. It examines the life course events which influenced these older men's present living circumstances in an attempt to answer the question did these older men benefit from a good quality of life as envisaged by the founders of The Republic of Ireland, and if not why not. Through semi-structured qualitative 'conversational' style interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 1995), the older men recall aspects of their lives and events which they found to be important.

The study illustrates the difficult and harsh times these men, their exiled siblings and parents lived through. It is perhaps timely to have the benefit of the insights of these older men who lived through some of the world's harshest economic periods, just as we face into a decade of enormous fiscal and social challenges due to the current domestic financial crisis and global recession. This generation however has the advantages of modern technology to support them in their quest for self-fulfilment and the benefit of a sound education to assist them in furthering their life goals. The modern world is globalised and multi-cultural unlike the world that the older men of this study were reared in.

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List of Abbreviations

ADL	Activities of Daily Living
AIB	Allied Irish Banks
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CBS	Christian Brothers Schools
CIE	Coras Iompar Eireann
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DFLE	Disability Free Life Expectancy
EMEA	Europe the Middle East and Africa
ERP	European Recovery Programme
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HSE	Health Services Executive
ICI	Immigration Council of Ireland
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
NAMA	National Assets Management Agency
NASA	National Aeronautics Space Administration
NCAOP	National Council on Ageing and Older People
NOSP	National Office of Suicide Prevention
QOL	Quality of Life

RHA   Royal Hibernian Academy

RTE   Radio Telefis Eireann

SEG   Socio-Economic Group

SLAN   Survey of Lifestyle, Attitude and Nutrition

SSRC   Social Science Research Council

UCD   University College Dublin

UK   United Kingdom

US   United States

VOIP   Voice over Internet Protocol

WHO   World Health Organisation

WWII   World War Two

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Preamble

This chapter covers the following topics, in brief, which I believe are pertinent to understanding the circumstances and setting in which this study was conducted. The chapter covers

- The current National context of the study

- The research question

- the definition of some potentially ambiguous terms used in the title of the study

- the study outline

- the recent concerns relating to the abuse of older men

- the recent trends in relation to care of the elderly

- the larger environment in which older men were raised

- the major influences in older men's younger lives

- the educational opportunities available to the older men of this study

- the reasons for the recent interest in older men

- my previous contact with older men

- the social support for ageing men

- the depletion of socialisation opportunities for older men

Many of these topics are covered in greater detail in the literature review chapter. I also outline the subject matter of the subsequent chapters.

Current national context of study

This study is conducted against a background of a sharply declining economy following a period of almost 10 consecutive years of unprecedented growth fuelled by low interest rates, increasing international competitiveness and increased availability of credit. Throughout this time, Ireland was known as the Celtic Tiger, had technically full employment and attracted home many exiles from Britain, America and the Far East, after the last recession of the 1980s, to participate in what was seen as a wonderful burgeoning economy. In addition to Irish exiles Ireland also attracted over 350,000 foreign workers, mainly from Eastern Europe to provide the labour to service this new wealth. This influx of workers created a 'bubble' in the domestic property market as well as a huge demand for sophisticated consumer goods. When demand peaked in 2007, a downturn occurred which coincided with an International Financial crisis, which has been compared with the Wall Street Crash of 1929 (Barry, 2010). Many domestic investors lost their life savings as traditional blue chip stocks plummeted in price and dividends were suspended. To forestall the worst of these economic effects, the Irish Government guaranteed all Bank deposits to avoid a 'run' on the Banks, provided share capital to the major Irish Banks and agreed to purchase their high risk debts through a new organisation called the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), which has paid approximately €40Bn for €80Bn debt. These two circumstances resulted in a slump in demand for houses and luxury items which were the main revenue engine of the Government's tax strategy. This domestic crisis will, in time, result in severe cutbacks in Government spending due to reduced taxation receipts. Coupled with this is the requirement to service high levels of debt interest and unemployment benefit claims from the 13.5% (CSO, 2010) of the current unemployed population, which is expected by some to grow to 15%. Having prospered for nearly a decade Ireland has now reverted to negative gross domestic output levels. Interviews were conducted with older men within this declining economic framework, which can be expected to influence their perception of wellbeing, security and overall world view. The

significance of this development revolves around the possibility of major cutbacks in health, welfare and support facilities used by older men.

> 'In a circular sent to dentists last week, the HSE outlined severe reductions in dental treatment for medical card holders. The HSE advised dentists that in order to reach budget targets there would be severe cutbacks in the services they provide to many of the most vulnerable in society, including the many older people who rely on the Medical Card for essential dental care. The circular outlines measures such as a suspension of key preventative measures including cleanings and x-rays. Dentures and denture repair will no longer be provided except in case of a clinical emergency. Root canal treatment is to be restricted to front teeth and only in case of an emergency and no provision for the treatment of periodontal or gum disease.
>
> The circular also dictates that fillings should be limited to two per year –a measure which dentists believe will lead to further complications and more expensive and specialised treatment down the line'. (Older and Bolder , 2010).

The fear amongst older men may be that these recent cuts in addition to the imposition of a carbon tax, which directly affects heating oil used to heat older people's homes in winter, new charges per item on medical card prescriptions, and the elimination of the extra week's pension payment at Christmas, may herald yet more revisions affecting older men. Concerns have been expressed by older adult organisations that future cuts may affect the State pension, as well as the possible lowering of the qualifying ceiling for the means-testing of medical cards. All of these occur while our financial services industry is being supported through billions of euro borrowings by Government, paid for by taxpayers, including older men.

The research questions

The core study question is whether the State has delivered, in this post – Celtic Tiger society, a quality of life consistent with the Irish Proclamation of 1916 and the Democratic Programme of 1919, which state:

> '…guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally'.(Irish Proclamation, 1916)

and the later declaration of the founders of the State, which was read into the records of the first meeting of Dáil Éireann on 21st January 1919, known as the 'Democratic Programme'

> ' … we declare that the Nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the Nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare. It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland'. (Democratic Programme, Oireachtas, 1919)

Definitions

The title of this study is 'Older Men's Lives – A Qualitative Study'. Considering the multiplicity of possible understanding for some of these words it is important at the outset to define the subject matter more exactly.

'Old' can be classified in many ways to reflect the nature (gravity) and circumstances of the topic under discussion. 'Old' and/or 'Older' have different interpretations depending on their context. For example the term 'old' is synonymous with terms like 'seniors', 'elderly' which in themselves describe a state of advanced years. However in some contexts the term 'old' can have different connotations, some of which are flattering and some which are denigratory. For the purposes of this dissertation I have chosen the most commonly accepted definition of age as meaning chronological age. Most developed countries accept the chronological age of 65+ as meaning 'Old'. Sixty-five is the age at which the State recognises formal 'retirement' through the entitlement to a State pension (which commences payment once 66 is achieved). Traditionally this age marks the move away from fulltime employment to either part time or no employment, funded by a pension, whether State or private or a mixture of both. 'Young old' in this work will refer to those between the ages of 65 and 74, whereas 'older old' will refer to those 75 and older.

'Lives' in the context of this dissertation refers not only to the current lived experience of older men in the twenty-first century in the Republic of Ireland but also includes the historical context in which individuals were raised.

The study outline

This study is a holistic overview of the lives of older men living in modern Ireland. It looks at a selection of older men's current habitats and explores their lived experience of growing up in Ireland, and discusses the challenges associated with living in a post Celtic-Tiger society.

This study aims to explore a subjective insight into older men's lives and the factors which impact on quality of life issues for them. In particular the study aims to explore individuals' physical well-being, social participation, social networks and supports as well as non-monetary factors that affect their quality of life.

In recent decade's concern for, and care of, the elderly has increased in prominence within the public arena. Some of this concern arises from revelations of elderly abuse as detailed in the Leas Cross Report (O'Neill, 2006), the increase in the number of violent attacks on older men, particularly in rural settings (Kilkenny People, 11th June, 2008), as well as the recent interest shown in isolated single older men by President McAleese (Áras an Uachtaráin, 2007).

Older men are becoming an increasing proportion of the older population due to medical advances, lifestyle changes and a reduction in work related illnesses, accidents and improved work practices. It is therefore important to maximise their *disability free life expectancy* (DFLE) thereby enhancing their quality of life, if they are not to impose an unsustainable burden on an already overburdened health system.

Even though only five per cent of the elderly population receive institutional care (Timonen, 2008), the trend towards greater use of retirement homes, sheltered accommodation and social housing has accelerated in recent years. Some of the contributing factors to this trend lie in part in the disintegration of the nuclear family due to the necessity for children to travel long distances to secure employment and affordable housing, because of lack of local work opportunities, or due to the death of a spouse or divorce. This trend has led to a reduction in traditional intergeneration social support.

Other investigations into the life and times of older men in Ireland have tended to be quantitative in nature, leaving a gap in the literature of the lived experience of this growing sector of the Irish population. These quantitative studies assume a degree of homogeneity amongst the elderly which is not entirely valid or informative when trying to establish the true needs of older men. Older men have been classified under a single heading of 'the elderly' with little acknowledgement of gender differences or their disparate needs. This study gives full prominence to older men and their diversity as never married, married, widowed, and divorced in both urban and rural settings.

By getting an insight into the backgrounds, current circumstances and attitudes of these older men this study will provide a greater understanding of their lives and also identify

broad indicators for future quality of life issues which society should consider when providing for their future needs and wants.

'May you live in interesting times', is an unattributed Chinese curse which at first sight appear to offer support and comfort to the recipient, however the 'sting in the tail' is that those times may also present considerable challenges. Never was a phrase more aptly applicable as it is to this cohort of older men in Ireland. The group of older men under examination were born between the early / mid-Twenties and early / mid-Forties. These men lived through some of the fastest changing times the world has ever known. At either end of this age spectrum are those whose lives were impacted upon by world wars, social upheaval, stringent and sometimes chaotic economic times. During their lifetime Ireland went from being amongst the poorest and most isolated countries in Europe to being a fully integrated member of a European Community of 460 million citizens, and, at one point in time the second wealthiest country in the world (Finfacts, 2006). The recent domestic and international financial crisis may yet see Ireland reclaim its previous unenviable position.

Many older Irish men, in common with their international peers, have been described as 'invisible in society' (Thompson, 1994; Ruxton, 2007) and were born into an Ireland of internecine strife which came with the Irish civil war of 1922. Then, communities and families were divided in their support for or against the Treaty which was the basis for Irish Independence from the United Kingdom. Some of these older men, then children, lived in an atmosphere where members of their close family and community fought amongst each other. Many had relatives who were injured or died as a result of this conflict, and were subsequently discriminated against because of their allegiances. After the Civil War this antagonism lingered well into the 1950s and beyond (Coogan, 2003).

By the early 1930s some of those interviewed in this study had commenced free schooling mainly under the auspices of the Catholic Church which was charged with the responsibility for implementing the Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act 1924. Thousands of priests, brothers, nuns and lay teachers inculcated into this generation in particular, a respect for law and order, an unwavering belief in a personal Christian God, and a lifetime adherence to Catholic dogma (Inglis, 1998). In particular the Catholic

Church played a major role in shaping their lives for the next five decades. During those early years of the State it was common for children to leave school between 12 and 14 (Hout, 1989). Entry into the education system in those early decades was at age 5-6, and students stayed to age 12-14 to complete the primary cycle, when a Primary Certificate was awarded. Primary education was free. The next level was Secondary or Vocational Education for which tuition fees were charged until 1967, after which secondary education was free. These fees, plus the opportunity-cost of family labour, resulted in many rural boys being recruited into farm labouring, known as 'relative assisting', as a prelude to taking over the farm some day, and as such constituted 29% of the labour force (Hout,1989). In urban Ireland this tuition cost also proved a disincentive to further education where additional household income could be garnered for working class and many middle class families. Even in professional and managerial classes up to 35% of sons did not go to school beyond primary level (Hout, 1989). Those that left the education system at this early age were propelled into an adult world in trade as unskilled or semiskilled labourers, who represented 42% of the male labour force.

> 'Three-quarters of Irish men who began working before 1945 received no more than a primary education. Half of the men who began working in the late 1940s and the 1950s received at least some post-primary education; the other half followed the older pattern of early school leaving … Post-primary education was more likely to be academic …where 62% of those continuing went to academic secondary schools' (Hout, 1989, p.196).

Later in the State's history transition rates from primary education were to grow significantly from 24% to 76%, favouring the working class.

Throughout the decades of the 20th century, the sons of large proprietors, professionals and managers attended secondary school, while the sons of small farmers, unskilled, manual labourers and off-farm labourers were most likely to drop out after primary education. In 1957 only 10,000 students sat the leaving certificate examination (Muckross, 2009), compared with 55,000 in 2009 (Irish Independent, 3rd June 2009).

In the early decades a small percentage of school leavers, estimated at 3 - 5 per cent, went on to Higher Education, if their parents could afford the fees and support finance for books and subsistence. As the decades progressed, higher proportions of the school going population remained within the education system to the point where today 60% of school leavers enter into some form of Higher Education programme (Byrne et al., 2008). The significance to this study is that a large proportion of our older men, received little more than a rudimentary education on which to further their careers.

Geography has always played a major role in the development of Ireland as a nation, and it has also proved important in many respects when considering the cultural, social and political timbre of Irish society as well as the quality of life of older men. It is all too easy to forget in these times of instant global communications and relatively affordable and available access to the furthest corners of the world that until recent decades Ireland had been a remote island on the edge of Europe. Similarly within Ireland remoteness has played, and still plays, a part in shaping the lives and aspirations of its people. Despite the many advances made in recent years, the lack of infrastructural development in Ireland means that it can take longer to get to the further reaches of Kerry or Donegal from the capital than it takes to get to Berlin or Boston. This lack of universal accessibility has played, and continues to play, a major role in the development of communities and services on offer to its more 'remote' older populations.

This research examines further the impact of these deficiencies on the quality of life, health and social connectedness of older men.

How the objectives of the study will be achieved

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, this research will explore the lived experiences of older men living in modern Irish society, the barriers to self-fulfilment and the adequacy of the support mechanisms available to them. The study also examines the literature currently available on older men in the areas of health, social engagement and the changing role of older men and their masculinities in society today. A feature of this literature review is the limited extent of current research into the lives and aspirations of older men living in Ireland. In recent years radio and television documentaries have proved an expanding source of information on older men and to that end I have also examined these sources to discover the nature of the world of older rural men, in particular. In this regard special mention must be made of the part RTE radio's CountryWide and its predecessor Farmweek has played, along with its presenter Damien O'Reilly, in raising awareness levels of older men's circumstances in relation to rural isolation.

Reflecting on my previous contact with older men I decided to conduct a qualitative research study, and to this end, to adopt a 'conversational interview approach' (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Thus I approached a number of organisations to provide a small number of older single men from rural and urban settings, with as wide a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, within the limitations discussed below (see methodology chapter).

The background to this study and my interest in older men

My interest in the topic 'Older Men's Lives – A Qualitative Study' arises from a number of recent influences in my life. The first is the result of studies undertaken when I recently completed my Degree in Health Promotion (2007) as a mature student where one of the elective subjects was 'Older Adults'. The curriculum for this subject brought into focus the potential problems associated with ageing in the areas of physical activity, mental health and social participation. Site visits to nursing homes for independent and dependent adults

brought home to me the plight of many older men. It also increased my awareness of the particular social needs of older men and the range of services required by them.

The second influence is my personal awareness, as a young 'older person' (60), of the changes which have occurred in society in recent decades which disproportionately impact on older men. These changes revolve around changing technology and social isolation in both rural and urban settings.

I am also a summertime Bed and Breakfast proprietor and in that role for the past 10 years have come into contact with approximately 50-60 older men each year. Most are accompanied by their wives but some are divorced, widowers or never married. I find them engaging and extremely articulate in their views on life and the world's general progress.

Over the last ten years I have also run my own 'one to one' weight management clinic, as part of a national franchise agreement, and have had many older men seek my assistance to lose weight. The insight into their lives over the course of a ten or twelve week programme has been a cause of great fascination and revelation to me. I find the contrast in attitude and lifestyle between the married, unmarried, divorced and separated men of particular interest.

I have also had the privilege of dealing with old deprived and vulnerable men over the ten years I was a member and President of my local International Lions Club. My Club, in common with 100 other Irish Lions Clubs, amongst other charitable activities, took a large number of deprived older men on holidays each year. This consisted of a week in Butlin's Holiday Camp, in Mosney, County Meath, where we provided entertainment for them. This was a particularly rewarding experience and a great opportunity to observe and interact with older men in a holiday and festive setting.

As part of my Degree I undertook a work experience programme with the Health Services Executive which involved running a Men's Health Stand at a Health Promotion Day in a South East County. On the day of the event, four times more men presented with health concerns than on previous occasions. This was thought by the organisers to be due to the fact that the event's 'Men's Health Stand' was promoted as being manned 'By Men for Men'. This event gave me a unique insight into the variety and depth of men's health

concerns, and the impact health can have on their social life and mental health. It also provided me with an opportunity to contextualise these issues with their family and home circumstances.

I have developed a concern for older men and their general well-being over the last 10 years in particular, as we share more and more common life circumstances and experiences. Like most men, I have spent the majority of my adult life involved in the world of business, preoccupied with making a living and providing for my family. The world that most men occupy is predominantly commercial in focus, where success or failure for a large number depends on financial viability as reflected in 'the bottom line'. Within this constrained environment there is little room for self-expression, personal initiative, personal discretionary freedom or meaningful socialisation, unless it supports greater profitability. At 65, and sometimes earlier, whether through retirement, family or personal ill health and/or other circumstances, this world collapses, and leaves many individuals to construct, often for the first time in their lives, a personally meaningful existence.

The reason for this circumstance is largely historical where men have been primarily regarded as the 'bread winners' outside of the home, although this role is increasingly being shared by working wives in recent years. This social construct has resulted in many men having to develop new social coping skills to ensure a reasonable, dignified and fulfilling lifestyle. A large number of men struggle to do this, without any formal support structures, and in many cases without the active encouragement of business or society. While the number of older men is increasing they still constitute a minority, with insufficient numbers to influence the 'social partners' with their concerns. Approximately 46,000 males or 31% of those >65 live alone (CSO, 2008) as a result of separation, divorce, death of a spouse, being never-married, and the death of parents and/or the exodus of siblings, children, and peers due to emigration. Their financial resources and income potential is considerably reduced, which in turn limits their social activity options, which can impact on their mental and physical health (Ruxton, 2007). Coupled with this is the rationalisation, due to commercial pressures, of the few familiar social refuges many have relied upon for regular human contact such as pubs, post offices, marts, the creameries, and small local shops and in some cases local Churches.

In today's world entertainment comes not from 'the meeting at the crossroad', the 'Ballroom of Romance' or the local picture show but from reading, television, radio, videos and ipods which are largely solitary pursuits. For those who enjoy a drink, and who live some distance from a pub, drink driving laws and the price of 'a pint' have proved a major deterrent to social participation. These circumstances and influences are more common to the rural older male population. If this trend continues without any intervention, within the increasing older male population, it seems plausible that social isolation, anxiety, stress, depression and suicides in this age group will increase.

Outline of subsequent chapters

Chapter Two

Chapter two outlines the environment that older men occupied throughout the 20th Century. It reviews the major social influences of the time which included the political landscape, the Church and its influence and the social climate. This is significant because it contextualises older men's lives as it has been reported that older men's later lives are often linked to their earlier lived experiences in public and private spheres (Davidson et al., 2003).

Chapter Three

This chapter reviews the current literature available on older men in Ireland, theories of ageing, social determinants and the roles they play in older men's lives in Ireland. It also examines how the perception of 'invisibility' became associated with older men. Older men are living longer and as a result becoming more numerous. In this chapter I look at the latest predictions on life expectancy in Ireland and examine influences in relation to morbidity and mortality. Some of the perceived 'invisibility' of older men may arise because of a change in older men's masculinities as they age. I examine these changes and their impact on older men. While some research has taken place on 'older people' in Ireland, little has been done, with some notable exceptions (Ferguson and Hogan, 2004), on

the changing role of 'older men' in an Irish context. Valuable work has also been published in the United Kingdom detailing the role of family, friends, social networks and the subjective needs of older men in relation to network building and familial support (Ruxton, 2007, Davidson, 2006). Loneliness, both social and emotional, is perceived as a major constituent element of older men's lives and this chapter also examines the latest information available in this domain (Lloyd, 2010; Drennan et al., 2008; Treacy et al., 2004).

Chapter Four

Chapter four presents an overview of the methodology and research design used to gather and analyse the data for this study. The research options are reviewed as are their likely value to this study. Chapter four also looks at the recruitment criteria, the use of gatekeepers and considers the ethical aspects of engaging with older men. To get a true picture of older men's lives in modern Ireland it was important to adopt methodologies which would yield as comprehensive and informative a profile of the individuals and their lived experiences as possible. To accomplish this it was essential to encompass not only their immediate life view and circumstances, but also those earlier life influences which contributed to and shaped their present circumstances. These life influences are multi-dimensional involving a variety of experiences at different stages of their lives. To this end, the use of a semi-structured 'conversational approach' (Robson, 2002) allowed each individual the latitude to articulate and prioritise the particular life events which they felt were 'drivers' in their life course. This approach is not 'agenda setting' by presupposing that events and circumstances which I might consider important were significant in their lives. The literature review identifies interview techniques which are considered important when interviewing older men, particularly in relation to health matters and this chapter discusses their use in this study. Interviews were carried out with twelve older men from urban and rural backgrounds. This chapter discusses the rationale for this approach as well as the procedures adopted for recording, transcribing, and analysing the data using a 'thematic framework' (Robson, 2002).

Chapter Five

This chapter profiles each older male participant in the study. It also gives detailed synopsises of three interviews, two rural and one urban, to better understand the findings of the research undertaken with all of the older men both rural and urban.

Chapter Six

In this chapter I identify and analyse the findings of the research interviews, as themes which include loneliness, health, education, accessibility – participation and socialisation, poverty, older men's homes and spirituality and religiosity and review their significance on the lived experiences of the participants.

Chapter Seven

In this chapter I outline the conclusions arrived at as a result of the research in relation to the objectives and main research question and posit some solutions to some of the problems identified.

Chapter 2 – A Contextual Overview of Older Men's Early Years

A national overview

Of considerable significance to this study is the place that older men are perceived to hold in Irish society. Before we can deliver a verdict on this it is necessary to review the nature of the society that they live(ed) in and how those structures influence their current circumstances. In considering this particular cohort of older men it is important to acknowledge the social climate that they inhabited. Many of our 'older' old men were born into an Ireland of social upheaval and economic uncertainty and yet one which brought with it an enormous spiritual 'certainty'. The early Twenties started with the Civil War (28th June, 1922) when family turned upon family and neighbour upon neighbour. Dissent over the Treaty agreed by Collins and Griffith, and subsequently passed by the Dáil was disputed by de Valera, eventually exploded onto the streets of the capital and in cities throughout Ireland.

> '… roughly 3000 deaths were inflicted over a period of eleven months… The war would drag on needlessly for another eight months into the spring of 1923. Republican operations would degenerate into a campaign of sporadic sabotage. Both sides would commit atrocities that would generate bitterness that has lasted to this day. The Irish government would pass an Emergency Powers Bill allowing the execution of Republican prisoners, of which seventy-seven were killed (more than were executed by British authorities during the War of Independence). Comdt. Frank Aiken, who had succeeded Liam Lynch as Republican Chief-of-Staff after his death in 10 April, issued a cease fire and a dumping of arms on 24 April, effectively ending the war'. (Walsh, 1998)

Occurrences such as the Easter Rising and the Civil War are significant events in Irish life and because of the close family associations surrounding these events play a role in shaping the social atmosphere of early Irish influences. Family reminiscences of events to those born around those times perpetuate mistrust. This was particularly true for those living in

Dublin when the landscape was scarred with evidence of civil strife. This would have included the Four Courts, the Customs House and Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street). Their significance replayed again and again thus prolonging an interpretation of right or wrong for another generation. Despite the social upheaval very little changed administratively and commercially in the day to day structure of living pre and post-British occupation. The new Irish Government pursued a commercial Nationalistic policy of self-sufficiency, thus protecting the little foreign exchange it had. When the British pulled out of Ireland, they took a considerable amount of commercial activity with them including their wealth (Hout, 1989).

Domestically much progress was made in the following years to heal old differences and focus on constructing a stable education, administrative, commercial, judicial, and defence presence as well as a strong and respected Garda structure, all with very limited resources (Coogan, 2003).

The early Thirties saw the start of the Economic war which resulted from the Irish Free State's refusal to repay 'land annuities' to the British Government for land transferred to Irish ownership as a result of Independence (Ferriter, 2005). During this period, the State continued to collect these payments from farmers which it used to implement social policies. A trade war ensued. This conflict lasted from 1933 to 1938 and brought severe hardship on the whole country, in particular to the rural community which now had no markets for agricultural products. The cattle trade was particularly hard hit which meant that every farmer in Ireland, large and small alike was affected. Cash was scarce within the State and credit was virtually non-existent. Schemes to use unsalable beef were introduced, known as 'beef for the poor' (Ferriter, 2005). Over time farmers refused to pay the annuity contribution, which resulted in the forced sale of herds and the subsequent boycotting of auctions by neighbouring farmers. A black market developed for beef products to generate cash. Externally, the enmity against Britain ran so deep that the phrase 'Burn everything British, except their coal' was in common usage. Both sides engaged in a tariff war imposing import duties on each others produce. This in turn led to severe shortages of fuel, fertilizers, engineered goods and chemicals essential for industry and commerce, and the

Irish economy went rapidly into recession/depression (Coogan, 2003 ; Ferriter, 2005). This was exacerbated by the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the haemorrhage of world trade.

To stimulate economic and social progress by the introduction of electricity to power industry and agriculture the Irish Government engaged the services of the German Siemens company to harness the waters of Ardnacrusha for hydro-electric power. At this time rural electrification based on this and other fossil fuel burning stations was being rolled out (Manning and McDowell, 1984), although usage was extremely low initially due to the high cost. Turf was the main indigenous 'fuel of the people' along with low grade coal from Irish mines. Scarce energy resources such as coal would subsequently be conserved for use by The Pidgeon House Electricity Station and the gas companies in Dublin and other cities and towns during the Emergency (O'Keeffe, 2004).

In 1938 an Anglo–Irish Trade Agreement was negotiated which agreed a once off payment of £10m in full compensation for any outstanding annuities to the British and tariffs invoked during the dispute period were reversed. Part of that agreement saw Ireland regain control over its ports, which cemented the principle of Irish neutrality. Shortly after the conclusion of this agreement the start of the Second World War isolated Ireland physically and politically from the Western Allies. Throughout those times, through to the end of WWII in 1945, Irish men and women emigrated to England to join the British army and to work in offices, factories, on farms, in mines and in construction (Coogan, 2003; Ferriter, 2005).

At home Ireland continued to ration scarce resources while maintaining a highly censured press and radio. Ireland maintained it's neutrality throughout the period despite pressure from the Allies, although some bias was shown towards the Allies with regard to intelligence information and the incarceration of British soldiers who were captured as a result of being shot down over Irish territory. These were usually repatriated to Northern Ireland. German soldiers who tried to use Ireland as a 'back door' into England, and were caught, were interned. Southern assistance, during the blitzing of Belfast, saw fire brigade units from the north-east of the Republic race to supplement the Northern fire units (Coogan, 2003; Ferriter, 2005)

Needs were simple and unsophisticated and cash and credit continued to be scarce. Even after WWII rationing did not fully cease until the early Fifties, although it should be noted that average daily calorie intake at 3059 calories in Ireland immediately after WWII (1946/1947) was second only to Denmark, with Rumania the lowest at 1694 calories (Geiger, 1999).

Mechanisation of farms and industry was at a low ebb throughout those decades, due to lack of funds. Trade resumed with the United Kingdom, who took 90% of Ireland's exported goods right up to the mid 60s. The added value element of exports was low, particularly in our main export of agricultural goods. Hout (1989) suggests that trade with Britain was

> 'on terms disadvantageous to the Irish … underlie(ing) the
> history of Anglo-Irish relations' (Hout, 1989, p.26)

Ireland did benefit from the European Recovery Programme (ERP) commonly referred to as the Marshall Plan post WWII, but only to a limited extent and mainly because the Americans wanted to reduce Britain's dependency on US beef by purchasing Irish cattle (Geiger, 1999). Ireland was also short of natural coal resources to drive industry and the Marshall Plan sought to address this imbalance by providing resources to purchase fuel from abroad (Geiger, 1999). Tariffs remained to protect vulnerable inefficient industries. The early fifties saw mass emigration to the United Kingdom at the rate of 40,000 per annum, where the job of rebuilding Britain had begun with the support of the ERP. Because of the war losses, male labour was scarce for the high level of industrial activity. Jobs were widely advertised by British industrialists through Irish newspapers, guaranteeing employment even to unskilled labour (Hout, 1989). Britain and Europe embarked on a rebuilding programme, which generated enormous commercial activity and wealth, while Ireland languished in recession. As the fifties progressed the Irish Government recognised that its focus of self-sufficiency and unwillingness to borrow money from abroad for industrial development was short sighted and so embarked on a new plan to stimulate inward investment and job creation. Through the development of tax free zones and preferential tax rates on profits it generated employment based on exports. This new approach was known as the Whitaker Plan …

'In 1955, at the very young age of 39, he (Whitaker) was appointed Secretary to the Department of Finance. His career as a distinguished civil servant flourished and he was instrumental in shaping Irish economic policies in the late 1950s and 1960s. The publication in 1958 of Whitaker's Economic Development, known as 'the grey book', is widely accepted as a landmark in Irish economic history. (UCD Archives, 2009).

By this stage the 'older' old men in this study were nearing their late thirties, while many 'younger' older men were in their mid/late-teens. This new industrial plan impacted virtually instantaneously in urban areas of Ireland, creating thousands of new jobs in new disciplines requiring new skills and stemming the flow of emigration. So successful was this new strategy that the Immigration Council of Ireland (ICI) reported that …

'Employment expansion in the 1970s resulted in net inward migration …'(ICI, 2005).

The world was now starting to change very fast. In the early Fifties, television sets went on sale in the Republic. Those who could not afford to buy televisions, hired sets. All of the programmes were transmitted from the U.K. and Belfast, including the Coronation of the Queen of England (1953), which caused some ripples at the time. Unfortunately because of the low power of the then analogue transmitters, only homes on the north and east coasts could receive a signal. This development changed the nature of news distribution, entertainment and perceptions of some social values almost overnight. The only option left open to the Government to counterbalance the effect of this 'cultural invasion' was to institute its own television broadcasting company, and thus RTÉ TV was launched in 1961. This proved to have a major influence on shaping public opinion by opening up public values and norms to scrutiny particularly in the area of politics and religion. A new media era had arrived. Rural living, with all its hardships, was exposed to urban dwellers and vice versa (Sheehan, 2001). Equally important was that foreign day to day social cultures and standards, particularly British and American, were opened up for examination.

Before the implementation of the Whitaker Plan in 1959, the ailing Irish economy offered little prospects for those wanting to achieve anything more than a 'frugal' income. Farm work was still majorly powered by horses, as was distribution of products in towns and

cities. Industry for its part operated with outdated equipment to service domestic markets which offered few opportunities for economies of scale thus precluding the possibility of being competitive in export markets.

> 'Few Irish men had the money to start producing on a scale sufficient to replace the volume of imports' (Hout, 1989, p.14).

Although Ireland was only a small market to potential UK suppliers it was suspected that some indulged in predatory pricing to fill their spare capacity. Many of the major Irish industries were controlled by or had significant British interests on their Boards or within their shareholders depriving them of the motivation to export to their nearest market, the U.K. This was soon to change with the implementation of the Whitaker Plan. The new measures to stimulate industrial activity included incentives for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), preferential tax rates on exports, the rental of industrial factories in Industrial Zones at prices below market value and the creation of Export Zone industrial estates such as Shannon. The new plan attracted investment from America, Japan and Europe, making Ireland the gateway to Europe. This had the effect of redressing the emigration imbalance well into the 70s by the creation of thousands of new, mostly technology related, jobs.

> 'Investment – domestic and foreign- North and South, transformed Ireland in the course of a generation. In short, Ireland underwent the kind of economic miracle now associated with Southeast Asia' (Hout, 1989, p.1)

The rural environment

> 'The modal pattern is for farmers to enter farming from inheritance, either directly as a first occupation or after a period of apprenticeship as an unpaid family member assisting on the farm' (Hout, 1989, p. 128).

In the early years of the State, under the Land Law Commission Act (1923), the State compulsorily acquired lands owned by non-Irish persons and redistributed these lands to local 'peasants'. Holdings were small (20-50 acres), often of poor quality land, particularly

on the Western seaboard. This nevertheless provided a subsistence existence for rural dwellers. These uneconomic holdings, allowed small farmers to graze a few cattle and produce small amounts of tillage crops. By the mid 30s and 40s there was a movement to amalgamate these small holdings into larger more economic units. In 1926, 644, 000 people were employed in agriculture. By 1936 this number had dropped to 605,000 (Muckross, 2009). By 1951, there were 342,000 male farmers and relatives assisting; by 1971 the number was down to 213,000 (Whelan and Whelan, 1984 as cited by Hout, 1989 p.121). Over the period 1926-1936 cattle numbers dropped from 4.4 million to 4.0 million. Horses, which were the work engine of small to medium farms, declined. However there was an increase in pigs and poultry. Bad crop yields in 1929 turned farmers away from tillage in the 30s. With the outbreak of WWII and the encouragement of the Government tillage increased dramatically from 1.5 million acres to 2.6 million acres. Tillage crops and live cattle provided the backbone of exports to the UK during WWII (Muckross, 2009).

Running water, electricity and sanitation was poor throughout those decades particularly in rural Ireland. The average wage was 15 shillings per week which forced large scale emigration of mostly young men and women (Coogan, 2003). Some progress was made as a result of the rural electrification programme in the 30s and 40s when 50% of dwellings were brought on to the network (Manning and McDowell, 1984). For the vast majority of farmers the horse provided the 'muscle' for heavy work on the farm and for transport of produce and people locally. The work of ditch digging, drainage, boundary posting, hedgerow husbandry and field clearing (of rocks and boulders) was done by hand. In addition, fertilising, reaping and threshing were also mostly manual. Work was heavy and extremely physical and hours worked were long and seasonal. Winter work was irregular and many small farmers in coastal regions had to supplement their incomes with fishing. It was common to provide working labourers with their meals, and somewhere to sleep if they were transient workers. This practice kept wages low and, if meals were good, attracted quality casual labour year on year (Rockett, 2002). Because of the tight window for summer harvesting, adjacent farmers co-operated in 'getting in the crops' and, in later years, shared harvesting and threshing equipment. Child labour was regularly used to supplement the local male workforce and this practice also provided families with additional income to see them

through the winter months. These collectivist practises led to considerable local social capital (Nestor, 2009). The nature of the work demanded considerable physical fitness. Throughout those years there was a high incidence and prevalence of heart disease, tuberculosis and cancer (Muckross, 2009).

Social life was simple and involved neighbours visiting each other, dances at the crossroads and regular visits to the pictures where people could escape from their difficult lives viewing uplifting American and British musical extravaganzas and propaganda war movies. In 1943, 22 million cinema tickets were purchased in the Republic (Ferriter, 2005). Social contact between young men and women was closely overseen by parents and clergy. There was virtual segregation of the sexes.

> 'Bachelorhood has been prevalent in Ireland for a least a century, but in the last 20 years it has increased dramatically among the rural poor. In 1926 one in five never married, that is 20% between 45-54 years were single. By 1966 the rate was 33%, most of the increase was among poor farmers on small farms. Bachelorhood among farmers with 30 acres or less was double (that of farmers with 200 acres)' (Kennedy, 1973 table 54 as cited in Hout, 1989 p.140).

The dominant work ethos was male orientated, with women running the household, rearing the children and providing for the family by growing seasonal vegetables, making butter and cheese and rearing pigs and poultry (Muckross, 2009). Few households had radio, and those that had one, entertained neighbours when major events, sports tournaments or national celebrations arose. The national station was 2RN, the predecessor of RTE. In 1932, 5% of households had licences and this increased to 100,000 licences by 1933, when the Athlone transmitter was commissioned. Gaelic games were the main social distraction for rural dwellers with enthusiastic support for club and county players in hurling and Gaelic football mostly, but in some counties handball was a popular sport. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which was founded 1884, was by far the largest sports organisation in the country, as it is today, with current membership of 300,000 registered adult members and 2600 clubs (Inglis, 2008). This organisation thrived because it shared the values of Church and State alike throughout its long history (Muckross, 2009).

Travel outside local town lands, for the great majority of rural dwellers, was limited to visiting the nearest village, town or local major city. While trains formed the backbone of the national transport network throughout the 19th century, depopulation of the countryside due to emigration and a drift to the major cities resulted in underutilisation of the network of 5500 km (1920) resulting in its subsequent rationalisation to its current levels of less than half that size. Coras Iompar Eireann (CIE) was the product of the rationalisation of the railways, formed in 1935, and provided steady employment in the provinces in a wide range of skills (RPSI, 2009). More importantly, it created lifelong career opportunities for many who had families. Canals provided an alternative for the transport of good but these too declined due to lack of use and funding as a preference for road use grew with the introduction of the motor car and road haulage. The road infrastructure was more extensive than any other alternative at 9737 miles of main road out of 48,000 miles of public roads. By 1939 the number of registered vehicles grew to 78,813 with a road fund income of £808,547. This dropped back to 6,566 vehicles in 1944 during the Emergency; these were used for essential services (O'Keeffe, 2004). Transport was relatively expensive. The bicycle was the major form of personal transport in rural and urban areas. Raleigh bicycles were produced in Dublin under protective tariffs and tyres were supplied by Dunlops in Cork. Cost and restrictive travel arrangements limited frequent personal contact between parents, children and siblings.

The slow development of the national telephone network under the aegis of the Department of Post and Telegraphs, again due to lack of funding, meant that there was a reliance on public telephone outlets in the form of phone boxes for personal communication. Few rural households had telephones throughout the 30s, 40s, and 50s into the early 60s, and neighbours relied on each other to facilitate calls from friends and families, particularly in more remote areas.

As mechanisation increased towards the mid 50s fewer unskilled labourers were needed to service the land and contact within communities decreased as farmers became more self-sufficient (Hout,1989). Marts and Fairs, held in virtually every town and village, provided the backbone for rural business and social contact in those early years. As road transport developed small fairs gave way to larger and fewer marts. This resulted in less social

contact, especially for small farmers. The development of large integrated meat processing plants with published 'factory gate prices' hastened the decline of marts, while also creating good job opportunities for sons of small farmers. Coupled with this was the phasing out of livestock export sales for which there had traditionally been a large export market. New hygiene and animal welfare regulations sounded the death knell of local abattoirs, depriving small farmers and butchers of the opportunity to maintain their independence. The formation of Bord Báinne in 1961, and the success of Kerrygold paved the way for new thinking in the marketing of Irish products as a premium brand, thereby improving the lot of farmers. Even though co-operatives had been formed since the late 1800s, their main function was for the bulk processing of milk, whey and cheese, which were sold on for export in that form.

On the positive side, Ireland's accession into the European Community in 1973 and the adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) brought about a reversal in farming fortunes. The purchase, through intervention, of a whole range of agricultural produce ensured the prosperity and revitalisation of the whole rural landscape.

The urban environment

All of the major cities in Ireland are built on rivers, Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Galway, and as such are trading centres which have developed over centuries to service the hinterlands of those cities. Dublin being the capital had the additional responsibility of being the main seat of Government administration and as such attracted a larger population than its trading circumstances might suggest. Dublin is also the main import and distribution point for other goods sold throughout the island. Over the early decades of the 20th Century these cities developed largely as places of buying and selling support goods and services for the main activity of the country which was agriculture. There were few manufacturing centres or industrial facilities even up to the early 30s and 40s. Some cities like Cork developed specialities in motor assembly (Fords) and tyre manufacture (Dunlops) which became synonymous with the city. In Dublin brewing was a major activity (Guinness) along

with the employment of workers and staff for State and semi-state utilities such as the Electricity Supply Board, The Gas Company, and various Government Departments. The departure of the British deprived major cities of considerable commercial activity derived from military activities, both army and navy. In the 1950s

> 'Small, independent farmers dominated politics, demography and the economy. In the cities independently owned shops out-numbered factories' (Hout, 1989 p.12).

Beyond the city centres lay the wealthy middleclass suburbs. In Dublin these included Ballsbridge, Ranelagh and Rathmines on the Southside of the city and Glasnevin, Clontarf and Howth on the Northside.

> 'During 1973 and 1974 John A. Jackson directed a large-scale survey of the male working-age population of the entire island. Separate surveys were carried out in Northern Ireland and the republic, but the goal in each region was the same. … The project designed to study the determinants of occupational mobility … is here called the Irish Mobility Study'(Hout, 1989 p.32)

This project received funding from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in the United Kingdom (under grant number HR 1440/1) and provided the most detailed and rigorous data of any national mobility study ever undertaken (Hout, 1989). It involved interviewing 4500 men in every section of the labour force and tracking their employment between 1959 to 1973 as well as their own and their families educational and employment history back to 1908. In his book *Following the Father's Footsteps* (1989), Michael Hout, from the data generated in the 1973/4 survey, examines the socio-economic evolution of Ireland and the movement of individuals from one social origin to other social destinations. In it he gives particular prominence to the effects of the Whitaker Plan on Irish urban society. He concluded that prior to 1959 'Ireland is more stratified than are other European nation.' (Whelan and Whelan (1984), as cited in Hout, 1989).

> 'Favouritism in hiring and special favours on the job, are opposed in many societies, they are taken for granted (and approved) in Ireland. Special treatment for family members

> aids in the maintenance of privilege (and poverty) from one generation to the next' (Hout, 1989 p.322),

… and this was particularly true of Dublin.

Urban society was divided into two classes, middle class and working class. The distinction between the two was based on Goldthorph's et al., (1968) boundary definition of 'manual versus non-manual labour as embodied in advanced societies'. Hout's commentary on personal advancement predicated that 'the absence of clout handicaps men of different origins who might otherwise pursue a career in skilled manual work' (Hout, 1989 p79). Hout (1989 p. 115) tells us that inequality of opportunity was also reflected by Whelan and Whelan (1984 p. 45) who observed that

> '…sons of skilled manual workers are twice as likely, as men with lower working class origins, to achieve a higher professional and managerial position'.

A United Nations survey in 1962 noted that Dubliners spent less on their housing than they did on drink and tobacco, and had a life expectancy of 62 for males (Ferriter, 2005 p.586). Working class labourers in the early decades of the century lived in deplorable tenements near the centre of cities and had large families averaging 8/9 (1911) reducing to 5 in the early 60s (Coogan, 2003; Ferriter, 2005). These tenements were the vacant dwellings of absent landowners and senior British civil servants who deserted their properties after the Act of Union of 1800 continuing through to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many, with the coming of the Free State, were owned by the professional classes and a variety of Trusts, while some were owned by the Church (Coogan, 2003) who rented rooms to working class tenants and appointed rent agents to collect these rents and manage the properties. Densely packed with people, with no running water and inadequate sanitation these dwellings were rat infested and breeding grounds for disease (Kearns, 1994). Tuberculosis (TB) was rampant throughout the 30s, 40s and 50s in the major population centres and special hospitals were set up to cope with the epidemic. Tuberculosis was causing in the region of 4,500 deaths per annum (Ferriter, 2005 p. 319), until its virtual eradication with the introduction of streptomycin in the late 50s.

Large Corporation estates were built in the suburbs of cites in the 40s and 50s where the majority of the working class were re-housed. In Dublin, estates were constructed in Finglas and Ballymun in the 60s, in Moyross and South Hill in Limerick, currently the subject of much controversy. Other major cities constructed similar housing estates in their suburbs. Diets were poor, some families living almost exclusively on bread and tea and were subject to constant approaches by moneylenders. A typical working class inhabitant was white, Catholic, educated by the Christian Brothers and was likely to leave school at 14 to work in a trade or as an unskilled labourer (Ferriter, 2005). He would most likely follow his father's career, would be low paid and would work a 45 hour week (included Saturday to lunchtime) with no overtime pay, and would be a regular Church goer. Depending on his position in the family his education prospects would improve the younger he was, as older brothers and sisters contributed to the family income. By and large, the circumstances of the working class did not change from generation to generation. Because of the large family sizes, some children lived with their grandparents, returning to the family home for the occasional meal. Boys and young men would participate in one of the many soccer or Gaelic football and hurling clubs scattered throughout the city. Soccer was a more popular urban pastime for most working class people. Mothers were full time homemakers looking after the children. In a working class family children played games on the streets in the immediate neighbourhood (Cullen, 2001: Kearns, 1994) due to lack of play grounds and playing fields. Many worked on the docks unloading cargo ships of coal, fuel and fertilizer or on building sites. Many were involved in re-loading ships with grain and cattle from the cattle marts which were dotted around the perimeter of the city. An RTE interview by Harry Crosby, owner of the Point Village (Depot) in Dublin, described how thousands of the 6000 strong dockworkers would assemble early each morning to be picked for casual work. Only a few hundred would be selected, as their employment depended on the number of ships in port at any one time. These were extremely dangerous occupations with workers suffering from emphysema from flour, coal and asbestos dust inhalation, later in life. Fatal accidents were common. These jobs were later decimated with the introduction of containerisation of freight and bulk haulage of grains, flour and fertilisers and the demise of marts and livestock exports. Many worked in the fruit markets or ran fruit stalls throughout the city centre (Cullen, 2001).

If his family was from a trade background sons would most likely be apprenticed to a master craftsman.

> 'Fathers can teach their sons the trade, and then use their connections to win for their sons positions in apprenticeship programmes or get sons union cards or other credentials' (Hout, 1989 p.79).

Some trades were organised as 'closed shops' into 'Chapels' (printers and compositors) and employment in them required 'social standing'. As an apprentice a young boy would 'come out of his time' after 3 to 4 years as a fully accredited tradesman recognised to work wherever he liked, including abroad.

Those who finished their Secondary Education could sit the Civil Service exams or join a semi-State body such as C.I.E. or Irish Shipping as a clerk or one of the many Banking Groups which at the time was dominated by the Munster and Leinster Bank, Provincial Bank and Royal Irish Bank, later to become Allied Irish Banks (AIB Group, 2009) or the Hibernian Bank, National Bank of Ireland or Bank of Ireland, now the Bank of Ireland Group (Bank of Ireland, 2009). If he was particularly good at sports this would have been a major advantage in securing employment in these establishments as it was reputed to help increase the institution's prestige and forge business contacts. This was particularly true for those who gained prominence in the national Gaelic sports arena.

Overall however,

> 'The life chances of men born into working class origins are inferior to those of men born into middle class origins' (Hout, 1989 p.119).

The next rung of the social ladder consisted of the middleclass, who were;

> ' … chiefly (educated at) the Jesuits' Clongowes Wood College, The Holy Ghost Fathers' Balckrock College, and the late Dominican Fathers at Newbridge, County Kildare, and the Vincentians at Castleknock, County Dublin, sought to prepare Irish Catholics for the upper reaches of the British administration, or for positions in the law, medicine and the army throughout the Empire. Consequently a more anglified

> tone permeated their classrooms and playing fields, where rugby, cricket and tennis were played, rather than the Gaelic games of hurling and Gaelic football, which were favoured by the Brothers' (Coogan, 2003, p.15).

These were usually the sons of professionals, farmers, publicans, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs and industrialists, who lived in Dublin 4, or had second residences in the leafy red bricked suburbs of Rathmines, Rathgar or South County Dublin. In keeping with the ethos of these 'fee paying' schools children were coached in achieving excellence in sport and academic pursuits, by academics who were at the top of their profession.

> '…upper professionals' sons have a chance of landing a good job that is six times higher than the chance of a proprietors' son and twenty four times higher than the chances of a semi-skilled workers' sons' (Hout, 1989 p. 321).

Within this class there was a universal family expectation that sons would complete third level education as a matter of course, and follow their parents into the family business or profession. Invariably this proved to be the case (Hout, 1989). The great majority went on to University College Dublin, while some attended Trinity College Dublin, and subsequently populated the professions, academia, the law, army, church or became captains of industry. In Dublin 'self-recruitment' within elite independent professionals and industrial managers, ran from 51% to 41% respectively (Hout, 1989).

> 'The trend in inequality of occupation opportunity is clearly tied to the trend in educational attainment' (Hout, 1989 p.326).

In the early decades of the 20th century there was a strong movement towards unionisation of the skilled and unskilled labour force. This met with considerable resistance from employers, which led to the Great Lockout of 1913 and the nationwide building industry strike in 1937. This resulted in a wage freeze in 1941-2 and the outlawing of strikes (Ferriter, 2005). Unions favoured protectionism as a strategy for maximising employment and resisted change 'tooth and nail' (Ferriter, 2005). It was not until the early 60s, and early 70s when Ireland joined the EU ('73), that Ireland started to generate significant numbers of jobs locally. Major foreign direct investment helped to establish large pharmaceutical, computer hardware assembly plants, software manufacturing and development plants for

Europe the Middle East and Africa (EMEA). In addition, software reproduction, technical support, marketing facilities and computer 'chip' manufacturing plants in the 70s, 80s, and 90s expanded rapidly, employing tens of thousands. By this time, most of the 'older' old men in this study were on the cusp of retirement or did not have the skills or education to avail of these opportunities.

Older men's early influences

'Every childhood lasts a lifetime' was a Barnardo's Child Care slogan some years ago and to the extent that that is true and shapes the lives of adults, it is important to reflect on the early childhood conditions of older Irish men. As outlined above, the great majority of older men were reared in turbulent social and depressed economic times. Cash was scarce for government, individuals and commercial operations. Self sustainability was the order of the day with urban and rural dwellers growing as much of their own food as was feasible within allotments or their own suburban gardens. Scarcity meant making maximum use of clothes and shoes. Clothing was made of 'natural' materials and was frequently recycled to be used again and again. Suits were 'turned' inside out or 'cut down' to fit smaller members of the family. It was common place to 'hand down' clothes from one family member to the other. For the working class new but sub-standard clothes called 'seconds' or second-hand clothing markets existed where apparel and shoes were bought and sold, one such market was the Iveagh Market in Francis Street in Dublin. Shoes were 'soled and heeled' many times throughout their lifetime until they literally 'fell apart'. Money was borrowed and lent between neighbours and goods were 'pawned' and retrieved on a weekly basis (Kearns, 1994). Children went to school in their bare feet and hungry and the staple diet for many households was bread and jam and potatoes with stews as main course most days made from 'scrag-ends' (waste or off-cuts) of meat which butchers would sell off for a few pence as refrigeration was not common in shops (Kearns, 1994). Frank McCourt, who was raised in Limerick, in his novel *Angel's Ashes* describes anecdotal reminiscences of coal picked from the 'leftovers' in coal yards or from the streets where some had fallen from a delivery cart and was often the only source of heat for some (McCourt, 1996). Approximately 800,000

people lived in overcrowded conditions in Ireland in 1926 and this situation did not improve much until the late 40s and early 50s (Ferriter, 2005). In 1946, 310,000 houses in Ireland had no sanitation and average family size had fallen from eight (1911) to five while 80,000 people still lived in one roomed tenement accommodation (Ferriter, 2005). The infant mortality rate in Dublin in 1911 was the worst in Europe where 25 % of new-born children died before their first birthday. Dublin continued to be the worst capital city in Europe for infantile mortality up to, and beyond 1949 (Ferrirer, 2005).

The Church

> 'Catholicism was always about making God's children feel so worthless and miserable that they concluded they have no hope but to fling themselves on the Almighty's divine mercy, wretched disgusting little sinners that they are'. (Eilis O'Hanlon, Sunday Independent 28/12/08)

The Church was a major influence on Irish society throughout the 20th Century, dominating education, health and social care. As 94% of the population was Catholic, the Church was in a strong position to influence public morals, values and opinions as it pervaded the whole fabric of society. The Church throughout these times, in keeping with the Catholic philosophy, promoted a value system which applauded humility, modesty, self-effacement in the face of achievement, unquestioning endurance in the face of hardship as well as an inflexible compliance and respect for Church and civil authority (Inglis, 1998). The male role as 'provider' was commended, as was the female role as devoted mother and subservient wife, which reflected the true values of the Holy Family. Being a single, celibate, male dominated organisation, little concern was shown for the plight of those families who endured low standards of living and starvation due to the size of their families. The Church vehemently opposed contraception and abortion and punished those who had children outside of marriage by consigning unmarried mothers to industrial institutions and putting their children up for adoption. In the mainstream schools children were taught 'religious instruction' daily as part of the school curriculum and the dominant 'ethos' of the vast majority of schools was Roman Catholicism. Children and adolescents were 'expected' to attend mass weekly, and on all Church Holy Days, and to attend confession on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Abstinence from meat products on a Friday was mandatory and

membership of religious devotional groups known as 'Sodalities' was encouraged, as was membership of the Total Abstinence Association which promoted abstinence for alcoholic drinks. Failure to conform to these rituals often resulted in social coercion of children and parents alike and could result in a visit from the local priest, of which there were many in every parish. The Church, through its daily contact with the community, held considerable social and political sway and established 'a comprehensive ruling and direction of all spheres of behaviour' (Inglis, 1998 p.23), and those who defied its teachings ran the risk of ostracism.

The Irish Constitution recognised the 'special place' of the Catholic Church and the Church used this relationship with the Government to influence the type of literature sold and read, particularly in libraries where a Church representative sat on the county boards. The Church influenced the types of films which could be shown and later, with the advent of radio and television, the topics and programmes which could be broadcast. In the 1930s there was a famous case of the appointment of a County Librarian which caused National controversy. Ms. Letitia Dunbar Harrison (RTE, *Scannal,*2009; Ferriter, 2010), a Protestant lady, educated at Trinity College, was removed from her position after eighteen months and appointed to the Civil Service in Dublin because Mayo County Council, which was controlled by the Church, would not accept her appointment.

From 1940 to 1972, the primary mover of Catholicism in Ireland was Archbishop J.C. Mc Quaid of Dublin, who had been Dean and President of Blackrock College and a close acquaintance of Eamonn de Valera who attended that school and later taught there, and is credited with devising the 1937 Irish Constitution.

> 'Archbishop McQuaid appeared to be a powerful and conservative figure who wielded much influence in all aspects of Irish society. His opinion and support were sought in many areas including the wording of the Irish Constitution, the Mother and Child Scheme, censorship, youth affairs, lay organisations, hospitals and the development of a Diocesan Press Office which was run by a layman. McQuaid also took an active interest in industrial relations and helped resolve more than one dispute during his time as Archbishop' (Archdiocese of Dublin Archive, 2009).

In business the Church favoured those who supported its views. Within the business community The Knights of Columbanus, which up to quite recently was a secret society, worked to foster Christian ethics in business (Inglis, 1998). Their possible influence in Government was referred to in the Dáil of the 11th June 2009 by Deputy Rory Quinn (Quinn, 2009) along with that of Opus Dei. The debate centred around delays in securing accurate details of Church interests in primary schools from the Department of Education. Deputy Quinn questioned if this lack of official data was a result of the Knights or Opus Deis internal influence and intervention. This is one of many references to lay Catholic organisations trying to influence Government, referred to in the Dáil records over the 20th Century.

The Church offered a 'safe haven' for its members, recruiting them at the early age of 14 and educating them in their various schools and seminaries. Families were approached directly to provide apostolates to various Orders with the incentive that all of their educational and living expenses would be met by the Church. Some Orders encouraged families to contribute a 'dowry' towards their Communities for novitiates upkeep on final 'ordination' or 'profession', depending on the nature of the organisation. Some recruits were sent on the 'Missions' around the world, usually to third world countries, creating much goodwill internationally towards Ireland, with many never returning. The Catholic Hierarchy through its various Orders, was one of the largest employers in Ireland and held large land banks on which it built churches, schools, monasteries, seminaries, convents, universities, and hospitals. Some of this property was donated to the Church or left to it in wills. The diverse range of services provided by religious organisations meant that the Church was the second largest employer, property owner, construction purchaser, and consumer of goods and services after the State, which gave it considerable financial influence. Weekly 'collections' at Sunday mass meant that it also had a strong cash flow, which it supplemented by charging for it's various services, making it the largest financial non-Governmental organisation in the State. Within many communities it was custom and practice to read out the 'collections list' at mass each Sunday. For many this became a chastening and humiliating experience. Some believed that ones proximity to the Alter was influenced by the amount contributed each week.

Where Church activities were concerned Canon Law took precedence over State law, as it does today. This meant that within the Church many 'indiscretions' on the part of priests, nuns and brothers were not reported to the civil authorities. This practice was to lead to the greatest scandal the State has ever known, the abuse of children. Throughout the 20th Century the Church played a major role in the provision of reformatories, industrial schools and orphanages, financed by the State. In some instances this led to the wholesale abuse of Irish children and adolescents at the hands of the Church. The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan, 2009) has recently brought into sharp focus the degradation visited upon a large number of children entrusted to the care of Church organisations, since the formation of the State. Throughout the 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s over 170,000 children passed into the care of the Church. During the course of its inquiry the Commission heard abuse allegations from approximately 14,000 inmates, many of them damaged irreparably (Ryan, 2009). The Commission identified 18 organisations such as the Christian Brothers, Sisters of Mercy and the Rosminian Order, which were found to have perpetrated the majority of the abuse.

> 'Physical and emotional abuse and neglect were features of the institutions. Sexual abuse occurred in many of them, particularly boys' institutions. Schools were run in a severe, regimented manner that imposed unreasonable and oppressive discipline on children and even on staff' (Ryan Report, Conclusion 6.01).

The report documents the wide range of relatively innocuous reasons for which children of that time were incarcerated for such as loitering, playing on the street, being born out of wedlock, being orphaned, truancy, stealing small amounts of food.

> 'The system of funding through capitation grants led to demands by Managers for children to be committed to Industrial Schools for reasons of economic viability of the institutions' (Ryan Report Conclusion 6.05).

The complicity of the authorities involved in the incarceration of these children was recognised by the Report. In particular the neglect, by the Department of Education, to oversee the proper running of these establishments.

> 'The deferential and submissive attitude of the Department of
> Education towards the Congregations compromised its ability
> to carry out its statutory duty of inspection and monitoring of
> the schools' (Ryan Report. Conclusion 6.03).

The Catholic Church denied the abuses and sought to dismiss and suppress genuine concerns and grievances. The prospect of being sent to institutions such as Artane, Letterfrack or Daingean was widely used to frighten disorderly or non-conforming school going children by teachers and some parents alike. The dismissive and authoritarian stance taken by the Church throughout these revelations illustrates, in many ways, the power and influence held by the Church in the 20th Century. This inviolability in turn had a conformist, fatalistic and self-deprecating effect on Irish adolescent society and on many of our older men. The comments of Judge Ryan might easily have applied to some non-reformatory /industrial schools.

> 'A climate of fear, created by pervasive, excessive and arbitrary
> punishment, permeated most of the institutions and all those
> run for boys. Children lived with the daily terror of not
> knowing where the next beating was coming from' (Ryan
> Report. Conclusion 11.A).

While the revelations of the Ryan Report appalled Irish citizens, many, who attended Christian Brothers Schools (CBS), and the major institutions mentioned in the report, were only too aware of the high level of 'robust' punishment visited upon the average student.

> 'The Rules and Regulations governing the use of corporal
> punishment were disregarded with the knowledge of the
> Department of Education' (Ryan Report. Conclusion 6.09).

'The predatory nature of sexual abuse including the selection and grooming of socially disadvantaged and vulnerable children was a feature of the witness reports in relation to special needs services, children's homes, hospitals and primary and second-level schools' (Ryan Report. Conclusion 6.43).

Throughout those decades, corporal punishment in schools was condoned and with few exceptions most students in the course of their school going years received some form of physical punishment form a cane or 'leather' wielding Nun or Brother. Some religious resorted to physical violence in the face of provocation or where children had not complied with dictates, to the point where civil prosecutions resulted. Nevertheless, the Irish have always recognised the value of education as a means of escaping poverty, and many parents devoted long hours in poor conditions tutoring their children when circumstances prohibited school attendance due to illness or financial pressures. Overall the Church can be said to have had a 'hegemonic' relationship with Irish society throughout the 20th Century in so far as it 'relates to (the) cultural dominance in the society as a whole' (Connell, 1995). It openly subordinated the role of females, children, homosexuals and non-Christians to its world view, not always through physical force, but through the use of its dominant 'moral monopoly' (Inglis, 1998).

It would be wrong to give the impression that all contact with the Church was doom and gloom throughout the 20th Century. In this regard it should be acknowledged that the great majority of Irish teaching religious deserve the fullest praise for their individual contribution to education in Ireland. Within society, the literature relating to the 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s consistently points to the low crime rates, and the extensive social capital which existed throughout the period (Coogan, 2003; Ferriter, 2005; Kearns, 1994; Nestor, 2009; Rockett, 2002). In urban areas communities were tightly knit and individuals were supportive of each other. In rural Ireland even though there was an ageing and diminishing population due to emigration, particularly in the 50s, the level of social participation, support and interaction was considerable. There is no doubt that work was scarce between the 30s and 60s, and, when available, work was hard, hours were long and the pay was poor, but the consolation for the vast majority was that times were tough for everyone.

In conclusion we can see from the social literature of the early and latter years of the Irish State that the liberation of Ireland from English rule while not populist was popular with its citizens. The withdrawal of the British, and their wealth, meant that limited access to capital created a cash and investment crisis which resulted in a stagnating economy. This in turn resulted in poor wages and a dependence on agri-business as the only source of foreign exchange. The enthusiasm generated by Ireland's new found independence was quickly dissipated by civil strife which drove the population into two political camps for several decades. Those representing the working classes were few within the first Dáil, and were represented by 17 Labour TDs, however

> 'Labour were told that it was in the National interest to hold back on social issues. The fairness and equality promise took a back seat' (Ferriter, 2010).

By 1932 Labour representation was reduced to seven TDs.

> 'In 1922 the Irish Transport and Workers Union had 100000 members, by 1926 there was only 40,000. The Democratic Programme was being ignored' (Ferriter, 2010).

This disregard for the working class created an air of mistrust within society just at a time when harmony and solidarity was essential to the harnessing of Irish potential. The economic war with England of the 30s, followed quickly by WWII, meant there were shortages in essential material for industry and agriculture. This placed a huge burden on rural and urban dwellers alike, and set the economic and social development of the country back many decades. Rural and urban working class citizens struggled long and hard just to survive. Those that could not earn a living were left with the only option of emigration to USA or UK, depleting the country of its young and healthy workforce. Throughout these decades the middleclass flourished, cementing still further the class divide inherited from British rule. Little effort was made by successive Governments to redress the economic and social imbalance within society. Poverty impacted most severely on the working/labouring classes including the families of the older men interviewed in this study. The early Government of the State was seen in the public mind as interested in property and was labelled

'men of property … most of whom were reared in the Victorian climate of late 19th Century middleclass Ireland' (Ferriter, 2010).

'One of the Sinn Fein slogans during the War of Independence was 'Labour must wait' (Ferriter, 2010).

Ferriter (2010) captures the plight of the working class with the following commentary in his series The Limits of Liberty,

'With no free education past primary level, a skeletal social welfare system, poor public health, a dependency on religious charities, all combined to ensure that many families lived on the edge of destitution. The slightest change in a family's circumstances, unemployment, sickness, the death of a provider, could spell disaster' (Ferriter, 2010).

Add to this the dominance and inflexible application of religious dogma, including the outlawing of contraception, within every level of society, particularly on an undereducated working class, one can see that throughout their early and middle lives Irish men and their families became devoid of self-esteem. By the time the Irish economy and Irish society had developed to the same level of prosperity and freedom as its European counterparts in the late 60s and early 70s, it was already too late for a great number of older Irish men to benefit from those developments.

From this literature review I was conscious, when conducting interviews with older men that many of them might have been the subject of the deprivation outlined above. Many would have seen their families suffer deprivation over many decades and would be the only remaining member of large families left living in Ireland. Many might have been born to single mothers, and if so would have been assigned to Catholic orphanages or other Church run institutions, and may have been victims of physical or emotional abuse.

The next chapter reviews the literature relating to the health of older men, the growth in the older male population, the current interest in their wellbeing, theories of ageing as they relate to older men, and the findings of reports relating to older men's morbidity, mortality and social practices.

Chapter 3 – Review of the Literature relating to Older Men

Why the current interest in older men

As we edge ever closer to the centenary of the foundation of the State there is a natural tendency by society to evaluate its progress in relation to whether we have or have not achieved the vision set down by those who fought and died to create this Republic. In doing so, the way we treat our elderly can be used as a reasonable yardstick of society's progress.

As a group, older men have been described as 'invisible' (Thompson, 2002), content to play an inconspicuous role in society and to be relatively undemanding when it comes to recognition for services done and services required. This reflects their traditional role as 'silent' providers to their families and society throughout the millennia. Having adopted this stance it is little wonder that they have been forgotten about in their latter years.

The turning point for public interest in older men in Ireland occurred recently when President McAleese remarked that she had noticed on her travels around the country how few older men attended the functions at which she presided. This interest on her part resulted in a conference hosted by her at Áras An Uachtaráin on 16th October 2007, and Chaired by well known television and radio personality Mr. Gay Byrne, to discuss, (title) *'Encouraging the Social Engagement of Older Men in our Communities'*. This conference attracted a lot of attention and was attended, not only by older men, but also by a broad cross-section of Government agencies, academic representatives, sports bodies, farming organisations, charities and self-help organisations interested in furthering an older men's agenda.

The key issue discussed at this conference was the isolation of older men, particularly single older men, and more particularly those in rural Ireland.

> 'In his address, Professor Eamonn O'Shea, Director of the
> Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at National

University of Ireland, Galway pointed out that there are currently more than 200,000 men over the age of 65 in Ireland, and that approximately 69,000 (one-third) of these older men live on their own. He also added that the total cohort (male and female) over the age of 65 is predicted to increase from 11% of the population in 2007 to 25% by 2026. He indicated that this rapid growth of an ageing society implies that the number of older men living on their own is likely to increase dramatically in the future. Statistics presented by Professor O'Shea also indicate that one in ten older Irish people have minimal social contact and limited social networks, and that one in ten over the age of 65 suffers from a depressive illness. A worrying consequence of this is the older males, particularly those living alone or widowed, are the second most at risk of suicidal behaviour' (Áras an Uachtaráin, 2007).

At the conclusion of this conference the GAA and the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) volunteered their services to address these older men's circumstances under a Social Isolation Initiative. Having tried unsuccessfully on numerous occasions to contact the individual appointed to this task within the GAA I contacted Damien O'Reilly of RTE for an update on the current situation. His response is detailed below:

'Dear Niall,

Thank you for your email which I received through our press office. With regards to your query, I bumped into Martin McAleese last week and he told me that there was significant progress being made with the project. He told me he would call me in the weeks ahead in relation to it. I also met GAA President Christy Cooney about six weeks ago, and again he sounded enthusiastic about the GAA Social Initiative. I am not that deeply involved with it at this point. It is now under the administration of (Name) in Croke Park.

Best Wishes, Damien'. (e-mail 09/06/2010)

From a literature search this is the only initiative in the history of the State taken by a State representative that has exclusively focused on the concerns of older men. This Presidential initiative attracted much popular media attention. Other literature and interventions tend to relate to the wider older population, and propose solutions to problems generally held in common between older males and females.

Professor O'Shea's statistics on the future older population identifies another main reason why older men are of recent and ongoing interest. Not only is the total older population increasing, in absolute numbers because of population growth, in addition older people are also living longer. As recently as 2006 it was calculated for a pensions Green Paper that men have a life expectancy at age 65 of 15.9 years (2006) and this is expected to grow to 20.6 years by 2031 (Mercer, 2007[1])

More conservative economical predictions, when combined with reducing Pension Support Ratios (PRS), presents considerable challenges for Government not only in the area of State pensions but also in a wide range of other Government services for the elderly, in particular medical and care services.

Furthermore, the current level of attention in older adults has been prompted by the disparity of wealth in the general working population. The Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2007 (CSO, 2009) points to the increased risk of poverty from 2006 at 13.6% of older people to 16.6% in 2007, while the threshold for poverty risk increased by 12.5% from €10,566 to €11,890 on one year (CSO, 2009). The high level of dependence of the aged on State pensions fuelled a review of those perceived to be particularly vulnerable, including older single isolated men. Much publicity, in the past decade, had focused on the resources being channelled towards supporting women by society and Government with little attention being directed towards older men. National screening programmes focusing on reducing premature deaths and suffering due to breast and cervical cancers in women have been in place for some time, while few national resources have addressed men's health needs. It may be true to say that latent interest in men's health may have stimulated a proposed prostate cancer screening programme due for implementation in 2012.

Other reasons for an interest in older men come from the changing role of the males in family life, resulting in greater participation by fathers and grandfathers in their children and grandchildren's upbringing. This has, in turn, prompted a greater interest in older males as part of this new family dynamic (Ferguson and Hogan, 2004).

Last, but not least, older men are of interest because the larger European Community agenda to value all of it's citizens equally by understanding their problems and assisting

them in realising their full potential, not only as economic contributors but also as participants in a united Europe. This approach strengthens the cohesion of the multi-cultural European environment by drawing those with common interests together, across national boundaries. In this context, older men have a particular contribution to make to the ongoing success of the European Community by drawing on their life course experiences to identify appropriate and sustainable solutions for the greater good of society as a whole.

Older men a growing population

The increasing older male population, economically, represents an ongoing challenge to the Irish exchequer. In 1926 when the population of Ireland was 2,971,992, (CSO, 2005) the male population stood at 1,506,889 of which 128,576 were over the age of 65. In 2006 the population stood at 4,239,848 (42% increase) of which men constituted 2,121,171 (40.07% increase) and of which 207,095 were 65 and over. This represents an increase in the over >65 male population of 62% in just 80 years. In that same time frame the percentage of men over 80 (as a % of >65s) has increased from 14% to 19.1% (an increase of 36.4%). In the 85+ age category, the number of males has increased from 6,584 (1926) to 14,845 (2006) an increase of 125.4% (CSO, 2007).

While population increases can be influenced by movements into and out of the State over that period, the primary influence here is increased longevity. Changes in lifestyle, improvements in nutrition, better housing standards, major improvements in medical care and disease control have all made their contribution to this increased longevity. In 1926 life expectancy at birth for males was 57.4 years, and at 65 it was 12.8 years. In 2003 life expectancy for males at birth was 75.1 years and at 65 it was 15.4 years. This represents an increased life expectancy at birth of 30.8% and at 65 of 20%. As our population continues to grow over the next 20 to 30 years, and as our percentage of >65s, continues to increase it is estimated that by 2021 (CSO, 2005) the 65+ population (male and female) will increase from its current 466,000 (11% of population) to 741,000 (14.6% of population) representing an overall increase of 275,000 (59% increase) in just 15 years. Beyond that the

combined population is due to increase to 1,053,928 by 2031 (HSE, 2008). Life expectancy at birth in 2036 for males is projected to rise to 82.5 and at 65 to 20.6 years, while projections to 2061 suggest life expectancy at birth will be 84.6 years and at 65 will be 22.3 years (Mercer, 2007[2]).

Increases in longevity represent a challenge for national Governments where there is a static or declining birth rate, which is the case in most Western societies. This occurs because there will be fewer people earning to fund pensions from 'current expenditure'. The impact of increased longevity combined with decreasing fertility rates can be seen in the diagram (Fig.1) where population profiles are constructed for 2002 and 2052. Within 50 years the proportion of 65+ increases, resulting in higher exchequer expenditure in support of the elderly by a proportionately decreasing younger working population.

The following diagram illustrates the forecast population change.

Figure 1 Age Pyramid of Irish Population
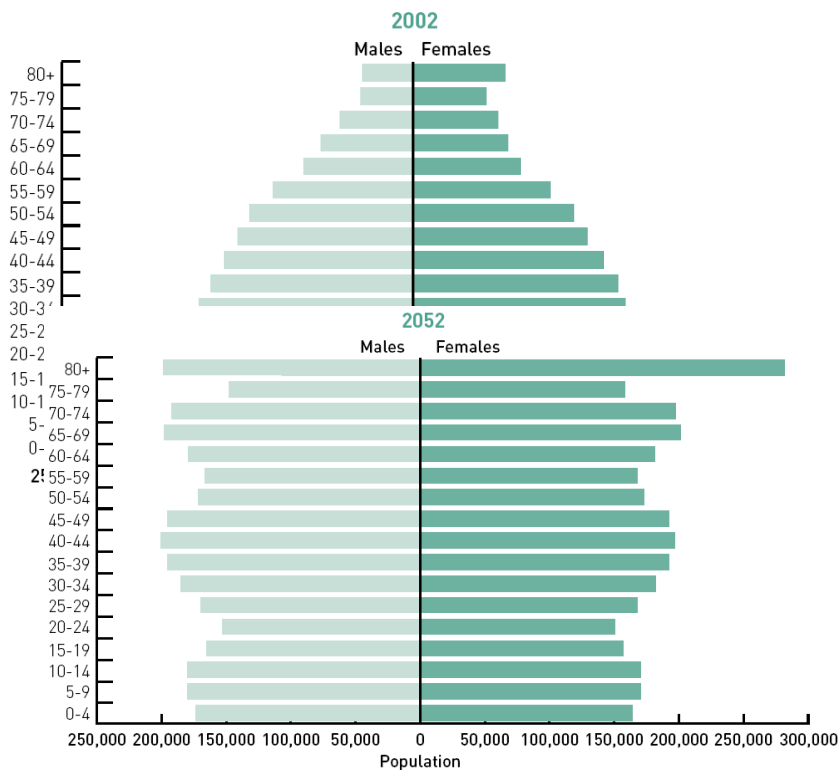
Source: Goodbody Economic Consultants (2007)

Taxes, which pay for Government services, including pensions and medical services, are generally calculated based on the number of working taxable citizens who are assumed to

be aged between 15 and 64. The number of this group compared with those under 15 and over 65 is known as the dependency ratio. This burden of support is expected to increase from 47% in 2006 to 62% by 2041 (HSE, 2008). The net effect of these changes in the population structure over the coming years, even though the population continues to grow, is that Government exchequer will have to provide for an increasing dependant population. These services cover not only pensions but also health, drugs, disability subventions and a wide range of other social services. This situation is further exacerbated by the accelerating increases in day to day medical care costs.

It is this projected increased demand which propelled the Irish Government to change the entitlement laws for the over 70s medical cards from non means-tested to means tested in the budget of October 2008. By making this entitlement 'means-tested' rather than a universal entitlement the Government over the coming years will be able to reduce its exposure burden to older adult ill-health. One way to avoid the historically high costs associated with older adult health is to ensure that current and future older adults are healthier for longer. Another alternative is for our older population to work beyond the age of 65 so that they contribute towards the cost of their pension over a longer period while also earning the State additional income tax. On the 3rd March 2010 the Government increased the pension age to 66 from 2014. State retirement age is expected to increase further to 68 by 2028. It is interesting to note that the UK Government are currently considering the same measures for it's citizens while the French are proposing to delay State retirement to 62 years of age from it's current 60.

Older men and ageing theories.

> ' … the survival rate for those aged 65 and over is lower in Ireland than in any other country in the Western world and many developing countries. Indeed, life expectancy for elderly men in rural areas (in particular) has declined over the last 60 years' (Fahey, 1994).

The ageing process is explained by a multitude of theories. The three main categories into which these theories fall into are: the Biological Theory, the Sociological Theory and the Psychological Theory.

Within the Biological Theory there are a number of hypotheses. One such theory is the 'Wear and Tear' theory (Austad, 2009), first introduced by Dr. August Weismann in 1882, which likens the human body to a machine which eventually 'collapses' and dies through wear and tear. This theory posits that the use and abuse to which we subjected our bodies through the consumption of toxins, fat, sugar, caffeine, nicotine and exposure to ultra-violet sun rays as well as emotional and physical stress caused our bodies to become worn out.

The 'Autoimmune' theory suggests that with increasing age the human body rejects its own tissues resulting in death (Effros, 2009). The 'Free-Radical' theory is where certain chemical compounds accumulate in the body over time which brings about death (Shringarpure and Davies, 2009). The 'Programmed Cell' theory posits that each cell has a predetermined length of life programmed into it (Gonidakis and Longo, 2009). 'Somatic Mutation' theory argues that cell mutations will produce functional failure eventually resulting in death (Martin, 2009). The 'Homeostatic' theory revolves around the concept of the body's inability over time to maintain stability within its various chemical levels. (Darkwa, 1997).

Under the Sociological Ageing Theories, the most prominent is the 'Disengagement Theory' (Cumming and Henry, 1961), which proposes that ageing persons naturally 'withdraw' or 'disengage' from society and other personal relationships. 'Role Theory' suggests that as individuals lose their 'role' in society they lose their 'self-esteem' and 'identity' causing them to lose interest in life.

'Activity Theory' developed by Havighurst (1961) postulates that the elderly get greater enjoyment and satisfaction out of life when engaged in positive activities which are the antithesis of old age.

Perhaps one of the most enduring theories is that of Age Stratification (Riley and Foner, 1972), which sees old age as an interplay between the older person and society. Age

Stratification Theory suggests that an individuals changing age in any particular society influences that person, which in turn impacts upon how that individual relates to those of their own and other ages groups. This theory posits that each age strata, has its own characteristics based on size, gender, social class distribution and social mobility, and is affected by particular historical events which impact on its attitudes and behaviours.

'Modernisation Theory' (Cowgill and Holmes, 1972) posits that due to modernisation of the industrial and business world with the introduction of mechanisation, computing, business sciences and a host of other technologies, that the status of older adults, and particularly older men, is diminished. Traditionally older men in business held the wisdom and controlled the resources of production. Technology has inverted this to the point where it is perceived as a positive disadvantage to be old where modern technology is used extensively. As a consequence older men can become alienated from society.

On the psychological level there are many theories about ageing and how they contribute to Quality of Life (QOL), morbidity and mortality. The two most enduring hypotheses are those expounded by Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) and Erik Erikson (1902-1994). Both of these theories state that a man goes through certain developmental stages in his life. In the case of Freud, these stages are primarily psychosexual (oral, anal, phallic, genital, Oedipal and pubertal) in nature and are manifested / reflected in adult and elderly life behaviours. These stages are the primary drivers in man's QOL and impact significantly on morbidity, particularly mental health, and are a determinant in a man's mortality.

Erikson posits

> '… that side by side with the stages of psychosexual development were psychosocial stages of ego development in which the individual had to establish new basic orientations to himself and his social world' Erikson also proposed that 'personality development continued throughout the whole life cycle, and that each stage had a positive as well as a negative component'(Elkin, 2008) .

This hypothesis has eight stages of development each of which has positive and negative aspects and influences. Each of these stages is outlined below.

Erikson's Psychological Stages

Stages	Age	Positive outcomes	Negative outcomes
Trust V Mistrust	0 - 1	Child develops faith in people, believes that his needs will be taken care of	Child comes to believe that other people cannot be counted on, believes that his need will not be met
Autonomy V Shame and Doubt	1 - 3	Child develops confidence in his ability to do basic tasks independently	Child lacks self-confidence
Initiative V Guilt	3 - 5	Child feels OK about trying new things	Child is afraid to try new things, afraid of failure or disapproval if he doe not try new things
Competence V Inferiority	6 - 12	Child takes pride in being able to accomplish normal tasks	Child feels inferior because he cannot do things that other children appear to do with ease
Identity V role identity	13 - 18	Child develops a sense of who he is and how he wants to live life	Child may be unable to settle on an identity (role confusion) or may adopt a negative identity
Intimacy V isolation	Young adulthood	Person is able to form close relationships with friends and lovers	Person has difficulty forming or sustaining close relationships
Generative V stagnation	Middle adulthood	Person is productive through raising a family or through some form of work	Person is unable to be productive
Ego integrity V Despair	Late adulthood	Person is able to look back on his life with pride and satisfaction and approach death with dignity and acceptance	Person feels that he has not accomplished what he set out to accomplish in life and is frustrated by the approaching end of life

Erik H. Erikson, (1963)

Selective Optimisation Theory (Baltes and Baltes, 1990 as cited in Jones & Rose, 2005) adopts the approach that successful ageing is based on 'the ability of older adults to adapt to physical, mental and social losses in later life' (Jones and Rose, 2005 p.16). This theory involves focusing on high priority areas of life which yield the maximum levels of satisfaction and personal control, as well as optimising personal skills and talents along with the use of technology and personal strategies to achieve one's objectives.

Older men and health

QOL, at all ages, is inextricably linked to health and this is particularly true in old age. The World health Organisation (WHO) defines QOL as:

> '…an individual's perception of his or her position in life in the context of the culture and value system where they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. As people age, their quality of life is largely determined by their ability to maintain autonomy and independence' (WHO, 2002 p.13).

The ability to walk, talk, think and communicate with one's family and friends is essential to a long and happy life. For older men this aspect of QOL is firmly embedded in a Social Determinants Model of Health as articulated by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1998). Within this model, health is influenced by age, sex and constitution. Individual lifestyle also plays a major part as well as participation in social and community networks. Of particular importance is education, the work and living environment and conditions, employment/unemployment, accessibility to health care services and availability of clean water and appropriate sanitation. These factors combined with the general economic, social and environmental conditions form the basis for good or bad physical, mental and emotional health. All of these influences may vary from individual to individual and the impact of any or all of these influences can vary according to frequency, intensity and

duration over the course of a lifetime and, determine an individual's quality of life.
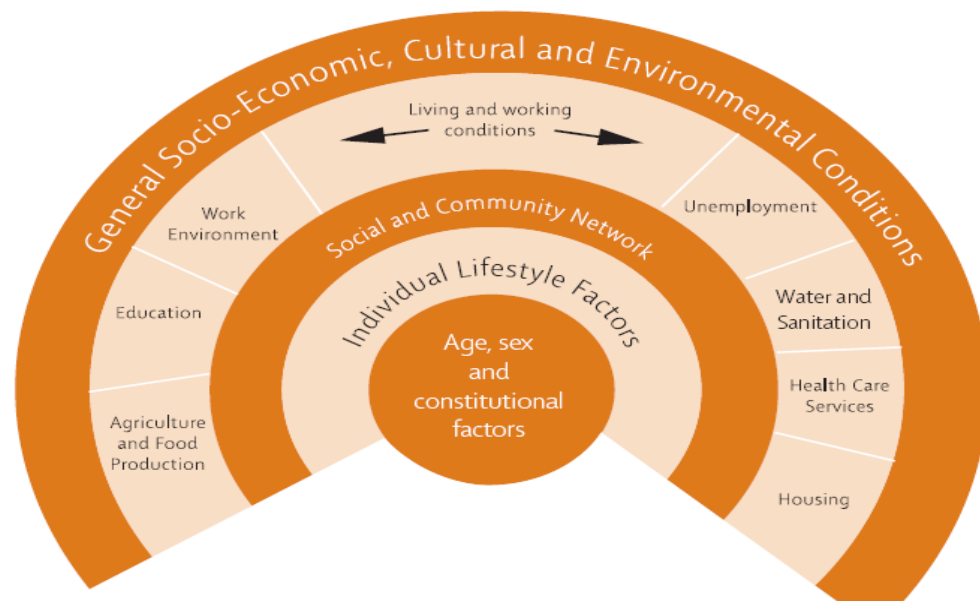
The Social Determinants Model

Source : Dahlgren & Whitehead (1998)

Morbidity and mortality

In 1980 The Black Report identified a range of social issues and circumstances, within the British Isles, which clearly established the link between health, lifestyle, social networks and an individual's socio-economic circumstances. That Report identified a relationship between an individual's education status, social position, as determined by their place within Socio-Economic Groupings (SEGs) order, gender, and age. The findings of this Report, and those of the WHO (1994 and 2002), demonstrate clearly the implications of these determinants as factors influencing morbidity and mortality. Those in higher SEGs (1/2) are more likely to live longer, have better health and be more capable and likely to pursue health enabling lifestyles than those in SEGs 5/6. The Black Report also established that while women are sicker throughout their lives, men die younger. The Black Report also points out that the longevity of men's lives is also influenced by their social class.

> 'In adult life, class differences in mortality are found for
> many different causes. As in childhood the rate of

> accidental death and infectious disease forms a steep
> gradient especially among men; moreover an extraordinary
> variety of causes of deaths such as cancer, heart and
> respiratory disease also differentiate between the classes'.
> (Black, 1980. Chpt 2.28)

While the principles of the Black Report might equally be applied to Ireland it was important that specific data be secured in relation to men's health to form the basis of a coherent national men's health strategy. This opportunity was afforded with the publication of 'Getting Inside Men's Health' (Richardson, 2004), which not only confirmed the relevance of many of the Black Report's findings and their applicability in Ireland, but also gave a unique insight into the health and circumstances of older men in Ireland in particular. Compared with younger men, older men significantly value aspects of their relationship with their doctor in areas of caring and concern, as well as the ability to discuss private and personal matters with them. This is reflected in the additional time spent by older men in doctor consultations over younger men. 'They rate highly their doctors knowledge of them as patients' (Richardson, 2004). Older men are also less likely to engage in high risk behaviours by wearing seat belts when in the back of cars, than younger men. Older men are more conscious of their weekly alcohol intake and

> 'participate more in positive self-care practices and
> preventative health behaviours' and 'as men grow
> older they are likely to become more health-
> conscious' (Richardson, 2004 p.89).

Older men are also significantly less likely to drive having had two alcoholic drinks or more and are more likely 'to meet the recommended type of and amount of physical activity for health gain (Richardson, 2004 p. 131).

In 2005 the four major causes of death in older men were circulatory diseases (41%), malignant neoplasm (24%), respiratory diseases (10%) and injuries and poisonings (7%), which represented 82% of all male deaths (DoHC, 2008). Deaths in men >65 of 11,675 compared with those of females >65 of 8,917(CSO, 2006). Male deaths exceeded female deaths in each of the above categories.

The 'Getting Inside Men's Health' findings in relation to older men include the following:

- On average 55.8% of all men consulted their doctor in the previous three months or less, and 89.9% consulted a doctor in the previous seven to twelve months.

- Older men were six times more likely to visit their doctor than younger men.

- Those in higher SEGs (SEG 1/2) such as professionals, administrators, better-off and better educated, consistently fared better in relation to morbidity and mortality rates than those in the lower SEGs (SEG 5/6).

- 72.2% of older men 'never hesitated' about going to the doctor. One quarter of men from SEG 5/6 said they would only go 'as a last resort' compared with 10% from SEG 1/2.

- Older men were less likely to leave the doctor with unanswered health questions and tended to have longer consultations. They 'viewed more highly the personal aspect of care they received from their doctor as well as rating highly the doctor's knowledge of them' and felt 'enabled' as a result of consultations.

- Older men showed a significant preference for being seen by male doctors.

- Older and better-off men were significantly more satisfied with their doctor's practices than younger, less well-off men.

- 47% of those aged 60 – 69 and 59% of those over 70 reported having a long-term illness with 44% and 36% respectively reporting 'neglect of their health' as a contributory factor.

- Of those who reported 'neglect of their health' 59% came from SEGs 5/6 while only 33% came from SEGs 1/2.

- Anxiety or fear of visiting the doctor was mostly experienced by those less well educated and from lower SEGs.

Factors contributing to ill-health included excessive drinking, smoking, inadequate physical activity and stress as well as lifestyle high risk behaviours.

- High risk behaviour such as binge alcohol consumption (20 units or more per week) affected 12% of those aged 60-69, 13% of those aged over 70.

- Smoking: Within the >71 age category only 9.5% are smokers. These represent only 2% of all smokers, with those in SEGs 5/6 representing 59% of smokers, and SEGs 1/2 only 11% (Office of Tobacco Control, 2007).

- In relation to physical health and activity,

> 'Older, less well-off, less educated and unmarried / non cohabiting men were less likely to meet the recommended type and amount of physical activity for health gain' (Richardson, 2004 p.62).

- With prostate cancer 'More than 75% of all cases occur in men over 65, and about 40% of men over 80 have the disease' (Harvard, 2009). Digital Rectal Examination (DRE), is performed by a doctor to determine the condition of the prostate for prostatitis or prostate cancer, 33% -50% of over 50s questioned were not aware of the most common prostate cancer symptoms and only 25% had had a DRE examination (Richardson, 2004 p.69).

- While the highest risk age group for testicular cancer is 20-35 (Richardson, 2004), only 11.2% of all age groups surveyed regularly practiced Testicular Self-Examination.

> 'Older men with less formal education (were) less likely to be knowledgeable about testicular examination' (Richardson, 2004 p.70) .

- Stress appeared to diminish with age, with younger age groups citing work demands, financial pressures and 'the people I work with' as the three most highly stressful aspects of their lives (Richardson, 2004 p.63).

- Older men were more likely to participate in self-care practices by visiting the doctor more frequently, adopt more positive health behaviours by participating in recommended levels of physical activity, smoking less, and being more conscious of their alcohol consumption.

- By and large, risk-behaviours, more commonly associated with younger men, were not major factors in older men's lives. 'Suicide and Intentional self-harm' remained stubbornly and consistently high in those 65 - 74 at 18-19 per 100,000 population (Walsh, 2008).

While a large proportion of older men have long term illnesses, they are diligent in consulting their doctor where they suspect deteriorating health, they value their doctor's advice and feel empowered to act upon it. They also have the mind-set to improve their behaviours and adopt practices which will minimise illness and improve their life circumstances. The high-risk health behaviours associated with older men relate mainly to smoking and drinking, and abuse levels are low.

Of particular concern is the ongoing premature mortality risks of suicide and self-harm, transport accidents and lack of physical activity in older less well-of men. The Irish Times of 30th October 2009 reported that suicides in Ireland had increased by 43% when compared with the first quarter of the previous year with 106 people taking their lives. Four out of five suicides were men.

The mental health of men as reflected in Richardson's (2004) report indicates that men have higher rates of hospitalisation than women for schizophrenia and alcoholic disorders and fewer admissions for depressive disorders. Unfortunately no breakdown based on age is provided so it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to how 'older men' fare in these categories other than the reference to higher rates of admission for divorced and widowed males. However these may not be 'older men' within the terms of reference of the study. The average annual suicide rate for 2001 to 2005 for men aged 65 and over was reported at 60, whereas the similar rate for females is 16.2 (Walsh, 2008). The primary methods for suicide used by older men are hanging (47%), drowning (28%), poisoning (11%) and firearms (8%) (NOSP, 2007). In this regard the WHO recommends that

> 'Particular attention needs to be paid to the differences between men and women in the way they respond to their mental health problems' (WHO, 2005, p.22).

Transport accidents may increase in older populations due to the fact that visual acuity decreases with age and that

> '12% to 14% loss of visual field in older adults coupled with sensory and motor deficits, results in an increase in automobile accidents involving adults over 65 years old' (Jones and Rose, 2005, p.49).

Moderate physical activity reduces cardiac death by 20 to 25% in people with established heart disease (Merz and Forrester, 1996). It also prolongs independence and reduces trips and falls, which are a major contributory factor to morbidity and premature death (NCAOP, 2003). The Irish Times, (McGreevy, 2009) reported that, in 2007, 67% of all claims referred to the Injuries Board (formerly known as the Personal Injuries Assessment Board) were for slips, trips and falls.   Regular physical activity also aids competence in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). These are necessary for getting through a normal day unaided requiring bending, stretching, turning, putting on and taking off clothes, turning on and off light switches, taps, turning keys in doors, walking up and down stairs safely, handling cooking utensils, preparing food, washing clothes and self and going to the toilet. These activities can be taken for granted and mobility can diminish if not practiced regularly. 'Go for Life' is the national grant aided programme specifically designed to develop these facilities and other physical sporting capabilities in older people.

Nutrition is an important aspect of older adults' lives and, in particular in the lives of older single men living alone. Older men, during their adolescent and working life were not primarily included in the 'domestic' side of home life which involved cooking, cleaning and rearing children (Muckross, 2009 ; Rockett, 2002). This lack of cooking preference/capability is reflected in the Slán Survey (2007) which reported that more men than women, of all ages, did not have breakfast, 11% (M) compared with 9% (F). More men purchased their main meal outside of the home, 14% (M) compared with 10% (F), and more men than women purchased their light meals outside of the home, 27% (M) compared with 19% (F) (DoHC, 2009). In older age the absence of cooking skills and nutritional information, can be very detrimental to good health, for, as they get older, older people may not adjust their diet to their new lifestyle. This can result in under nourishment or an unbalanced diet leading to overweight, diabetes or excessive cholesterol which can lead to

coronary artery disease or stroke. Such lifestyle diseases are called non-communicable diseases and are the single largest cause of death in >65s (WHO, 2003). The correct balance of carbohydrates, protein, fats and minerals is essential for healthy active living. The SLAN Report (2008) tracks the consumption of various categories of foods consumed, by sex. The following (see Table 1.) is a brief profile of men's food consumption patterns for '98, '02 & '07.

Table 1: The % of men complying with the Food Pyramid Serving Consumption Guidelines.

Food Category	**1998**	**2002**	**2007**
Cereals, Bread & Potatoes	42	37	27
Fruit & Veg.	49	61	73
Milk & Dairy Products	23	24	21
Meat, Fish & Poultry	34	38	37
Foods high in fats, sugar, salt	13	16	13

SLAN (2008)

From this we can see that there is increasing compliance with the guidelines by men in the fruit and vegetables category, with proteins in the form of meat , fish and poultry stabilising at around 37% followed by cereals, breads & potatoes, dairy products and fats sugars and salts.

In addition to this, older men also need to maintain contact with a dentist, to ensure that they have fully functioning teeth or dentures. Nationwide fluoridation was not introduced into Ireland until 1964. Prior to this, oral hygiene was at a low ebb throughout the first half of the 20th Century, resulting in our present day older men losing many of their natural teeth at a relatively early age (Clarkson et al, 2003). As good mastication is essential for accommodating as wide and as varied a diet as possible, it is essential that older people have easy and regular access and to a dentist. The National Survey of Adult Oral Health

(2002) reported that although 65% of older adults were medical card holders and entitled to free dental care, only 14% availed of this free service, even though 79% of those surveyed (N=715), had a clinical need for treatment. Over 20% never visited a dentist and 44% visited a dentist regularly. Barriers to attending dental clinics include morbidity, cost of transport and fear of dentists (Wood et al, 2009).

For many older men with diabetes, poor circulation and calluses on the feet, from the friction of wearing working or industrial boots for most of their lives, results in many of them requiring regular chiropodist / podiatrist services. Without this attention, many would find walking extremely painful, or in some cases, impossible.

Morbidity in over 65s is also examined within the Black Report.

> 'At least half the population in this age group report some form of long-standing sickness, although among retired professional workers and their wives, the percentage is lower', and 'males who have retired from manual occupations show a somewhat higher propensity to long-standing sickness than do their white-collar counterparts' (Black, 1980, Chapter 2.62).

Domestically the Respond! Housing Association's survey of its older clients, reported that 68% of those over 65 in their care, of which 68% were men, had at least one chronic illness (Lloyd, 2010). These older men had been mainly manual workers in their working lives, and are a source of participants for this study, as well as others who have a background in agriculture. This level of long-standing illness is consistent with the Slán (2007) survey in which 62% of over 65s reported having a chronic illness (DoHC, 2009). Studies show that those in manual occupations (SEGs 5/6) suffer from more diseases and die younger than those in SEGs1/2.

On the 28th January 2009, The Department of Health and Children launched its much heralded National Men's Health Policy (DoHC, 2008). This policy document also adopts a social determinates approach to men's health, identifying the risks and opportunities for decreasing morbidity and mortality rates among men. The document covers all age groups and SEGs and details a comprehensive course of actions in support of actualising its

recommendations. If implemented fully this policy would make a major contribution to both the longevity and quality of our older men's lives. Unfortunately the Minister of State Mary Wallace, who launched the document, stated that no additional resources would be allocated to implementing the document's recommendations, over and above those already in place. This is particularly disappointing for older men who could have benefited considerably from the support and practical recommendations detailed therein. In particular the recommendation to institute Social Personal and Health Schools for boys, in a school setting, would benefit them later in life from this intervention. This declaration by the Minister puts into very clear perspective the low esteem and value in which men, and particularly older men, are held by the State. Neither the men's organisations present, nor women's organisations, whose members would benefits from a healthier happier male population, nor the media or TDs protested at this stance by Government. This apparent apathy also reflects the traditional lack of priority attributed to men's issues by society.

Older men and masculinities

The main thrust of most men's lives is their work. The environment in which our older men lived their lives has changed rapidly and these changes have had a major impact on older men in particular, not only in their day to day working lives but also on their masculinities. These changes are articulated by Diczfalusy in his address to the Berzelius Symposium on Aging Males held in Malmo, Sweden (September 2008) quoting Lesher and Howick in a National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) Report:

> 'Eight hundred life spans can bridge more than 50,000 years. But of these 800 people 650 spent their lives in caves or worse: only the last 70 had any truly effective means of communicating with one another, only the last 6 saw a printed word or had any real means of measuring heat or cold, only the last 4 could measure time with any precision; only the last 2 used an electric motor: and the vast majority of the items that make up our material world were developed within the lifetime of the eight-hundredth person'. He (Diczfalusy) went on to say, 'Since 1966 the amount of new information has doubled every 6 to 7 years.

Thus it seems justifiable to state that the scientific progress achieved by *homo sapiens* in the past 50 years is at least as much as, if not more than, that of all preceding generations during 50,000 years' (Diczfalusy, 2008).

Work provides identity, status, influence and implies certain practices of masculinities such as control and independence. This view of men has changed somewhat in recent decades as we have become a more meritocratic society. This was not always the case. In fact, a feature of the environment of this study is that 'older' older men lived with a clear delineation between what was 'masculine' and what constituted 'femininity'.

The literature refers to 'hard men', 'quiet men', 'strong men' (Kearns, 1994). So much so, that one of the most popular poems of the 20th Century by Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936) who, in his poem IF, published in 1910, spoke of the commonly perceived qualities of masculinity as 'keep(ing) your head when all about you are losing theirs …not be(ing) tired by waiting … force(ing) your heart and nerve and sinew, to serve long after they are gone ….and so hold on when there is nothing in you, except the Will which says to them 'Hold on' … if neither foe nor loving friend can hurt you …. You'll be a Man my son'. Masculine acts of 'bravery' are frequently eulogised in books, poems, films extolling the virtues of suffering in silence, and not complaining, particularly in war situations.

Masculinity as defined by Connell

'…to the extent that it can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practice through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture' (Connell, 1995 p.71).

Connell also accepts that masculinity is a 'moving target' defined by time, place and social culture so that it is not a fixed universal outcome or composite characteristic. The stereotypical masculinities pertinent to Irish culture overall, may not be the primary masculinities in other nation States. This aspect of Irish masculinities is of particular interest bearing in mind that Ireland has some unique characteristics which may in turn reflect in its male population. The first unique characteristic, in a European context, is that Ireland is an island off the coast of Europe virtually culturally isolated for hundreds of

years. It did not have the benefit of other European countries by being constantly involved in large scale trade with a multitude of close neighbours. It did not have significant and constantly changing multicultural influences. It did not have significant natural resources such as coal or iron with which to trade or build its economy. It did not have any colonial wealth or an industrial revolution, as did the rest of Europe. It was dominated for 700 years by the British culture; it did not play a major role in their development and was, by and large, peripheral to British commercial and political success. Ireland was Catholic, and subject to the rule of Rome in matters of faith and morals which seeped into every aspect of life. The Irish, perhaps with the exception of St. Brendan, were not renowned for their global discoveries and, as such, did not repatriate foreign cultures and integrate them into its own society. Even in modern times the social developments of Western societies are slow in being adopted in Ireland, to the extent that we are considered to be 10-15 years behind America and 5 years (some say 10 years) behind Britain. All of these aspects of peripherality and cultural isolation over so many years, from the main stream of the Western world, reflect themselves in the Irish male.

Dominated by colonial social and economic structures (Coogan, 2003: Ferriter, 2005) and strongly aligned to Christian values (Inglis, 2008), the Irish man learned to operate within conservative parameters and expressed himself with a deep sense of stoicism and compliance, combined with a deep-rooted respect for, and resentment of, authority. The Irish male found expression through personal independence and self-sufficiency. This aspect of the Irish male's character is perhaps most evident in the rural male from where most of Irelands major leaders originated. Being largely undereducated, compared to his Western counterparts, he sought solace in his work, which, by its agrarian nature was mostly solitary, rather than participating in the cut and thrust of sophisticated society. With 338,000 holdings in Ireland in 1930 a large majority of the population was involved in agricultural related employment (CSO, 2007). Much of the literature points to a subservient and compliant population (Coogan, 2003: Ferriter, 2005). This situation did not suit all Irish men, some of whom emigrated to England or Europe to pursue their careers most notably artists such as Sean O'Sullivan RHA and Louis le Brocquy HRHA and writers Sean O'Casey, Samuel Beckett, George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce (Dublin Tourist,

2010). Many of these, unfettered by domestic social constraints, achieved great recognition in their chosen fields.

In keeping with the challenging economic times and the imperative to survive in a society and environment where the effects of misfortune were all too evident on a daily basis, some physically dominant male groups existed. In Dublin, gangs of underprivileged and unemployed men, known as 'razor gangs', because they kept razor blades in the peaks of their caps, consistently sought dominance over other underprivileged groups. The violence became so consistent between these groups that it became necessary to build additional unemployment exchanges on both sides of the River Liffey to keep the factions apart (Kearns, 1994). The institutional response to this type of masculinity was to send in Sergeant 'Lugs' Brannigan and his team of hand picked well built (generally rural) Gardai to address these challenges. Brannigan would often confront leading trouble makers with 'one-to-one' fisticuff fights in 'rough' neighbourhoods to settle rowdiness and excessive criminal activity. He had a reputation for 'always fighting fair' (Kearns, 1994). While specific examples of this type of hegemonic activity existed it would not be considered a prominent or universal Irish male trait, except perhaps where fuelled by excessive imbibing of alcohol.

As the social order changed with the development of the State, and as men became more educated and economic life improved, so the Irish male asserted his new found independence. Changes in a whole range of technologies obviating the need for many physical masculinities in most workplaces. The development of mechanical and hydraulic equipment powered by electricity, later supplemented by digital computers, turned the focus gradually away from a physical approach to work to an educationally based economy and lifestyle which in turn has gradually lead to a knowledge based economy. These changes dispensed with the previously valued masculinities of physical strength, physical competitiveness, as well as physical aggression, and concentrated on cooperation, networking, communications and business skills not previously regarded as masculine traits (Ni Laoire, 2001). This in turn, at least in the workplace, conditioned the development of hierarchical masculinities based on physical capacities. At a larger community level control was gradually taken from the individual, who out of economic necessity combined into

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collectives, which disempowered many at an individual level, but brought with it many financial benefits. The success of the Irish co-operative system is a clear example of this. Ni Laoire (2001) in her study of young farmers and their masculinities in a changing rural Ireland, concluded that these changes in the technology and the way the farming business is now constructed, has resulted in 'a destabilisation of hegemonic rural masculinities'. Ni Laoire argues that there is 'a persistence in masculinities in Irish farming …. albeit in a modern form'. These influences would have impacted upon the current cohort of older rural farmers and workers. Legislation in the workplace has also changed the nature of masculinities permitted. The 'Health and Safety at Work Act, 2005' (Oireachtas, 2005) and its predecessors, fostered levels of personal responsibility and mutual care not generally associated with hegemonic masculinities, to the benefit of all.

These developments combined with the generally accepted social construct that, throughout their lives, men are expected to behave in a particular 'masculine' way to pain, hurt, rejection, illness and threat of danger by suppressing their feelings, not showing fear or suffering in silence, as articulated in Men Talking (North-Eastern Health Board, 2001). This contributed further to the 'solitary' nature of older Irish men. The need for control, independence of action and reluctance to seek advice or assistance can result in unnecessary suffering for men in later life when they become physically ill, physically restricted or limited in what they can achieve and in personal health care. Studies of younger men show how they are reluctant to admit to being ill (Richardson, 2004), are embarrassed to discuss their medical circumstances with their doctor except as a last resort and continue to indulge in high-risk behaviours in relation to prevention of accidents, alcohol consumption and sexual activities (Ferguson and Hogan, 2007). These traits seem less pronounced in older men.

Older men and participation

Retirement represents an ideal opportunity for older men to develop personally through active involvement in sport, pastimes, social networking and community participation.

Unfortunately the reality is quite different. The independent and transient lifestyle of many older Irish men, particularly single rural older men, who followed work around the country, and sometimes abroad, cultivated in them a solitary self-sufficiency which stayed with many of them into their elderly years. Davidson talks about life being a continuum for men and how 'the social roles in later life are linked to men's earlier lives in public and private spheres' (Davidson et al., 2003). This leads to differences in older men's lives which vary considerably depending on their marital status.

Older married men have large social circles, mostly because of their wives social contacts, support and encouragement. They entertain friends and family at home regularly whereas the 'never married' have few close friends, rarely if ever entertains acquaintances or family in his home and will tend to frequent public places for entertainment (Davidson et al., 2003). Widowed and divorced older men fall in the middle of these two extremes with widowers having a smaller social network than married men but also have very strong social support from friends and family who visit or keep in touch regularly, particularly their daughters who tend to be the major carers with older widowed men (Davidson et al, 2003: Timonen, 2008). Widowed men continue contact with neighbours, by virtue of living in the family home, and continue their associations with sports clubs and charity work, although socially they feel a little threatened by widows (Davidson et al, 2003). Divorced men have smaller social circles than widowers, generally having moved out of the family home, and tend to live alone in flats or apartments and have minimal family contact and support, possibly due to the animosity generated during the separation process (Davidson et al., 2003). Older married men have a 'sage-like' relationship with their children advising and supporting them financially, tending to guide their sons in the ways of life and protecting their daughters. Their relationship with their sons were often 'competitive' until their sons reached their early 30s whereas their relationship with their daughters tended to be 'more relaxed and mutually affectionate' (Davisdon et al., 2003).

Grandfatherhood

Grandfatherhood, is a time of great enjoyment and sharing of affection with grandchildren by older men. Divorced older men reported little contact with grandchildren and overall 'felt left with the possibility of a lonely old age' (Davidson et al., 2003). Many of these older men have spent a lifetime working long hours, some on shift to support their families. Single older men maintained 'a distance from intimate relationships' (Davidson et al., 2003 p.13) , entertained in pubs and restaurants and because of their lifelong single status tended to be particularly capable in the area of housekeeping (Davidson et al., 2003 p.13). Overall older men did not replace lost friendships, as 'men's friendships are principally forged and maintained within a workplace setting', this practice leads to a reducing circle of friends over time (Adams, 1994). Cancian (1987) points out that much of the limited research undertaken around older men tends to apply 'feminine' values of importance with regard to the significance of larger social intimate contacts. Men's priority is for 'individual autonomy and independence' (Davidson et al., 2003 p. 14). Aber et al., (2002) posits that the 'feminine ruler' is used to measure the quality and quantity of male social networks. This lends substance to Davidson's (2006) argument of the importance of getting the male perspective on these issues.

Loneliness

Loneliness is often cited as a cause for concern in older men, in particular in older single men. Ruxton (2006, p.11) states 'Loneliness resulting from the death of a spouse, poor social support and physical illness or disability can lead to self-harm in older age - particularly amongst older men. Social isolation also often precedes homelessness, and homelessness may exacerbate and intensify isolation'. Davidson (2006) observes that 'Having financial resources does not solve the problem of loneliness. The need for mental stimulation should be considered in addition to activities and social opportunities'. Unfortunately men who are not 'joiners' in their younger years are unlikely to become members of organisations in later life (Perren et al., 2002, as cited in Davidson, 2006). In Davidson's (2006) studies the problem of loneliness was more openly discussed within the SEGs 5/6 than in SEGs 1/2, with those with better financial resources report having 'fuller

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lives'. Having one's own transport is viewed as important for personal 'independence' (Davidson, 2006). Much of this isolation in older men's lives derives from their underdeveloped 'social skills' and as such can be regarded as a 'learned incapacity' (Davidson, 2006) developed as a result of operating in a competitive work environment. This results in men's overall social interactions being generally conditioned and orientated to work interactions rather than emotional expressions, thereby limiting self-disclosure and intimacy (Davidson, 2006). It is this self same self-disclosure and intimacy which can limit women's progress in the workplace (Davidson et al., 2003). While this 'measured' social approach may be appropriate in a work environment it is entirely unsuited to social contact in later life where there is generally no competitive gain or advantage to be derived. Another aspect of this 'work ethic' is men's orientation to achieving goals, usually in a material or instrumental manner. This culture, over a lifetime of practice, and approval by peers, colleagues and society, can make older men 'uncomfortable' achieving ephemeral or non-practical outcomes which would be regarded by society as pre-eminently 'feminine'. All of these characteristics combined contribute to older men feeling reluctant with participating in social clubs and societies where the dominant culture is 'female oriented', because of the higher participation levels of women (Ruxton, 2006) or where individuality and independence of choice is subservient to 'non-masculine' ideologies. In Australia, this problem is addressed through male oriented 'Men's Sheds' clubs, of which there are over 300 (AMSA, 2009). These are places where men, and particularly older men, congregate to socialise and discuss matters of mutual interest in a male oriented environment, and learn and pass on their skills to other members, and contribute to their local communities.

Davidson (2006), on older men and their needs, outlines an array of recommendations appropriate to older men, some of her key observations and recommendations are outlined below:

- Older men are most happy when involved in productive 'project type' activities which they find interesting, which reflect their masculinities, and where they can engage with other men of a variety of age groups and have occasional contact with women, at their discretion.

- They like life and events to be 'structured' rather than random.

- They thrive best where they have regular contact with their families, friends, relations or other 'intellectually' stimulating acquaintances or professionals.

- Good transport facilities, especially at evenings and weekend, provide continuity of social contact.

- They lack domestic capabilities in a variety of areas and also lack information on their entitlements and services available to them in areas of welfare, social activities and health. Services should reflect this.

- They prefer physical contact, where necessary, to be with men rather than women and need ongoing advice on management of illnesses and disabilities as they prefer to do things for themselves rather than have them done for them.

- Because of their 'independent' nature they are less likely to share confidences with a wide group of people and therefore lack 'emotional support', this should be compensated for through 'befriending' which men find acceptable.

- The services provided to older men should be 'flexible' to accommodate their changing needs and offer 'choice'.

- They require warm homes and sufficient finance not to worry about fuel bills.

These observations are largely in line with those of Ruxton (2006) and many are also reflected in Lloyd (2010). These recommendations are relevant to this study as they provide a baseline for older men's thinking, habits, social networks and familial preferences. They also provide a relatively safe conversation platform for expanding the interview conversation.

An Australian study by Hall et al. (2007) found that older men like to socialise as part of their leisure activities which utilised their existing skills or which enabled them to acquire new skills. This study also reported that older men liked to have physical outcomes to their socialising, as this was often an endorsement or recognition of their previous work-related

skills. The social aspect of these gathering was secondary to the participation in the 'projects'. Team work was perceived as important as a core element of participation. Hall et al. (2007) also found that socialising in this way satisfied older men's desire for independence and personal control and was thought by them to be helpful in times of personal challenge such as divorce, bereavement or when family members had to leave the home or neighbourhood because of work or housing pressures. Davidson and Aber (2003) identified that older men found difficulty in establishing and sustaining relationships with other men and believed that this was because of the lack of social skills generally amongst men. Studies relating to older men show a reluctance by them to use 'day centres' except as a last resort, these being regarded as an indicator that they have 'given up' (Davidson and Aber, 2003). Lloyd, (2010) found that Respond! older adults were also reluctant to use the services of the 'day centres' provided, as they were seen as a sign of dependency. However the activity /socialisation approach has been gaining popularity where older men participate in tours or social events organised by sheltered housing community officers (Lloyd, 2010). Socialising through attending 'tea dances' is reflected in the older men interviews, which are covered later in this study as well as regular Church attendance and visits to the pub afterwards.

Fear of crime

Fear of crime is an area of concern to older men. There has been some prominence to elderly men being attacked in their homes in the national media in Ireland in recent years. Beaulieu et al., (2007) studied the worry of walking alone in ones own neighbourhood and found that men over 70 worry more than those under 70. Indeed men in their 80s 'have five times the risk of expressing a worry' of walking alone in their neighbourhood by day or night than those in the 60-69 age group. Other factors which heighten insecurities around crime are: having two or more chronic illnesses and previously being a victim of crime. 'A rather surprising result was that a large available social network was associated with an increased risk of being worried or preoccupied by crime' (Beaulieu et al., 2007 p. 341).

Conclusion

This literature review of older men has been particularly helpful in providing an insight into the myriad of circumstances which put older men into the category of vulnerable and disadvantaged adults, particularly when viewed in the social context of their adolescent and adult working life. From the literature we can see that there is an increasing interest in older men by Government, in the form of President McAleese, significant national organisations such as the GAA and IFA, and last but not least by their inclusion in the National Men's Health Policy. There is also growing recognition of the fact that the older male population is increasing and that they constitute an increasingly significant proportion of the older population. The challenging life circumstances into which many older men were born, which limited their educational opportunities and consequently their life choices, along with the inflexible Church dominated social environment in which they lived, makes them a category of citizen worthy of further attention and support.

The literature relating to older men's health issues, particularly that relating to morbidity, is of concern, as it directly impacts on their current QOL. The trend away from traditional physical masculinities and towards an increasingly complex and knowledge based economy/society separates many still further from normal social involvement. Older men's lack of life skills in socialisation, self-care and their lack of adequate information on their entitlements disadvantages them, especially when seen in the context of their desire to maintain their personal independence. The literature demonstrates that older men have a desire to participate in society when provided with an appropriate male orientated environment. Older men have demonstrated that they are interested in improving their QOL by moderating their intake of harmful substances and minimising their high–risk activities. Their positive action with regard to their health by visiting their doctor frequently and acting on the advice given also demonstrates a genuine self interest.

Interest in older men, as a stand alone subject group, appears to be in its infancy in Ireland at present and, based on this and other research will, I believe, increase in momentum in the coming decade. The current domestic crisis may prove a stumbling block to the speed of that progress, as witnessed by the refusal of Government to put new funding behind the

National Men's Health Policy. The Minister for Health, Ms. Harney, recently referred to the plans for introducing of a national prostate cancer screening programme in 2012, when addressing a conference on Men's Health held in Galway on 10th and 11th June 2010. It is hoped that this initiative will not suffer a setback as a result of any further deterioration in the Nations economic circumstances.

The following chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct this research, the background of the author, the selection criteria for the participants, the research question, the aims and objectives of the study, the collection of data and the process used to analyse the data.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical concepts and influences of this study and their practical execution. As the objective of this study is to explore the life experiences of older men in a sensitive and dignified manner, a qualitative approach is taken using semi-structured interview techniques, which provide an opportunity for rich contextualised data. Of paramount importance throughout the interview process is the need to be flexible, accommodating and sensitive to each older man's individual life circumstances. Semi-structured interviews maximise this approach allowing participants to identify the key points for disclosure thereby driving the process in a safe and comfortable research atmosphere. Using semi-structured interviews, it is possible to adopt a 'conversational' style which allows interviewees the prerogative of sharing, or not sharing their stories.

Research methodology is the approach taken by the researcher to define, interrogate, analyse and discuss the research questions which are the focus of this study. Therefore this chapter will cover:

- Background of the researcher

- The research question

- The aims and objectives of the study

- The influences in choosing methodology

- The collection of data

- The process used to analyse this data

Background

Based on my personal experience of dealing with older men over many years, I have found that they have a preference for dealing with people of their own age and gender and, as context is critical to this study, I detail a brief biography of myself that you may appreciate any nuances at play in the study and interviews.

I was born in 1948 and brought up in a working class area of Dublin's Northside. Fourth in a family of five, with four sisters I attended a Northside Christian Brothers' School up to the age of twelve and then a prominent fee paying Dublin Southside College. I spent all of my working life in senior Sales and Marketing positions eventually becoming Managing Director of a US/Irish joint venture company. This company was taken over in 1995 and I was made redundant. I moved to the South East where I set up my own business. After a number of years there I decided to return to fulltime study and secured a First Class Honours Degree in Health Promotion. After graduating I was awarded a Strand 1 Postgraduate Research scholarship to complete this study on 'Older Men's Lives – A Qualitative Study'. I married in 1972 and have two children, now 37 and 32.

The objectives of the study

Within the next 10 years Ireland will celebrate the 100th anniversary of The Rising and the foundation of the Free State. This study offers an opportunity to see, through the biographies of older men in urban and rural Ireland how they experienced those momentous years of the States formation and development. This cohort of older men are unique in the history of the State in that they are the first inheritors of the freedoms fought for by their parents, and are the bedrock of future prosperity for generations to come.

Objectives

- To explore the biographies of older men's accounts of living through the modernisation of Irish society.

- To explore older men's subjective experiences of living alone and in poverty together with issues relating to family relationships and social networks of support.

- To identify and explore non-monetary factors that affect the quality of life of older men including health status, social relationships and housing conditions.

- To discover how well existing social policies address older men's needs and how they need to improve to ensure a good quality of life for older men.

The influences in choosing the methodology

This research is a qualitative exploration of the experiences and opinions of a group of urban and rural older men on their life experiences of living in Ireland throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. Qualitative methods were chosen because they are considered to be particularly good at examining and developing theories that deal with the role of meanings and interpretations (Ezzy, 2002, p.3). I sought to hear the lived experiences of the older men, throughout their life courses. Of paramount importance is the environment in which they lived, which informs the discussion, as well as development of social policy in relation to their needs. The approach is 'constructivist' in nature. Constructivist researchers have grave difficulties with the notion of an objective reality which can be known (Robson, 2002). They consider the task of the researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. As identified by Ezzy (2002, p.3), meanings are constantly changing, and are produced and reproduced in each social situation, with slightly different nuances and significances depending on the context as a whole. I believe this paradigm was appropriate to answer the research questions this study presented.

Criteria for selection of participants

In this research I have chosen to interview 12 older men, all of whom live alone. The 'volunteers' for this study were selected by 'gatekeepers' within two organisations who specialise in delivering services to older men. One organisation operates in a remote part of the South West of Ireland providing support and social network services to older men living alone in their own homes, which are scattered throughout remote regions of the Dingle peninsula. This organisation keeps in regular contact with over 120 older men in the region, providing them with information and assistance on housing, health and social issues.

The second organisation provides social housing to a broad spectrum of married, never married, divorced and widowed men and women. This organisation operates nationwide and provides a full range of services including meals in their community, social centres, befriending services and physical activity programmes based on 'Go for Life' principles, all within a Christian ethos. The participants are located in a number of counties within the South and South East region. All of these participants live alone in single bedroom accommodation.

Six participants were provided by each organisation. Both of these organisations have, at one time, had contact with Waterford Institute of Technology who were kind enough to provide the relevant contacts.

The main criteria provided to the 'gatekeepers' who work with the staff that come in regular contact with these older men were: participants should be 65 or over, be living-alone and be of sufficiently sound mental capacity to converse coherently. Individuals' financial circumstances were not stipulated, except that they should be of 'frugal' means. The standard of their accommodation was not specified. Literacy levels were not stipulated either. My expressed wish was to interview as wide a range as possible of older men living alone within the geographical influence of these organisations. The selection of the individual participants was left to each organisation. Individual participants were offered €30 for taking part in the project. Some refused a payment. This contribution was not

discussed with the gatekeepers or participants before the interviews and as such had no influence on the interviewees' responses. The names of the older men interviewed have been substituted with pseudo-names, and as far as possible their locations have been disguised (see Table 2).

Table 2. Overview of participants

pseudo-name	Age	Marital Status	Living Arrangements	Occupation
John	73	Never Married	Rural Isolated Farmhouse	Small Farmer
Bill	70	Never Married	Rural Isolated Farmhouse	Small Farmer
Jack	78	Never Married	Rural Isolated Farmhouse	Labourer
Peter	65	Never Married	Rural Townhouse	Hospitality Wrk
Philip	69	Never Married	Rural isolated Farmhouse	Small Farmer
Mike	85	Never Married	Isolated Mdrn. Bungalow	Small Farmer
George	74	Widower	Urban Social Housing	Craftsman
Patrick	66	Divorcee	Urban Social Housing	Technician
Frank	74	Widower	Urban Social Housing	Painter
Gary	74	Never Married	Urban Social Housing	Labourer
Jimmy	84	Divorcee	Urban Social Housing	Bld. Contractor
Paul	74	Divorcee	Urban Social Housing	Bus Driver

Ethical approval

As part of the Masters Study process I applied to the Waterford Institute of Technology's Ethical Committee, for approval for this study. This I secured (see Appendix 1). As part of this process I was required to attend an Ethical Committee Board meeting which was chaired by Dr. Vennie Martin, to discuss the study. The Chairman was most particular to point out the vulnerability of the subjects of the Study and the need to observe caution for their wellbeing, both physical but also emotional. I outlined the nature of the interview style I proposed adopting and the precautions I had put in place with my Supervisor and the participating organisations in the event of any perceived 'upsets' arising. My main concern was that some of the interviewees might become distressed as a result of particular questions or reminiscences at the time of the interview or later when they reflected on it, alone. Should the former eventuality arise I arranged to discuss the circumstances with my Supervisor who, if he deemed necessary, would contact the participating organisation for further guidance and action. The Committee was happy that these precautions were appropriate.

The interview format

As part of the literature review, I read a number of papers on studies of older men, to get an insight into the types of questions older men were comfortable about answering, as it was my primary objective not to distress any of the participants. I recognised that older men living alone are potentially very vulnerable and therefore every aspect of the study must focus on ensuring that their physical and emotional welfare came first. This need to minimise stressful interaction proved a major limitation of the study and interview content.

Interviewing older men presents a number of challenges which have been articulated by Bonhomme (2005), and Oliffe and Morz (2005). These studies agree that older men are

'more closed' and do not express themselves easily, and observe that the conversation can be over before it starts. Older men are less inclined to share information verbally and are likely to feel challenged at information gathering. The literature indicated that older men are less likely to be in touch with their emotions, less able to express their feelings and tend to be self-reliant and achievement oriented. In interview situations they like the interviewer to be courteous, punctual, organised, dressed informally and non-judgemental. They like to be reminded that there are no right or wrong answers to questions. They display stoicism and other overt masculinities. They like to move from general to specific topics, and their attention can fade quickly. It is recommended that interviews with older men should last no longer than one hour and if more information is needed then this should be secured by a return visit. To maintain interest at a high level, enthusiasm should be shown in their answers, and questions should be reframed if securing a response is proving difficult. Questions may also need to be repeated.

These concerns influenced the format of the interview. Initially I considered having a list of questions about participant's opinions under the headings of health, society, the church, the welfare services, their friends, their family their proximity to pubs, shops, doctor. My thinking was that this would allow me to draw direct comparisons with two studies of urban and rural elderly people, undertaken by the National Council on Ageing and Older People (NCAOP) (Horkan and Woods, 1986 ; Daly and O'Connor, 1984). I also planned to include a short interlude of unstructured conversation at the end of each interview. To this end I drew up a list of questions, based on my 'Interview Topic Schedule' (see Appendix 2), and submitted these to the rural gatekeepers for their opinion. They responded by saying that they felt this format would be 'too intimidating' for the older men and might cause distress. They suggested that a more informal 'conversational' approach would be more participant friendly, with occasional specific questions on any key areas of interest. This advice was most welcomed and acted upon. As the rural interviews took place first I applied the format used for them to the urban dwellers for consistency of approach.

Informed by my research I did consider, at the early stages of the project, adopting a more 'documentary' style approach to the study, and believe that in the right circumstances such an approach has much merit. I was particularly impressed with a study by Hinck (2004)

who interviewed 19 oldest-old adults (>75) in a rural environment, retuning to each at least three times over the course of a year. She provided each of them with a disposable camera to photograph the scenes and surroundings in their lives which made most impact on them and then discussed these scenes with them. Described by her as:

> '… photo elicitation (Highley, 1989), also known as hermeneutic photography (Hagedorn, 1994), (it) was the use of photographs to stimulate discussion about important objects, spaces, and activities. Photo elicitation required participants to reflect on what was meaningful to them when they made decisions about what to photograph and provided insight into how participants were situated within their past and present relationships and the rural setting'. (Hinck, 2004)

Despite the appeal of this innovative approach I was unable to use it due to lack of time, as due to pressure of work on the gatekeepers initial interviews could not be arranged until 12 – 14 months after the study start up date, which left little time for return visits. The most effective use of this technique would be to publish the photos and the commentaries together, but this would have represented a breach of client confidentiality, and because Ireland is such a close knit community may have caused embarrassment to participants or indeed placed them at risk, as they might be identified as older single men living alone.

I was also very conscious that, in keeping with Erikson's Psychological Stages (1963), the participants were all, each to a greater or lesser degree, within the eight stage of 'ego integrity versus despair'. It was important therefore that the interview should not be of such a challenging or emotionally draining experience as to trigger self-reproach or despair. I resolved that if participants appeared 'down' because the topic which arose had particularly sad associated memories, I would steer them away from it by asking a different question. If they persisted in discussing the matter I would find positive aspects to the situation to respond with. If I felt there was any doubt about the emotional stability of the participant after the interview I would discuss this with my supervisor and refer the matter to the gatekeeper for follow up, as discussed and agreed in advance with the gatekeepers and outlined in the Letter of Consent (see Appendix 3) provided to gatekeepers for each participant.

I also approached the Men's Development Network (MDN) in Waterford with a view to interviewing older men identified by them. After an interview with some of the management and one older man who was a member of the Steering Committee of the MDN, I concluded, that the older men that they dealt with were more likely to have 'personal issues' which might make them less appropriate for participation in the study.

I concluded, for the sake of insight, breath of experience and reliability of detail that the interview should be biographical in style, starting with the interviewees earliest recollections, and working towards present times, at the participants own pace. In this regard I followed the qualitative methodologies advocated by Crotty (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000). This would relax the participant and give him time to gain confidence in me and the interview process. During this verbal journey I intended asking detailed questions about health, family, friends, neighbours, quality of life and social support structures, thereby developing the breath and depth of the interview. This is in keeping with Snape and Spencer (2003) who describe qualitative research as being flexible, developmental and facilitating close contact with the interviewee, leading to rich and detailed responses. The overall approach is aptly described as follows:

> Qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.3).

In adopting this 'conversational' style it is my intention to remove the interview as far as possible from a formal interview experience into the arena of 'natural' conversational exchange (Rubin and Rubin, 1995), thereby gathering views, perspectives and experiences of participants (Ritchie, 2003).

It should be noted at this stage that apart from the fact that the study construct was predetermined by the Strand 1 approval process in that the scholarship was awarded in relation to a study titled 'Older Men's Lives – a Qualitative Study', I also considered alternative approaches.

Quantitative research can be very valuable where the incidence and prevalence of a phenonomen is required, and, in the context of older people's lives, has been used by agencies such as the NCAOP to demonstrate the extent of social isolation and loneliness in Irish society (Treacy et al., 2004). It is particularly useful for comparative analysis within counties and countries. That was not an objective of this study and, for that reason, was of little appeal. However, within qualitative research, the option still existed to consider focus groups to accomplish the task in hand. The logistics of this approach, bearing in mind that I wished to have as wide a spread of participants as possible, would have proved a major problem. Remote single males are, by their nature, difficult to get to, and to have assembled even a small group on a particular day in a specific place at a set time and to have returned them to their respective homes would have been outside my resources of time and finances. Focus group management needs a considerable amount of skill, particularly with a group such as this, and conflicts can arise, as well as confidentiality issues (Robson, 2000). Some degree of specific/similar experiences, are also a requirement for meaningful detailed discussion in focus groups (Gibbs, 1997: Merton et al., 1990). With such a diverse group as these older men, from different backgrounds and ranging in age from 65 to 90, I felt it could be divisive and perhaps unsettling to have a focus group format. In addition to the logistical implications, there is also the problem referred to by Bonhomme and Oliffe and Morz regarding older men's their unwillingness and/or inability to express themselves. It was my view that, if gathered in a group, people with these characteristics might be reluctant to talk at all, especially about personal issues. This was confirmed later by one of the gatekeepers for the rural group, who commented, 'You could put a half a dozen of these fellows in a room together for a couple of hours and they wouldn't say ten words to each other and they would be perfectly content'. In this regard I was interested to hear Professor John Macdonald, Director of the Men's Health Information & Resources Centre at University of Western Sydney, at a breakout session of a Men's Health Conference held in Galway on 10th & 11th June 2010 declare that 'Men don't need to talk'.

Questionnaires were also an option. However, I felt that, to get a meaningful qualitative response to the study, a questionnaire would have to ask questions which would have to be contextualised for the participants. There was also the potential problem of literacy, bearing

in mind that many of today's older men left school at a very early age, many of the selected cohorts may not have been able to read or write sufficiently well to fill out a questionnaire in any depth and may have felt intimidated by it.

The role of the gatekeepers within the two organisations that I worked with, and the esteem in which they were held, proved to be central to the success of this study. Their selection of the candidates for interview, and the trust and good will that participants had in the gatekeepers, ensured that few barriers were created when interviewing them. This willingness to cooperate in the study ensured that a major ethical concern of their voluntary participation was allayed (Dencombe, 2003).

Collection of data

Interviews can be unnerving even for the most experienced of interviewees, let alone for these old men who are by and large, isolates. Added to this, from the interviewee's point of view, is the fact that the interviewer is 'not local' and is not familiar with the nuances of either living alone or being an older man. Together, these circumstances I believe, point to a potentially nervous participant. To reduce any tensions as far as possible, all of the observations outlined by Bonhomme and Oliffe and Morz were implemented. In addition the participating organisations provided contact personnel to introduce me to the participants, and, in some cases, drove them to and from meeting places where the individual did not want to be interviewed at home.

The interviews were recorded using a miniature digital recorder. This was very unobtrusive thereby minimising the perception of 'formality'. The recorder is capable of continuous recording for 35 hours and therefore no interruptions to replace tapes, as with the old tape recording system, was necessary. The convenience of this approach meant that where participants wished to talk for more than the recommended one hour, and most did, no further attention was drawn to the recording process after the initial introduction. These

recordings were transferred to my laptop, which is password protected, and security labelled to prevent access by unauthorised users. Copies of interviews were placed onto a secure digital memory stick and locked in a secure desk as a contingency. Using specialised software and a digital dictation facility, recordings were transcribed into Word format on my laptop. By adopting this digital approach to recordings and transcription, all the data collected remained in my care throughout the study process.

Prior to starting the recorder, full consent was secured. A detailed explanation of the aims of the study was imparted to the participant and a reassurance given that if he felt uncomfortable with any of the questions, he was under no obligation to answer them. I also explained that if, at any time, he wished to withdraw from the study, either immediately or at any time in the future, that was his right and that all recordings would be destroyed or, if requested returned to him.

Interview questions were 'open' in structure such as 'How long have you lived here?' or 'Is this your first family home?' or showing an interest in whatever the participant was doing at the time I arrived. This approach was used to encourage the participant to talk about familiar non-confidential topics as early as possible (Legard et al., 2003), and to relax him. During the conversation, if the participant raised the subject of parents, brothers or sisters or health then I would interject with a more specific question (Rubin and Rubin, 1995), as to the whereabouts, contact with or consequences of a particular relationship or event. Where no mention was made of key issues relating to quality of life such as of health, participation or security, then I would wait for a lull in the conversation and pose a question relating to one of these topics in keeping with the unstructured nature of the interview (Snape and Spencer, 2003). As previously mentioned the intention was to limit the interview to the recommended hour, so as no to tire the interviewees. In every case the interviews went on for more than two hour, and in a couple of cases for three hours, which I took as a sign that the participants were comfortable with the process. In most cases, I was offered a cup of tea or invited to 'have a look around' their homes and one interviewee even arranged to meet me the following day to show me some pictures of his friends with whom he had many adventures. The amount of time spent with each participant, and the

friendly atmosphere generated, gave each participant adequate opportunity to discuss and/or reveal issues or circumstances which they felt were important in their lives.

In a normal interview situation where an older man is being interviewed by a young student, there is the risk that a 'social chasm' might develop (Legard et al., 2003) based on age, ethnicity or social class. In these interviews, this risk was minimised by virtue of the fact that I am in the same age group as the interviewees, and as such, have a good understanding of most circumstances they might choose to talk about. I have a reasonable knowledge of farming terminology from my interest in farming programmes, and a good working knowledge of industrial terms from managing businesses, to allow me to engage in meaningful conversation with both rural and urban participants. During interviews, I would regularly comment on my lack of knowledge of particular specialist topics to ensure that they appreciated that they were the 'expert or teacher' (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Where the participant and I had a shared experiences or opinions on some matter, I would inform him of this thereby closing the social gap still further. As previously mentioned where invited to tour their home or apartment or join them in a cup of tea or coffee, I would accept, again further encouraging a relaxed atmosphere. I would also mirror their seating position and hand gestures and, where possible sit, beside them rather than directly opposite them, as one might in an inquisitorial interview. In my years as a salesman, I used these techniques to diminish any 'confrontational signals' as interviewer that I might inadvertently give off. I would engage in 'active listening' and avoid prompting responses to questions or recollections participants might have, as this gives the impression of impatience, which can alienate the interviewee

The process used to analyse this data

To analyse this qualitative data I have chosen an approach known as template analysis. This is considered suitable for use with interview transcripts. The steps of template analysis are outlined by Robson (2002, p.458)

- Key codes are determined either on a priori (derived from theory or research questions) or from an initial read of the data

- These codes then serve as a template (or bins) for data analysis; the template may be changed as analysis continues

- Text segments which are empirical evidence for template categories are identified

- When analysing descriptive summaries of the text, text segments are supplemented by network maps, flow charts and diagrams.

In template analysis, it is common to identify some themes in advance because this assumes that aspects of the phenomena under investigation should be focused on (King, 1998). King also justifies the use of pre-identified a priori themes as the importance of certain issues in relation to the subject being researched are so well established that the researcher can safely expect them to arise in the data. The initial template can arise after the initial reading or two of transcripts or when all transcripts are coded. In the case of this particular study, I read the transcripts a number of times and listened again to each interview recording for subtle nuances and applied my initial template. I choose four a priori: loneliness, health, education, and accessibility – participation and socialisation. Following this I re-read the data and carried out an initial coding in relation to the pre-identified priori. I applied the template to the data sets in turn, coding all relevant segments by separating the data into different parts, and then using highlighter markers to identify and separate the individual participant's interview accounts.

Limitations of this study

The main limitation of this study was the requirement to ensure that the interviews conducted did not in any way cause any form of immediate or residual anxiety to the older men who were being interviewed. There were a number of areas of interest which could have been discussed in detail which had the potential to be very unsettling to the interviewees. This limitation also determined the format of the interview process to ensure

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that the subjects discussed were largely of the interviewees choosing. Had the interviews been more structured it would have been possible to draw comparisons with other qualitative studies.

A second limitation of the study was the geographical spread of older rural men interviewed. While it is not possible to generalise in qualitative studies it would have been interesting to interview men from the midlands, mid-west and north-west of Ireland and perhaps Northern Ireland to draw comparisons on the quality of life over the period under discussion in different locations. This was not possible due to time and resource limitations.

Conclusion

The purpose of the methodology used was to reflect the older men's stories, in an appropriate context. The 'conversational' approach proved to be particularly appropriate with the rural older men who, by and large, had spent the majority of their time on their own, isolated from daily face to face contact with family, friends or neighbours.

I was also anxious to create a secure interview environment for each participant by interviewing them in a place of their choice, usually their home. The trappings of an interview were reduced to the absolute minimum by using inconspicuous recording equipment, dressing casually, being on time and affording them the respect of their age by giving first preference to their recollections, opinions and commentary rather than to my desire to have specific questions answered. Being introduced by a familiar face from the contact organisation played a major role in gaining their confidence and relaxing them.

The 'conversational' nature of the discourse put them further at their ease and the strategy of starting with their earliest recollections proved to be especially appropriate. From my previous contact with older men and from the opinions of others in the caring professions I was conscious that topics such as personal 'sexual' habits, money matters, religious beliefs and politics can be stressful to them on an initial contact. Some of the older men interviewed were comfortable talking about their personal intimate relationships, their wealth or lack of it, their religious beliefs and their political persuasions, others were not.

Where these matters were not mentioned first by those interviewed I did not pursue the matter. My objective was to create a comfortable, trusting, non-judgemental environment where older men could impart personal experiences without fear of controversy or criticism. I believe in retrospect that I achieved that objective.

The next chapter analyses the data from the twelve interviewees and describes it in a contextual format, where possible using the participants own words to illustrate the data detail. To this end this chapter provides a thumbnail sketch of each of the participants and synopsises three interviews illustrating the life course of those individuals providing an insight into the larger world of the interviewed population. This will be followed in chapter six by a thematic analysis of the themes identified as part of the study.

Chapter 5 – An Analysis of the Life Course of Older Men

This chapter deals with the data generated from the study interviews. The names of the participants attributed here, are not the interviewee's real names, and the locations described have been changed to protect the identity of participants.

To assist in appreciating the diversity of the lives of participants, I have provided a thumbnail sketch of each individual to contextualise their contributions. As I was anxious to establish the life experiences of as wide a range of older men's experiences as possible I designed the study to include rural and urban participants to see how individuals in different settings coped with similar national circumstances over the same time frame. I have detailed these groups separately to minimise any potential confusion. In conducting the interviews I found that some of the interviewees in the urban selection had spent most of their early years and some of their working life in a rural environment, while some of the rural men interviewed had spent some of their lives in urban settings.

I have also provided three synopsised interviews with two rural and one urban older man which provides this research with some rich insight into the language, disposition and social circumstance of the individual and the wider society of those interviewed. With older men, the significance of long pauses, forgetting what you or they are saying, repetition of words or phrases, leaving out the end of sentences, facial expressions, involuntary hand movements, nervous coughs and body movements cannot be fully reflected in the text. For this reason I feel these synopsised interviews go some way towards broadening the understanding of the research encounter which might not otherwise be gained without them.

The interview enquiry format was broadly based on encouraging the interviewee to recall his life course in chronological order starting at his early childhood, as anecdotal evidence suggests that older people recollect their earlier life more vividly than their more recent history. In following this approach, I hoped to put the participant more at ease by not causing them stress in trying to recall more recent events. As participants relaxed, they

gained confidence that they were in control and talked more fluidly about the things which they regarded as important in their lives.

Rural participant profile

John, aged 73, never married, lives alone on his 'family farm' of approximately 30 acres of poor land, with his sister. They have separate houses and he looks after a small number of cattle. He has worked on the land most of his life and, on occasions, supplemented this income with fishing locally and on trawlers around the Irish coast. He worked in the UK and America for a total of five years. John's story is synopsised below.

Bill aged 70, the youngest of seven, never married, lives alone and continues to work the family farm of 50 acres which he inherited, and has built up to 150 acres over his years there. He has dry stock and tillage and lives 10 miles from a large town. He has a Church, shop, and pub within 2 miles of his home. Neighbours are few and widely dispersed.

Jack, aged 78, small and wiry, never married, one of two children, a returned emigrant, lives alone in Dickensian conditions on his family holding. Outwardly his cottage looks derelict with corrugated iron on some windows and above the front door. The cottage is on the side of a rock strewn mountain of very poor land with no visible signs of sanitation. Inside the house, there is one central light bulb and the sitting-room is strewn with papers and debris. He spent most of his life away from his home and the small acreage is leased-out for sheep grazing. Jack left home to join a circus as a roadie and strong man as a young man and in his time was a professional wrestler, and a 'navi' on the motorways of Britain and Germany. He boxed, lifted weights and cycled competitively and has a lifetime interest in fitness. He maintains his fitness with a balanced diet and some daily weight lifting using concrete barbells which he made over 40 years ago which occupy the other ground floor room of his cottage. He has many past athletic achievements both local and national.

Peter, 65, never married, lives alone in a two bedded social housing bungalow on the edge of a small village. Given up at birth by his unmarried mother, he was raised in a Catholic

orphanage by nuns and was later sent to an industrial school, and then to a catering/hospitality college. He worked as a gentleman's gentleman for a landed Lord for 17 years and has also worked in restaurants and bars. He had a dual kidney transplant 23 years ago and is awaiting further replacement kidneys at present. He is on home dialysis for which he has a machine which occupies his second bedroom. He uses this daily.

Philip, aged 69, never married, was adopted at birth and reared in a two storey farmhouse in remote wooded mountainous terrain 5 miles from a small rural village. He lives on the ground floor of his family home, the upstairs being uninhabitable due to weather damage to the roof. A new roof was recently fitted by the County Council, at the urging of the organisation I dealt with, making the ground floor habitable. He is hard of hearing. He had a satellite phone supplied to him so that he can maintain contact with the outside world. Philip is a very quietly spoken person. He is a devout Catholic and a member of the Order of Saint Francis a lay organisation devoted to the life values of Saint Francis of Assisi. He enjoys socialising and attends a weekly tea and dance session in a nearby town. He has a relatively new car which he uses regularly to shop and attend Church.

Mike, aged 85, never married, lives on his own in a relatively new dormer bungalow. He is the oldest son of ten children, although he has a sister older than him he was chosen to 'run the farm'. He farmed the family holding until he was sixty when he retired. His story is synopsised below.

John's story

John, my first interviewee, is a 73 year old never-married, small farmer. He joins me in some rooms arranged by the gatekeeper in a local GAA club. We are about a half-mile from his home. His hair is greying, his dress unkempt in a blue anorak reminiscent of a 16/17 school boy, with shoe laces half undone and he is slightly stooped. He smokes his own 'rolled' cigarettes.

He starts by telling me that he was born locally but has lived abroad for 5 years in total, two years in America and three years in Britain. He enjoyed America but not the U.K. *'Once a*

ship hits Holyhead, Jasus, you can smell the hostility in the air, without going ashore ... and the very opposite when you come back, there is something in this country that could not be bought, you can't see it, you can't feel it ... and there is a liberty in this country we are so eager to get rid of today ... and we are getting under the umbrella (of the European Community) and we don't know what we are getting under, and for Gods sake they don't know what they had…and they just want to dump it'. Irelands membership of the European Community has brought mixed blessings *…' the roads may be bigger and faster' ... so much so that now they are 'machines of death'* and *'in any way we soon won't be able to afford the fuel to drive on them. Before, we had roads and bicycles and donkey's and horses and we could walk the roads'. 'Self-sufficiency was what was needed'*, to be independent. *'The Celtic Tiger brought more houses ... empty houses ... it was a pity the collapse didn't happen 2/3 years earlier so less people would have been caught'. 'The modern world is all about knowledge, knowledge, knowledge and less about wisdom and common sense'.*

Health can be an issue for unmarried single man from self neglect. Some are diligent in visiting the doctor regularly. *'I don't ... the waiting room is not ventilated and you are breathing everyone else's germs ... you would come out 'loaded''*. He says he gets the receptionist to renew his prescriptions and then he gets someone to tell her to bring it out to him. His 'chest' does stop him from walking fast and he does find it difficult *'getting out of the way of cars'.* He only takes his medicines every fortnight … because he is *'trying to cut down on them'*. He likes to be *'totally independent'*.

He recounts the famine times when people left their homes and villages if they had a fever in case they might pass it on to others ... *'they died in the ditches by the side of the road. It is a shame that all of those things are forgotten'*. Apart from his 'chest complaint' … because of his smoking, he has no health problems.

He says that *'poverty is more hidden nowadays'* … years ago you could tell from the *'torn clothes'*, nowadays *'they go out of circulation to hide it'*. '*People are in a state for the sake of cash'*. One time the banks *'couldn't give them enough'*, now *'they are lying low'.* He got rid of his television set 20 years ago and *'the internet shows you how to commit suicide –*

that is evil to the core'. He says '*the internet is like rummaging for a gold watch in a dust bin ... you have to go through germs and rotten meat and fish before you find it ... better to leave it there'*.

His sister goes away each year for long periods to the UK and he looks after … '*a few calves ... but nobody looks after me'*. He is not concerned with the risks of living alone, in his sister's absence, if a problem does arise … '*You use the old remedies ... you could be getting over it'*. He recalls having a calf once and how he threw holy water on it, when it was born. During the night he heard it distressed and saw it trashing about '*splattering blood from its navel'*, he said a few prayers … and it stopped, and '*it was never sick another day'*. He believes the calf was inhabited by an evil spirit which wanted to get at him, but '*attacked the calf instead'*. '*... yes, people don't pray now though ...years ago people believed it would solve their problems, now we don't believe that God made the world… it just happened, a big disorderly bang caused order and precision ... and there was no prime mover ... who is going to swallow that ... what direction do they think they are taking us in'*. As for the lack of Christianity today '*... you would notice it in the air ... an eerie feeling ... lack of thought ... you can't put your finger on it ... it is not what it was'*. He says we will be having another Lisbon Treaty Referendum … '*because we didn't know what we were saying' (the last time). 'They knew what they were saying alright'*.

As regards his social life … the last time he went out drinking he got '*attacked'* by a group of friends, and they '*stuck me for the taxi fare home' ... and in any way with the 'situation'* (drink driving laws) '*the pubs don't get busy until 10:30'*.

His education was longer than most for the times, he left school at seventeen. He enjoyed Maths, Latin and Irish. He didn't feel he '*fitted in'*. His maths teacher would give free grinds to a few children in his home. Years later he went fishing on a trawler and found it enjoyable but very dangerous at times, especially when fishing close to rocky shores when you have to rely on the instant power of the engine to take you out of harms way. He believes the Irish navy '*picks on Irish boats, ignoring Spanish and Dutch boats'*.

His father died in 1971 and his mother in 1986. They couldn't afford a tractor until 1978, '*by then it was too late'*. He feels '*drink was a big contributor to unhappiness ... from*

personal experience'. When he was fishing away from home he might get caught up in a drinking session … *'if we had a good day's fishing'*. He never missed a day's work as a result of drinking. A Waterford man told him once *'If a man can't drink while he is alive, he certainly can't drink when he's dead'*. He gives up drinking *'in spells'*.

He has lots of wild animals to feed, especially 14 birds, and he thinks it is a waste to collect household scraps and have them *'carted away, leaving nothing for the wild animals'* as they did years ago. He enjoys being outdoor and doesn't like too much heat; he got his first cold when he got double glazing installed. He has *'a nice stove'* to keep him warm. He says all small farmers needed to fish to survive … *'it was a miserable existence, and people would cut their own turf and cut down trees and kept the area clean and tidy'*. Nowadays *'the roads are too narrow for the speed of traffic'*. But people watch out for each other … *'one time a tractor was vandalised and the parents and the children had to go and apologise to the owner for the damage'*. He feels the problem comes after the pubs close … and from drugs.

If he had a chance to change anything he would like *'... to see people cooperate more with each other, and pray more'*. The *'kindness and direction stopped with the end of the religious teacher, parents needed direction'*. *'Years ago you might get a hit when you didn't deserve it ... and other times you might not get a hit when you did deserve it, sure life balances these out'*. He thinks *'everyone knows your business ... and everyone is writing books ... and they are not qualified to'*.   END.

Mike's story

Mike is a large, sturdy 85 year old, with a booming voice. He has huge hands and even at age 85 I can feel the power in them. He owns a modern four bedroomed dormer bungalow overlooking a broad expansive plain, on the side of a mountain. He is three miles from a small remote costal village. We arrived in the late afternoon with the gatekeeper and were invited into his living room which had seats facing outwards along a large picture window. He sits in a high chair with arm rests which helps him to get up easily because of a hip

complaint. He relates that he has lived on this site all of his life initially in *'the old house'* which is a large ageing outbuilding/dwelling we passed on the way into the property. He built the bungalow in 1994 with the money he got from selling his farm to Coillte. *'I'm so happy with my new house, and things like that you know, 'twould bother me that the slate will be carried off the roof (of the old house) or anything like that ... I built it and I'm delighted I did so. I'm so pleased with myself that I did. The people that come home in the summer to be able to stay here, in the comfort of a house ... I couldn't have done better with the money. There wouldn't be a hope in the world of building it now, for the money'*. He got an EU pension in 1981 of £20 and retired because … *'my hip was bothering me and my mother died, and trying to get a bit of food for myself and all that , I decided ... to forget about (farming) and see after myself'*. He is the eldest son and second eldest child in a family of ten children, *'five boys and five girls ...six of them dead now'*. His nephew lives close by on an adjacent farm.

He retired at age 60. *'I was delighted with it. I had time to get my bit of food and so on. I was a bit down I suppose for a while having nothing to do in a way ... the interest was gone, but then I got over that part of it'*. For about five or six years after that, he was the curator in the local heritage centre, to pass his time. He would show visitors around and help them trace their family roots … mostly Americans.

'I stopped school three weeks before I was 14, I got a boil on my backside, and I was kept at home from school, and I was never let go to school again after, I know that the school teacher wanted me to go to school, but everyone was in the farm, with a young family ... helping on the farm'. He didn't mind not going back to school, *'No ... too much of the education is not the best either'*. At 19 he went of to the Bog of Allen cutting turf (1942) and did that for four years. He earned good money at the time … *'£4.15s 0. per week from the 1ˢᵗ February until the middle of July'*, and he stayed in old army barracks in Newbridge. In the winter he would get 33 shillings for *'making roads and opening drains and things like that you know'*. There were 6000 men working on the Bog of Allen throughout the 'Emergency' and each year they would have a competition to see who could cut the most turf. He won this competition in 1946 and had a photo of the prize presentation … *'there were write-ups in the papers of course. We used to walk from Newbridge out to Naas for a*

football match ... 7 miles, and back again. Newbridge was 4/5 miles from the bogs ...Christ the cold of it'.

He came home in 1946 *'and I inherited the farm shortly after that. I worked away at it in good times and bad times ... more bad times than good and more bad days than fine days. It was all hard tough going you know, but we didn't give a dam about it ... we did it and no more about it'.*

We discuss the tough 50s. *'They were tough alright ... the bloody war was a fright, the scarcity and the hardness of it. Christ there was no petrol, there was nothing. My mother and father was here and a brother and sister (and) there were ten of us in the family'.* *'You'd be putting fire under rocks (to split them) and belting them with sledge hammers, 'twas the go at the time, oh I did that stuff ... farming was hard, there is no doubt about it, making drains, and knocking fences, as I say belting rocks with a sledge ... yer'ah they were great men'.* He lost one of his eyes to cancer in 1972 and had to sell his car. *'I go to town twice a week and hire a hackney ... I do a bit of shopping on a Monday and I go to mass on a Sunday and that's about it. I go to a funeral maybe, but I get somebody to drive'.*

I comment on a small 'bar' in the corner. *'I have a Murphy's keg of porter ... I have about 2/3 glasses every day, I like a glass with my meal sometimes. Nobody in the countryside calls to see you ... that was my recreation in my time ... calling into neighbours across the countryside and talking. There is nobody there to call to ... a few people would call once or twice a year, but you would feel it now in the wintertime ... you'd feel it very hard, the long nights, thinking of what we should have done and what we shouldn't have done'.* *'I hardly watch the television ... I don't watch the stuff at all, only the six o'clock news ... sure it doesn't suit, it doesn't suit, there is a lot of problems on it anyway'.*

He has a 'panic alarm' (on a ribbon around his neck) … *'A panic button or whatever they call it, I got it lately. Oh Christ, I'm old, I'm an old man. If I fell I would not be able to get up, I can't make the fire there. I made it about a fortnight ago one evening and I was down on my knee and I had an awful job getting up off my knees ... I miss sleeping upstairs'.*

He mentions that the Church is part of his regular routine … *'The Church. Oh God yes, yes, yes. I don't (never) miss that at all ... every Sunday, that's part of the recreation. I love a few pints and (I) meet a few lads, four or five lads come in below every Sunday then we has a couple of pints'* ... *'the pub opens straight away after mass, in we go and have a couple of pints, and come home again'.* In the local town there are events … *'Well there was a couple of old peoples thing down there, a 'tea dance' they call them on Sunday night in the hotel. I was down at that ... and I go to (town name) every Thursday ... a bus comes around and picks (us) up ... you meet people and you talk to them and so on. (I do) a recitation ... I have a few recitations like The Shooting of Dan McGee and The Cremation of Sam McGee, (and) the The Lament of Paddy Bawn .... Paddy Bawn was a great footballer you know'.*

Travel can be a problem … *'there about five nieces of mine above in Dublin and a nephew in Castleknock ... I did go to Dublin, and Killarney maybe ... but no ... travelling for old people is very tiring you know ... no I wouldn't travel anymore. I went to America once in '84, just to see my brothers and sisters ... not to see America .... I don't like (the) traffic and the cities and things like that, I can't stand that ... I can't stand the traffic in (names local town) ... it is a faster life than we had you know, it's all gone, all gone'.*

I comment that he is a fine big man and that he must look after his health … *'the stomach is great I would eat anything'* … and check-ups? … *'Every three months I get a check-up. I am a diabetic, type two'. 'The first time he (GP) told me I was a diabetic ... that was about 10 years ago ... he told me to walk four miles a day ... I lost 3 stone in a short time'.*

He enjoys a good meal … *'Meat, vegetables, a bit of beef or lamb, or something like that. Maybe a bit of corned beef ... I like a bit of corned beef and cabbage and things like that you know ... I do, I do, I eat fine ... so far anyway'. 'I go over to my nephew for Christmas Day and the crowd from Dublin will be down the following day ... yeah they stay over Christmas like'.*

He says he was a competitive man and enjoyed sport and other pastimes *'I played football'* …gets photos … '*and Tug of War (1944) ... and Polka (dancing) ... that is what I was competing in, in my time'.*

He recounts his days in the Bog of Allen … *'your bank was 60mtrs. by 30mtrs. ...the square was numbered and you would be measured every day. I was cutting, mostly cutting, and when the cutting stopped and the turf was dry you would be wheeling it out to where the lorry would be ... it used to go away to Dublin, 'twas reeked in the Pheonix Park. You would go out on the lorries, the lorries would carry you out and when the turf would be dried they'd be filled up with turf and go away to Dublin and be back again to take you in'.* Did he enjoy farm work? *'I was interested in animals and things and going to the fair ... in those days we had fairs that was the greatest day of all ... you know making a deal ... making a good deal, we'd go away and have a few pints ... oh, it was a great day ... and lots of women would go to the fair you know, when the buying and selling would be over'.*

The Economic War was difficult for everyone but especially for farmers and the locals weren't too happy and most did not agree with it … *'Christ no, they did not, the farming community did not ... they killed the calves and got 10 shillings for the hide ... they had so many cattle. The Government buyers came down and they bought 300 head of cattle ... you see there was people there with a lot of cattle and they got (other) people to stand in for them, you see they(Government buyers) would only buy two or three cattle from you, and you'd have some one stand there with five or six cattle for hours and they (buyers) would buy two or three out of them. And a man took a contract to drive them to the nearest rail head (10 miles) for £15, and he hired 14 men and himself to drive them ... it was an awful job ... imaging putting 300 cattle on the road ... I often drove cattle to the rail head by night and it took five hours to walk them ... but the heavy ones, they'd walk slower ... you wouldn't drive them far nowadays'. 'They'd put the cattle into the woodlands in Tipperary to fatten them'.*

People have changed in the intervening years and are less approachable and friendly … *'No, they are not friendlier, for Christ sake they have no respect for older people'.*

Of course times are better now than ever they were. *'Oh, in ways of course, in ways. There's more money, and everything like that, you know people are a bit crazy with money, they never think of the rainy day or anything else'. 'Christ we were around a long time before we knew what money was ... do you see in my time ... they all left home, they all left*

home, they all went out and made a few bob and sent money home and all that kind of stuff, that's how the big families survived you know'.

'I'm quite happy at the moment, thanks be to God, quite happy with the moment'…'The only thing I would like (is) somebody would call in the odd night to me and talk, like we're doing now, exactly that kind of thing now, somebody that would understand what we would be talking about like'.   END.

Urban participant profile

George, aged 74, is a widower. He has five children, two girls and three boys, and two grandchildren. A smoker, he plays golf, enjoys socialising in three different pubs but does not drink anymore. George's story is synopsised below

Patrick is just 66, divorced, has two boys and a girl and lives in a single bedded house in a small village within 3 miles of a Dublin commuter town. He has infrequent contact with his children and little with his ex-wife. He was born in Dublin's slums of working class parents, completed his Intermediate Certificate and went on to study electronics in 'the tech' and worked in the computer manufacturing business for most of his working life … some of it in Galway. He enjoys traditional music and plays a number of instruments. He researches old Irish music and has published a number of books on his speciality. He has diabetes, drinks modestly … now, and has a 'girlfriend' who is a widow.

Frank is 74, a widower, and he lives alone in a single bedroomed house on the outskirts of a large town close to his old family home. He is in regular contact with his only daughter and her son. He was a tradesman (painter) … the same trade as his father, and worked in the UK during WWII, returning to his native town to work for the County Council.

Gary is 74, never married, with one sister. Their unmarried mother died when they were very young and he was fostered to a neighbouring farming family. His sister, by a different father, was sent to an orphanage. He is still in close contact with his sister who lives 'up the country'. He lived in a hostel for the homeless for some time. He now lives alone in a

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single bedded bungalow in a social housing estate. He worked at farm labouring most of his life. He has severe respiratory problems and uses an electric 'scooter' to get around.

Jimmy is 84 and divorced from his English wife. He lives alone in an apartment block in a large city, close to where he was born. He has one son in Ireland whom he keeps in contact with, and has two grandchildren. He has a car. He emigrated to the UK at an early age where he ran his own building company. He was very close to the Irish community when away, and is pleased to be home.

Paul is 74 and divorced. He is no longer living in the village where he was born. He had problems with drink which caused his divorce and has little contact with his children or wife. He lived in a hostel for the homeless for a while before getting his one bedroomed social housing bungalow in the suburbs of a large city. He did a variety of jobs from TV aerial erection to bus driving, but was let go by the bus company because of his drinking.

George's story

George is 74 and lives in a social housing apartment on the outskirts of a large city. After a bit of banter between himself and the gatekeeper he invites me to join him in the restroom within the apartment block. The building is old and has an 'institutional' look with high ceilings and large sash windows in need of some repair. He outlines that he has always lived in the area that he is now located in and left school at 14. He spent his formative years as a 'caddy', on the nearby golf club, of which he is now a member. *'When I was seventeen we went on strike to increase the caddying fee and they gave us the right to play up to 12:00, so as not to interfere with members. We never had a set of clubs, I used to go around in 72 to 73 shots ... the confidence of youth. I didn't go back (to play) until after the wife died, because I had a family to rear. I was probably using her death as an excuse to drink, and I gave up the drink about two and a half years after she died'.* Her death left a big hole in his life … *'Absolutely ... yeah, when you lose your partner you stop going to functions because you're on your own. Even within the family I send a wedding present, I might go for the meal ... and get away out of it ... and then when you're not drinking too ... you*

know what I mean'. Other people talk about how badly he must be feeling? *'I tried to put a stop to that, I done me own thing, I done me own grieving', even with his widowed sister he said 'Listen here (name) don't be using me ... I done me own grieving'.*

He didn't cope well with his wife's death ... *'I was always a sensible fella ... up to that stage. I got a fright ... I went in to 'dry out' ... I couldn't stop meself'.* He describes how he went to the doctor to arrange for him to go to the psychiatric unit to get over his drinking after the death of his wife. *'There were boys in there ... they were zombies, we had to dine together ... they didn't talk , they didn't look at you ... after eleven days (doctors name) let me out , the doctor said 'I think you're OK now ... but you will be back, they all come back'. Some months later, he had to return a library book to the psychiatric units library and bumped into the same doctor who said 'well I knew you would be back' ... 'it was quick to go (his stay in the unit) but I never touched the drop (since)'.*

His family and friends kept an eye on him when he was drinking and were very supportive of him. *'Yes, but I was heading that way. I was waiting for the pubs to open every morning ... and not alone ... I was ashamed of myself, I never done that (before). My sister and the kids were very worried ... they were scared and everything ... I couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel ... she died so suddenly, I made the best of that eventually'.*

He was living at his own home then. *'I was ... (but) the guy next door had sold the house to a speculator who put in some students ... and I was off the drink and my door bell would be ringing at 02:00 in the morning ... 'is this where the party is?' ... especially on Wednesday night. Eventually I sold the house and divided it (the money) amongst the kids ... I said, we all have equal shares, I don't want to have a lot of money'.* He has a one bedroom apartment now near to where he used to live and close to the golf club ... *'I am the kind of anchor (tenant) ... if anything happens they (other tenants) contact me. I renovated (my) apartment inside ... I had me brother–in–law, who is a plumber, plumb in the washing machine, fridge, (and I put in) new carpets. I look after the bins and I look after ... (the place). I would say they will probably demolish it, and use it as a car park for the college next door'. 'I was still working when my wife died, I hid the drink from the job, I never lost*

any time'. 'I wanted to leave, because I was being hammered on the taxes ... as a single man ... it was 48p in the £'. 'I used to do an awful lot of overtime ... I wanted the money'.

He enquired about a redundancy package from his employer. The accountant for the company worked out that he would be entitled to £4500 approximately if he left. But one day he met the Managing Director, whom he knew, in the golf club and had a word with him and he said he would come back to him after he had reviewed the figures. He came back with a better offer and a pension. *'Oh, yes, I did take the full (lump sum), I didn't press it anyway, because I wanted to get out'.* What about getting on with people? *'If you're natural, and you're right with people you don't care about eating into any company ... if you're yourself and you're honest'. 'One thing I do regret in life ... I didn't get a great education, because we were reared during the war and I had six brothers and two sisters and we lived in a two bedroomed house ... so we had nine and the parents, so three of us, the eldest three slept with our grandfather across the road ... he had a big house and we used to sleep there until we went to work'. 'I was caddying to earn money and I'd run home with the money to me mother 'cause she had nine of us during the war, she had no fuel, she had no rations ... our biggest job was to survive, we had nothing, nobody had anything, and me poor mother ... she was a Protestant ... she turned Catholic to marry me father ... and that was the greatest mistake she ever made without a doubt ... because she married into a family who drank, Irish undertakers'.*

'The average funeral was £13 when I was a boy, and there was three families dragging out of the undertaking business ... we were badly off then for money so we tried to turn our hand to everything, the best educated went to college on a scholarship. The rest of us had to get out of it when the time came ... to get a job and rear the rest of them'. He went to work as a railway cleaner just to get into the railways, and had to do an oral and written exam … *'eventually I got in and worked there for three months and then you were paid off ... but you had a step in (the organisation). So I went to work for (name of company) I was only getting boys wages £3.7s.6d. a week ... I was fairly happy there and me mother was alive ... I used to bring home me wage packet to her ... I didn't want anything back ... (maybe) a couple of bob ... because I knew she needed the money'. 'A fella was caught stealing and I was promoted to his job but his wages were £7.13s.6d.because he was a*

man, I was still getting £3.7s.6d., and he was semi-skilled. So I went to the Union ... I said I'm doing identical work, and I'm only a boy ... I said I need more than the rate (I was being paid) ... because it was an awful bloody job'. He was told *'Listen here boy ... I took you off the road for that job'. I said Mr (man's name) ... 'that statement you are wrong twice, first of all you didn't take me off the road ... I applied for the job and I got it and you weren't even a foreman, and secondly the job was filled when I came here ... so you didn't take me off the road for that particular job ... so we didn't part on good terms ... so the following Saturday, I gave in me notice'.*

After that he went to a cabinet makers who made 'radiogram cabinets' but *'then I got uneasy ... I left the job and went back to the railway',* as a painter … painting bridges. *'The first couple of weeks I couldn't afford a bicycle so I had to walk (to the sites). It took two summers to paint some bridges and in the winter he would do work in the railway yards ... I got into the maintenance section. You see you'd have to do three years constant employment on the railway before you became automatically employed ... I remember after two years and ten months constantly (employed) I came down on New Year's Day ... you only got two days off for Christmas ... the yardman met the train and he said 'you're being paid off' . So I packed me bag and on the 7th January I arrived up in Birmingham and I had 33 shillings in me pocket ... I had to give the landlady of the digs 25 shillings of it in advance, I had no sleep I came out and I caught a number 72 bus out towards West Bromwich and got off at the industrial estate ... I cut in that night in Phillips bicycle factory ... where there were 1400 working at night. I had to work a week in hand. Eventually I finished up I couldn't afford to go for dinner at 01:30, which was subsidised by the company. I was sitting there one night when my supervisor Mr. O   said 'why aren't you at your dinner, you're not long here, we don't employ many Irish ... they usually do the building'. I told him I had no money and would there be any chance of a 'sub' ... he didn't understand the term 'sub'. He said I was to come to his office at the next break and he opened his own wallet and he handed me £3 saying I could pay it back when I got paid. When I got paid I went to pay my debts and handed him the £3. 'Hang on Paddy now', he said 'there is £2 back ... one next week and one the week after, and then we are all square'. 'When the weather got good being an outdoor type I went and got a job with a building*

company ... they specialised in pubs ... building pubs out in their own grounds ... I was looking after the timber end of it and everything ... I wasn't drinking now, and we used to go on the lorry on Saturday and Sunday and the office would pay me'. He lodged with a Mayo family and his brother came over looking for work and he arranged with his boss that his brother, who was 20, could take his job as he had more skills and knowledge and would find it easier to get work. But when he got back to the digs the brother had found his own job … so George had to look for his job back.

He got a letter from the railway in Ireland to say they had a job for him and he returned home. His brother eventually went off to London to work on the busses but not without leaving some confusion when a man called to the door of the digs one night looking for him. George met the man who accused him of dating his underage daughter. George pointed out the confusion that it must be his brother and said he would contact him to tell him to stop dating this girl … but he had already gone to London. All this time he was sending money home. George got a letter from the railway offering him employment and he returned to his native city and was trained as a welder and worked on repairing tracks … he did his full three years again and was appointed permanently. He became involved in taking up railway lines and found the work really interesting. Throughout this time he did not join the Union and worked as much overtime as he could get. It was during this period he got married. *'Mary had a house and she lived with her grandmother ... maybe that's why I married her, I don't know' (laughing). 'I used to be working Saturday's and Sunday's, we'd be preparing points to go in, and we'd put them in on Sunday'.* He was involved in the work preparing for the first 'roll-on roll-off' ferry and would get overnight accommodation allowances, but *'I would be at home in bed'.* He did such a good job that he was offered an interview for the job of National Bridgeman to work on erecting and dismantling bridges across Ireland. He got offered the job but said he couldn't move to Athlone because *'Mary would know no one ... and it would mean shiftin' my family ... sure she doesn't know where the nearest shop is, the schools ... I wouldn't bring that on anyone'. 'I turned down the job ... it was the job I always loved ye know, if I hadn't been married I'd have jumped at it, the concern was that I'd always, as a single man, been away'. 'But I turned it down, I was diligent, that was in '72 and in the semi-state bodies if*

you turn down promotion, (like) the ESB or the Telecoms, I know a lot of lads from travelling around, they'd say 'if your ever offered promotion your in trouble'. 'The kids were getting handy and they were always saying why does our daddy have to work on Sundays to pay for things ... and in 1974 I ended my career on the railways after 22 years, I had the best bloody years of my life, so I had'. Before he left he investigated every avenue to see if he could have shorter hours at more pay … to no avail.

He joined a new company who were set up to make motor engine blocks and pistons for export, on a nearby industrial estate, and his training as a welder stood to him, but because of a dispute over Union recognition the plant closed down a couple of years later having produced very little. He then applied and got a job as supervisor of a U.S. high tech metal fabrication facility. The technology was complicated and finely tuned and did not work for some years, eventually the company got taken over and specialists were brought in from the U.K. who solved the problems … turning the job into a routine and boring workplace. *'If you were doing nothing you were producing, and if you were busy you were producing very little ... the presses were runnin' at 350 strokes per minute and they were spitting out thousands of these things'*. This was the job he negotiated a redundancy and pensions with mentioned at the opening of this interview. It was while he was working for this company his wife died and he subsequently *'took to the drink'*.

When he had given up drinking, that he did not change his social habits … he still visited the pubs he had always played cards at and continued to win drink and Christmas turkey's … which he gave to his brother –in – law and daughters. He got jeered initially when he went back to these pubs because he didn't drink, but he stuck to his guns and continued calling. He described the destructive influence of one bar man who advocated only drinking pints … until he told him that he was quite capable of making up his own mind as to whether he did or did not drink. He recalled a request for help from an alcoholic, whom he met at his request and spoke with him about his problem. This individual worked locally with a multi-national.   This individual was extremely intelligent and worked in the laboratories, but was on a 'warning' about his behaviour as a result of his drinking. He

subsequently committed suicide on the Friday of a Bank holiday weekend. What particularly disgusted George was the reaction of some of this persons *'so called friends'* who said *'he took the easy way out' ... 'that drives me up the wall that talk, the chap needed help and he wasn't getting it. I often look at his memoriam (card), I have it in a bowl on the table, I often look at it and say what a waste, and that brainy educated fellow, what drink can do, so, 'twas only drink'*.

His children's family circumstances were not without events either. He has a young son in England, *'I send him money to keep him over there'* … his brothers and sisters think he is wrong to support him as he is into drugs … *'I don't think he will reform'. 'He is a very intelligent fellow, which is surprising an intelligent man using drugs, but he is ... an intelligent young man, perhaps too intelligent'*. George's eldest daughter, whom he has regular contact with, is a high achiever and up to recently ran a hotel in the city but the recession resulted in her being let go and replaced … *'by two other managers'*, but she did an interview with a new German supermarket chain and is going for training soon. He has a daughter who lived in Australia who got involved with an Australian who had a gambling problem and she has returned home with their two children. His constant expression of support for his grown up children is punctuated with pride in their achievements. *'They all finished school ... one lad is a tiler and plastered and has his own business the other is a general worker and I want him to get in on the busses'*. He outlined the trouble he went to, to retrieve his second daughter back from Australia by paying her and the children's fares. He says he adopted *'a mature' approach when her partner visited her from Australia'* … he *'stood back'* and let them sort their own arrangements for their future.

He enjoyed an active social life. *'I could never dance, briefly now I tell ye, I met my wife up in me own house, my sister brought her over to the house and I walked her home and I made a date with her and married her. I courted her for three years and up to the day that I mourned her I never danced with her, and she was a lovely dancer. I'm not a dancing man, I used to go off with the dogs hunting'. 'I do crosswords in the Sunday Independent and so does my brother-in- law'* … and when he can't find an answer he *'rings his son-in- law in Kildare or his son in (Name of town) but he doesn't ring me because he wont give me the satisfaction of sayin' I got it'* (laughs). *'I play cards the whole year round in a pub (names*

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pub)' and each year he wins several turkeys and drink which he gives to his relatives. *'Last year I won seven hams and five turkeys and four bottles of brandy'.* He had won some competitions with his cousin and the prizes were hams, which he didn't want so he switched them for *'bottles of spirits'.* His cousin asked if he could have the prizes as bottles of brandy … George said *'no problem, but why did he want so much brandy, sure you drink whiskey',* his cousin said *'Well I tell ye, my type of visitor would be upmarket, not like you' (laughs),* and I said *'If I had a dig in me I'd pull ye one'. 'So that was a good year and I won a ham and a hundred cigarettes up in (names another pub)'. 'I read a hell of a lot and listen to good music, I loves opera … I'm an opera man … I like Verdi, I like Strauss'. 'I have an idea that if a fella reads a lot and if he keeps a little inquisitive, just to keep it ticking over, he won't get Alzheimers'. 'I don't miss Jack O'Brien on a Sunday night, although he wasn't too good last Sunday night. Now not Grand Opera, I like Lehare, it's beautiful'.* He also likes light operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan and likes to listen to them on his own. *'I would, oh yeah … oh God I would'. I'm a kind of a selfish man that way, I love to listen to this on me own, cause most of the time sittin' down with a person, that does me head in … they do be slagging me up in the golf club, now it's only an auld slag'.* He goes on to tell me of his friends in the golf club whom he plays a regular fourball with he says are 'all alcoholics' and of his friend whose brother is 'big in country music' and he 'slags' them saying 'what about the intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana, by Mascagni', their response is … *'What's he f****** saying'* (jokingly).

He tells me of a special friend who had cancer and how he would give up his fourball game to sit with him when he came to the golf club and how they would criticise everyone's play, and how he visited him in four cancer hospitals while he was sick.

George recalls his wife's passing. *'She died of a heart attack, I was only 59 when she died … and at Christmas I was at an awful loss when she died because I had a lot of money and no one to give it to. When you get up in the morning and you do anything or go out for 12 hours or play golf or somewhere, and you come back home to your own house and it is identical as you left it … there is not a thing stirred in it, it is identical to what you left'. 'I never said boo to her in 27/8 years … if I had the opportunity to go (get married) again I wouldn't. First of all I'd be scared, ye know because I wasn't goin to work … and I didn't*

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need the commitment, and I would be shutting the door on my memories ... and then I'd have me family to contend with, you know what I mean'. 'I'd socialise with them (women) but I'd be tellin' them a bundle of lies (smiles) ... 'We were comin' out of the golf club the other night and there was frost , and I said to (names two ladies) ...Jasus I'll have to give the fat one a ring tonight, and they'd give ye a dig'.

He still enjoys being active … *'I love walkin', except when I meet a hill, but I have my method, if I'm coming up (names steep street in city) I hope I don't meet anyone and I always look in the windows (to catch a breath) ...I'm after lookin' in there a hundred million times, when I'm halfway up, that gets me over the hill'.*

He has a couple of regular golf partners whom he plays with every week. *'I keep up with them ... I have a battery driven caddy car that pulls me up the hills ... I can't drag it anymore. I was always physically strong, but Jasus it takes its toll anyway'.* He relates his experience with his prostate and the pain he went through when he got *'caught'* and had to go to the hospital to have his bladder drained with a tube and how helpful and nice the doctors and nurses were and how he had to have a *'bag'* attached to him for a couple of weeks. He relates how he went to his doctor's surgery one day and was in the waiting room with only four other older men there and one started to tell a joke and the others told their jokes, and the doctor came out to see what the commotion was and sat with them for the craic. He recalls how his eldest brother *'who was 6ft. 4 inches, died of cancer ... and he got the best of food when we were reared, a fine cut of a man, he died at 70 , and I could lift him out of the bed'. 'So I outlived him by six years'.* His friend from the golf club died at 60 … *'it's a consolation too, because I've out-lived him by 16 years'.*

He has no problem with younger people even at night when he is walking home … *'not a bit, as long as they wouldn't interfere with you, and if they are getting a bit snappy about it, I'd say 'I had the day when I wouldn't be goin back to you fellas' ... you'd make a joke of it'.* He talks about people who give up drink for Lent and how obnoxious some of them can become. He explains how the people who own his apartment block are building new modern luxury apartments next door at a cost of €22 million from land they sold in the good times and how he would like to get one of them. The new apartments are to be

occupied by nuns as well as lay people and he jokes that he asked another fellow who lives in his current block, who is a bit of a heavy drinker, how he would like to live in the new apartments … *'and be woken up with breakfast by nuns each morning'. 'That'd be all right'* he said *'but how would I get in with a feed of drink at night?'* The interview ends and he heads back to his own apartment.   END.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the range of older men involved in this research from rural and urban backgrounds, their differing early life experiences and social circumstances. It also outlined the wide variety of work undertaken by the participants which was, by and large, physical in nature and the education levels attained which to a great extent influenced the type of work open to them. It also provided a glimpse, through the synopsised interviews of the different social circumstances prevailing during the 20th Century in rural and urban settings and the social pressures of the time. It is interesting to note how similar the lived experiences of some of these older men is to the literature reviewed. The pervasiveness of the Church influence runs like a thread through many of the life course experiences, from George, whose mother had to change her religion to marry a Catholic, to Peter who was placed in an orphanage and subsequently an industrial school. Three of those interviewed were born outside of marriage, Gary, Peter and Phillip and all spoke sympathetically of the difficult circumstances their mothers were placed in at the time. Peter and Philip knew who their birth mothers were and where they lived but did not make contact with them for fear of embarrassing them in their new relationships.

The depressed economic times is reflected in most of the interviews, be they urban or rural. It is interesting to note the air of acceptance of what was essentially a Government created economic problems particularly in the 30s. The prevalence of large families, as encouraged by State and Church, is also of interest as in the case of George, Mike and Bill. The scourge of emigration as experienced by Mike, Bill and their families, along with the hardship suffered by those large families was common throughout the 30s, 40s and 50s, as witnessed

by the high emigration figures of those times. It could also be argued, as Mike did, that it was the existence of these large families, their emigration and repatriation of funds to the family home that facilitated the continuance of the large family farm life for those remaining. We can see this in the contrasting circumstances of Jack who only had one brother who died young and Mike with his nine other siblings. Mike now lives in frugal comfort while Jack lives in Dickensian squalor despite having worked hard throughout his life.

Having to live with Grandparents, as in the case of George, must also have imposed considerable pressure on family cohesion. Despite these major impediments most of the older men interviewed were sanguine about their treatment as children and adolescents. There were no major examples of abuse other than the neglect experienced by Paul whose father did not come home regularly and drank his wages at his employer's pub. The denial of secondary and tertiary education to so many throughout this period must be viewed as a major lost opportunity for Ireland particularly during WWII, when Europe was in turmoil. Ireland's lack of natural resources, except for agriculture, demands that education must be an ongoing high national priority, irrespective of the decade.

The majority of those interviewed were dependent on the State for some level of income support. The most common source of income was the State non-contributory pension, which is means-tested. The majority of participants had no significant tangible assets, in the form of property or savings. Mike, George, Patrick and Jimmy had small occupational pensions to supplement their State pensions. Jack on his return from his travels had refused a non-contributory pension because he had not paid into it over the years. All benefited from the free travel, telephone, electricity and heat allowances and were delighted to have them. The free travel allowed them to keep in touch with family and friends as did the free telephone. Free travel for long journeys for rural participants was most valued. Unfortunately most of the rural older men did not have a reliable, if any, local bus service to avail of which meant they had to depend on the generosity of neighbours for shopping or emergencies or hire a hackney. Technology in the form of iPods, computers, broadband or voice over internet facilities were of no interest to the majority if the participants with the

exception of Patrick who regularly used specialised digit music analysis software to record, 'clean' and restore old Irish pipe recordings.

It was interesting to observe what some older rural men were prepared to endure in order to continue living on or near their family farms. Mike who had one eye removed because of cancer and a cataract in the other must have gotten very little visual pleasure from the beautiful countryside which his home overlooked, while Philip and Jack must also have suffered extreme hardship living in the isolated and dilapidated conditions they occupied. Any of them, for their age and circumstances, would have been entitled to a County Council house in their nearby towns if they chose to request one.

There appears to have been a skewed mentality on the part of successive Governments, attributed by Coogan (2003) to the advice of senior civil servants in the Department of Finance, for most of the 20th century, of not borrowing funds for long term educational and physical infrastructure needs, in favour of preserving funds. This approach resulted in the dismantling of the railways, as seen in George's narrative. There was also disregard for prioritising the building a new national road network, which has only started in recent years. These investment omissions, recognised as essential to the nations progress by the Germans in the 30s and 40s and the British and Americans in the 50s, 60s and 70s, have since proved to be limitations to inward investment in Ireland. These timely investments might have stemmed the flow of emigration in the 50s, 60s and 70s, particularly from the Western seaboard, by making them more accessible.

The virtual absence of social mobility, from one class to another throughout the 20th century as noted by Hout (1989), is noticeable within the interviews. Those whose fathers were farmers became farmers themselves, as in the case of John, Bill, Philip and Mike, while the majority of those from manual or semi-skilled/skilled backgrounds continued within their social class, as in the case of Jack, George, Frank, Jimmy and Paul. None of those interviewed became members of the professional middle-classes, possibly due to lack of educational opportunity and appropriate support structures. Nevertheless many of the older men interviewed did demonstrate a quick-minded opportunistic approach to life as in

the case of George who turned his hand to a multitude of skills throughout his working life. Paul, who started his working life as an agricultural labourer, then progressed to television aerial erection followed by bus driving. Jimmy, with his limited technical education became a building contractor versed in a wide range of skills and employed up to eight men at various stages of his career in England. Patrick developed from City and Guilds tradesman to senior product development manager with a high-tech computer multi-national, all with virtually no assistance from the State.

For Patrick, Jimmy and Paul who were divorced, life without their families posed some regrets and on occasions some loneliness. They were somewhat stoical in this regard as they felt they had contributed to their own circumstances. The other men interviewed, who were mainly never-married, were more content about their family networks and, with the exception of Mike, enjoyed the level of social contact they had. In this regard I was intrigued to note that having gained considerable prominence in the 60s there was almost universal dislike for television by those interviewed, with the exception of watching the news. John had gotten rid of his set 20 years earlier, and none of the others, where they had a TV, referred to it as being a source of important entertainment and most preferred the silence. I considered it strange that something that had provoked and facilitated so much social change in Ireland throughout the late decades of the 20th century should now be considered virtually irrelevant in so many older men's lives.

In the next chapter we will see theme identification and a more detailed analysis of the lives of older men. Some of these themes are common to most of the older men while some are peculiar to those in urban or rural settings.

Chapter 6 – Theme Identification and Analysis

The previous chapter was descriptive in nature outlining the stories and circumstances of the older men interviewed. This chapter offers more detail and analysis of the data under the four per-identified a piriori themes of loneliness, health, education, accessibility – as part of the greater area of participation and socialisation. Also identified are three new themes of significance poverty, older men's homes, along with spirituality and religiosity.

Loneliness

Loneliness amongst the elderly has a high profile within the public consciousness. This is despite the fact that the literature has identified that only approximately 7% of the elderly population suffer from loneliness (NCAOP, 2004). It nevertheless evokes a deep emotional response in the public mind to think of an old person alone and lonely, and is the subject of many fund raising advertising campaigns around Christmas. Of those interviewed ongoing persistent loneliness was not the experience of the majority of these older men. Of the twelve men interviewed only one, Mike, expressed feelings of ongoing loneliness to the extent that it was a matter of recurring concern (see synopsised interviews). George was occasionally struck with bouts of loneliness when returning home to find 'everything was just as you left it'. Most of those interviewed enjoyed the freedom and independence of living alone and did not raise loneliness as an issue. Both of these comments are in keeping with Davidson (2006) observations.

The older men who lived in urban areas chatted with their neighbours on a daily basis or at the local shopping centres where they did their weekly shopping and where many of them had their daytime meals. Most of the older men in this study relied on family relatives for close company, and in particular the urban older men who had been married, valued their daughters company. This is in line with Davidson (2006) and Timonen's (2008) findings. Davidson (2003) reported that older never-married men living alone are less lonely than

those who were married and are now widowed, divorced or separated. This would explain how six out of the seven never-married men in this research did not report loneliness as a concern. Trips to the local pub for company, for most of the older men, was limited to special occasions such as weddings, christenings or funerals or Sundays. Older rural men with family farm houses looked forward to having siblings, nieces and nephews visit for holidays (Mike). Most of the older men interviewed kept occupied with solitary hobbies such as listening to recordings, reading and/or recordings music. Most socialised during the day time as they felt their eyesight and energy levels were reduced in the late evening. Overall while these twelve men lived alone, loneliness is not perceived to be a problem in this study.

Health

Health was a key on-going concern to all of the older men interviewed, in varying degrees of intensity. The following are some of the facts that I distilled from over 25 hours of conversation with the twelve older men. Their outward approach to their health was, by and large, casual, they did not make a fuss about the condition of their health or the inconvenience suffered as a result of their chronic illnesses. Nor did they look for any sort of sympathy or acclamation when discussing their treatments. Conversationally their health circumstances were delivered almost as an aside. One could tell from the importance they attributed to coping with their health outcomes they were intent on not letting their health deteriorate in the future or in the case of accidents, happen again.

Ten out of twelve of those interviewed (83%) reported having one chronic illness. This is higher than that reported by the Slan national survey (62%). Six reported respiratory illnesses, five of which were exacerbated with a lifetime of smoking, which they still continued to 'enjoy'. One who had emphysema and used an electric scooter to travel even the shortest of distances. Three reported type II diabetes, which is about twice the national average, which they controlled through diet exercise and medication. One who had a triple by-pass and one was on daily dialysis awaiting a repeat double kidney transplant. Jack the

78 year old who lived in appalling conditions kept fit walking and ate a high protein diet, had no current illnesses.

As individuals they were not aware that being in the SEGs 5/6 it was likely that most of them would incur more health problems during their youth and working lives than those in SEGs 1/2. Some of these health problems would be due to the substandard home conditions they were raised in and later in life due to the physically risk laden circumstances they worked in. They just accepted that that was what life had given them, and they had to get on with it.

Two of those interviewed reported work related accidents which continued to play a daily role in their current ill health. Jimmy had been victim to a falling steel girder on a building site when working on a job in London as a young man. The girder broke both of his legs. He now suffers from arthritis and takes pain killers daily. Mike had dislocated his hip when trying to lift a large boulder onto his horse and cart in the middle of a field, alone. It was years before he got if fixed in hospital. For men, these kind of risk situations were seen as part of the job and living.

All of those interviewed now attended their doctor at least twice a year, and some every three months and adhered strictly to the advice given, this is in accord with the findings of Richardson (2004). None of the older men interviewed consumed alcohol beyond the recommended intake of 20 units per week, and considered alcohol to be of secondary entertainment value in their lifestyles. Patrick recalled many years of late night drinking sessions while playing this Ilian pipes at Fleadh Ceoils and pubs, his drinking contributed to his marriage breakup. Paul drank to excess while a bus driver and as a result lost his job and his marriage. George recalled his fight with his newly acquired drink problem on the death of his wife. These three older men are now either total abstainers from alcohol or are very moderate drinkers and only on special occasions.

With the exception of Gary all appeared to be capable of completing the full range of ADLs appropriate to their lifestyle aspirations. Only one reported a chronic urinary/prostate difficulty (George), which he was going to see a specialist about and only one reported an encounter with cancer (Mike). None of those interviewed complained of stress and all

appeared to have a positive mental attitude were happy to converse and were aware of current major national controversies.

All of the rural dwellers liked to prepare the majority of their own daily meals at home eating out only occasionally, while 50% of the urban dwellers ate out on a regular basis either in the local shopping centre cafes or at their community dining halls. None of those interviewed reported problems with mastication although based on observation four of the older men interviewed needed the attention of a dentist.

From the interviews conducted it was evident that a small number of older men had neglected their health in their adult years with excessive drinking or smoking and high risk behaviours mainly associated with work. Peter was awaiting his second double kidney transplant and believed he would be fully functioning once that operation was over.

With regard to medication all took it as directed, with the exception of John who 'was trying to cut down on them'.

These patterns of behaviour are in keeping with the literature (Richardson, 2004). With older men taking part in high risk behaviours with alcohol, smoking and ignoring dangers in their early years. They have now adopted fewer high risk behaviours, smoke less, drink less and as they matured caring more for their health and minimising potential harmful outcomes. It is interesting that smoking continues to be so prevalent with so many who now do so much to avoid potentially less life threatening diseases. Overall the desire to maintain reasonable health did have a conditioning effect on these older men's lifestyles.

Education

The literature of Coogan (2003) and Ferriter (2005) and the interviews clearly indicate that education was not perceived as a necessity for success for over 70% of the older men interviewed. The fault, unfortunately, lay not with the interviewees of this study but with their parents, the State and to some extent the Church. Parents with large families were under pressure to contain outgoings and maximise their miserly income. One way to do this

was to put their children to work at an early age, forsaking their education. The State chose not to provide sufficient resources to educate this category of citizen, and in doing so ignored the potential that an educated labour force could yield to the economy. The Church, with its full coffers from providing services to the State, from weekly church collections from its followers and from the donations, bequests and investments chose to channel their finances towards the evangelisation of far away continents, rather than fully educate its home charges.

The majority of those interviewed referred to their lack of a full formal education and the fact that they had left school at a young age. This lack of education set the seal on the lifestyle they subsequently lived. It also limited their ability to rise within the social order, as outlined by Hout (1989) and as a consequence benefit from a better income and better health, if not in Ireland then wherever they were forced to live because of economic depression and emigration. The proof of the value of an enhanced education lies is in the stories of the small minority who went on to secure some level of further education. Patrick undertook his City and Guilds at his local Technical College, which secured him an excellent job as an electronics technician. Peter completed his training in hospitality which enabled him to become a Gentleman's gentleman, and later to work in the hospitality industry. Jimmy, even though he had only completed one year of his engineering course at his local Technical College secured a position as site foreman in England because he could read plans and estimate quantities. He later went on to form his own building company and employ many men. Others secured apprenticeships and had small but steady incomes for many decades, and further enhanced their skills as a result. Most of the remainder regretted not having the opportunity to complete their education and remained in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations up to their retirement. None of those interviewed achieved a Leaving Certificate, while Third Level education was out of the question for all. From the interviews, conducted with these older men, it is evident that those with additional education had experienced more challenging and interesting careers, had greater economic stability in their lives overall, reported fewer personal life course problems, were more content and had less anxiety in their retirement. None of those interviewed had any form of sex or health education, social etiquette training or more than a rudimentary home training

in personal hygiene, handed down by their parents. Lack of education contributed not only to their lack of financial opportunity but also hindered their ability to understand and assimilate a fast changing world, as technology gradually encroached into all job areas. Lack of education condemned those without it to the lowest rung of the jobs ladder (Hout, 1989; Kearns 1994) and made their incomes vulnerable to technology change and ensured they worked in the least health friendly occupations and environments. The Black Report (1980) and Richardson (2004) point to the correlation between the low SEGs (5/6), which these older less educated men occupied, and high morbidity and mortality rates. None of the older men in this survey were abused by their teachers during the course of their education however the robust (Ryan, 2009) teaching methods in relation to corporal punishment prevalent in most State sponsored schools were not calculated to endear young school goers to stay on within the education system.

Accessibility - participation and socialisation

Participation in community life and social events varied greatly depending on whether older men lived in a rural or urban setting. Some of the rural older men lived in very remote locations, such as Philip, who lived five miles from the nearest town, up a narrow dirt road which led to an even narrower single track stony lane, in an old two storey farmhouse surrounded by a dense and encroaching forest with only skeletal local transport. Bill lived ten miles from the nearest town with few neighbours, alone on his farm. While he drove a tractor he did not have a car and relied on neighbours for 'lifts' into town to do his weekly shopping. Many of the farms adjacent to Bill were 'hobby farms' devoid of people except in summer or at weekends. Mike lived two and a half miles from his local town on the side of a mountain surrounded on three sides by forest, with only his nephew as a neighbour and no public transport. While he was delighted to have a sturdy house which could and did accommodate his extended family for holidays, for his social life he depended almost exclusively on organised 'tea dances' once a week in a distant town, accompanied by Philip and a small number of other older men. Jack, Peter and John had no social focus in their social lives other than the occasional contact with 'townies' when shopping for their

weekly groceries. Peter was the only one of the rural participants to have a regular if infrequent public transport facility available to him. He lived within walking distance of the centre of his small coastal village. Because of his need to use his kidney dialysis machine on a daily basis he was restricted in how far he could go or how long he could be away from home. If he did travel he had to ensure there was a similar facility available to him where he was visiting.

Remoteness, combined with health limitations, lack of local shopping facilities, infrequent and unreliable transport, meant that majority of the rural older men, had no means of keeping in touch on a face to face basis with the outside world, on a regular basis. This in turn limited their ability to develop any meaningful sustainable social contact or community participation. This physical isolation, was compounded in many cases by the medical difficulties which some had, as in the case of Bill who had a triple by-pass and Mike who had only one eye with a cataract in it as well as diabetes and difficulties with his hips. The majority of the rural participants dismissed the idea of walking the local roads, even for enjoyment during the day time, because of the speed of traffic and their inability to react quickly enough to ensure they were not knocked down. Those who had cars at one time sold them in later life because they found driving too stressful. Effectively these rural men were locked into their homesteads unless taken to places by friends or neighbours. Some paid for a hackney to transport them to weekly events but this was viewed as too expensive for daily use.

There was recognition by these older rural men, of the isolated nature of their circumstances and 'concern' was expressed as to the lack of local transport services. However, this concern appeared to be outweighed by the contentment of living in, what to them, was a beautiful country environment with the warmth and support of surrounding neighbours who maintained a 'civil distance' and yet offered assistance when called upon. This self-sufficient and independent outlook on life was a reflection, and perhaps an extension of the solitary nature of their working lives. This is in keeping with the concept of men seeing their lives as a life-course, as articulated by Davidson (2003).

Urban dwellers, for the most part, had daily social contact with a wide variety of neighbours, estate workers and acquaintances which they met in the nearby shopping centres. Some had made close friendships with other male tenants on the estates in which they lived, and these friends popped in at irregular intervals during the day and week to check on their wellbeing. None however participated in the life of their larger local community. This may have been because most of them were 'new' to the local area or because they had not been invited to contribute to wider community events. Some preferred to visit the neighbourhood where they were reared. Frank for example travelled across his local town to visit a boxing club he had contact with as a youth, and enjoyed helping out in minor ways on an irregular basis. George enjoyed playing golf but did not participate in the organisation of his club events; he did however make a point of 'looking in' on any tenants in his apartment complex whom he felt needed special care or assistance. There was no male community facility where older men could gather and chat or participate using their life skills to enhance either their own environment or to learn or pass on skills to others similar to the Shed's Clubs in Australia. This would have satisfied the task oriented male preference.

Most of the urban men interviewed, did not consider alcoholic drink to be a regular or important part of their social life, in fact many found it to be a hindrance to enjoyment as it interfered with their medications.

Overall the rural older men of this study lived lives of isolation limited to telephone contact initiated by them or personal contact with/through a sparse neighbourhood network. Poor transport infrastructure, chronic illness and a desire for independence limited their ability and willingness to participate in local community events or organisations. This is in keeping with the findings of Daly and O'Connor (1984). The urban older men of this study had access to a variety of commercial facilities in nearby shopping centres and purpose built community centres. Many were reluctant to participate in 'estate' events because of the dominance of females whom they found to be 'too inquisitive and fussy'. A number of urban older men welcomed the fact that some social housing estates had 'out of hours' security with entrances to the estates which were 'gated' and accessible only by security 'fob' or card swipe.

In either rural or urban settings the opportunity did not exist to socialise as part of a leisure activity, or to participate in team projects with a physical outcome which older men found gave them a sense of independence and control, and provided them with help and comfort in times of personal crisis, as articulated by Hall et al., (2007).

Poverty

The most common theme which emerged over the life course of the older men of this study was the scarcity of money and in some cases extreme poverty, and resultant hardship, which existed throughout the early and young adult lives of older men. The impact of this poverty took many forms the most common of which was the frugality of early family life and a sense of low expectation for the future. This manifested itself in the majority of older men having to forgo a full formal education. Most of those interviewed completed their formal education to around Primary level, and in the case of Jack, to age eight, whose mother saved money by making his clothes, and when it got bitterly cold in winter made up bed coverings from potato sacks. Patrick went bare foot to school from his slum dwelling in north Dublin inner-city. Other interviewees from large families had to be content with 'hand me down' clothes from older brothers. Paul, the son of a farm labourer, worked for neighbouring farmers at an early age to supplement his mother's income from housekeeping, as his father did not support his family.

Those born into small farming families were expected to work for their 'keep' from an early age until they eventually found employment in off-farm jobs in nearby cities or emigrated. Those who emigrated repatriated a portion of their incomes to the remaining family. Because of the depressed economy in Ireland from the 20s to the 60s, and the absence government support to improve the lot of the working classes (Ferriter, 2010) there was no minimum wage rates, pay was low and incomes irregular. This scenario covered the adolescent and early working lives of those interviewed. Many family members emigrated to UK or America as recalled by Mike and Bill, and never returned while those who remained, like George and Frank took occasional work in UK returning when local employment circumstances improved (Coogan, 2003). Those who could get work in Ireland, as in the case of Mike, availed of 'work schemes' offered to those on the 'dole'

which paid the equivalent of unemployment assistance at the time (Ferriter, 2005). This lack of economic activity coupled with the difficulty of securing apprenticeship positions because preference was given to the children of those already in the trade (Hout, 1989), meant that there was a significant surplus of unskilled labour in the market place. Frank worked during WWII in England demolishing bombed buildings and recovering dead bodies from homes and factories, after German air raids. He later returned to do his apprenticeship as a painter and worked for the county council, following in his father's footsteps. George as a young boy earned money for his family as a golf caddy and later went to England where he worked in a variety of jobs before returning to work for CIE as a bridge painter and welder. Low paid and irregular work left little discretionary income for individuals or families and resulted in a poor quality of life for most men in this socio-economic group. The older men, now widowers, who were married with families, had to work as much overtime as they could get to create a better living for their children than they had. As they established themselves towards their 'middle life' things improved, but never sufficiently to allow them to save enough to take care of their own old age. Most of those interviewed now rely on the means-tested non-contributory State pension as their main source of income. Some, such as George, Mike, Frank and Patrick have small occupational or EU pensions to supplement their incomes. None of the older men interviewed complained about a lack of money or long-cherished unachieved ambitions. Overall they appeared content to live their lives in the present moment, to have a roof over their heads and enough money to put food on the table each day.

Older men's homes

Generally speaking the homes of the older men in this study, even those in social housing, were austere and functional and in the cases of some rural private dwellings, chaotic and dirty. An interesting aspect of interviewing people in their home setting is to observe the detail of the surroundings they live in. These surrounding can often confirm or contradict the impressions gained from talking to the individuals. In the case of these rural older men it was noticeable in most cases how frugally they lived in so far as the décor of their homes

was, with a few exceptions lacked what is more commonly known as 'a woman's touch'. Furniture was generally old in style and robust and lacked a 'lightness' associated with a warm home atmosphere. The private houses were generally unheated, despite it being November when the interviews took place. Memorabilia of favourite events, saints, relatives and friends were scarce and when they were displayed it was in a haphazard and 'casual' manner around the walls. The exception to this was Mike's living area. Here he placed his treasured dance certificates and photos of past achievements prominently on his sitting-room wall for all to see. His kitchen was tidy, spotless and organised and his heating functioned perfectly. In contrast, Jack's home had corrugated iron over the front door lintel, rotting window frames and half hung dirty net curtains in the tiny windows. There were sheep grazing in the 'garden' and the footpath from the road was of rough stone. Living quarters were strewn with papers, which represented a distinct fire hazard, and discarded junk which one might expect to see in an outhouse or garage littered the main living area. A single dim bulb barely lit the surroundings. Philip's main living area was a product of years of neglect and disorganisation, and his toilet, which was located openly in his downstairs bedroom, was distinctly unhygienic. Utilitarian would be too generous a term to attribute to these two latter dwellings and yet dirty would be too stinging a criticism, neglect through disinterest, incompetence and lack of insight into hygienically acceptable norms is somewhat nearer the mark. These observations are not meant to be a criticism of the individuals but merely an observation on the lack of social, personal and health education in some rural men's lives.

Bill's kitchen, where we sat for the interview, was tidy, faded and functional resembling a working kitchen where labourers might come and eat during a working day and head off back into the fields once fed. The décor was reminiscent of the late 40s or 50s with a minimalist centre lamp and brown tiled flooring. In keeping with rural tradition Bill's new Labrador working pup, which he hoped to train to herd cattle, was kept outside while Mike's pet, a large Jack Russell crossbreed, was allowed the run of his bungalow.

The urban men's houses were all modern in construction and reflected the individual taste of the owners in the internal décor, photos and painting hung on the walls. The furniture was modern and utilitarian in style. Houses or apartments were kept in good repair by the

local housing agency and tenants were allowed decorate the internal walls to their own particular preference. Some had small back gardens. Animals were not allowed on the estates. Most dwellings were bright and airy and consisted of a hall, bathroom, kitchen / dining room / lounge and one bedroom.

Spirituality and religiosity

Adherence to the religious practice of Sunday mass was common within this rural group of older men. Within each of the houses visited there was displayed either a picture of the Sacred Heart or an Infant of Prague, and in some houses both. Overwhelmingly the religious ethos was Roman Catholic, in keeping with the Catholic nature of the older men's background and upbringing. Attendance at Mass on a Sunday was invariably followed by a visit to the pub for a few pints or to a local restaurant for an inexpensive main course meal, emphasising the traditional links between socialising and religion in rural Ireland. Philip in particular was a devout practicing Christian who 'did good things' and was a member of the Third Order of St. Francis and had occasion to use his lay apostolate facilities. Recently he found a dead man in the woods near his home and was able to pray over him, which was of great consolation to the man's wife and family. All of the older men interviewed had a very 'Christian' demeanour as reflected in their modesty regarding their life achievements and spoke of others with a gentle kindness rather than being openly critical, disparaging or offensive about neighbours and individuals they knew.

Despite the dominant role played by the Church throughout their lives and the revelations of recent years regarding child abuse by some priests, brothers and nuns most older men took a benign and philosophical view of the clergy. Gary had some criticisms of the way his half-sister had been treated by nuns while in their care, but by and large, even he acknowledged their generosity whenever he called unexpectedly on a convent, abbey or parish house while touring the countryside looking for farm work.

All of urban men lived in housing provided by an association with a Catholic ethos with the daily involvement of nun's and priests, it is therefore difficult to know whether they were

reluctant to be critical for this reason. Open displays of religious devotion were less apparent in the urban older men's homes, and there was little reference to ongoing contact with Church organisations, even though some had very close contacts with Christian voluntary groups throughout their working lives. Jimmy in particular worked with his local parish priest at an Irish centre in London for over thirty years taking care of lonely, isolated and destitute Irish emigrants, and had on many occasions organised fundraisers to repatriate them to their families or to give them a respectful burial.

All of those interviewed portrayed a benevolence of spirit towards their fellow man, preferring to speak well of them, and were open to offering a helping hand where they felt their help was needed. They kept in touch with neighbours who might need assistance due to ill health or difficult personal circumstances and continued to be supportive to their surviving siblings, sons, daughters, nieces and nephews despite their limited resources. This generosity of spirit shown was so universal amongst all of the older men it was difficult to distinguish whether it was in recognition of the difficult lives they had led or whether it was because of a higher spiritual insight/devotion.

Summary

In this chapter we analysed the current circumstances of a small unrepresentative sample of older men living alone and in poverty. I found that

- Loneliness is, by and large, not a major problem in this selection of older men.

  Recommendation: Greater support for individuals should be available through HSE, public health nurse, or local doctor or voluntary bodies for those who express an interest in more regular face to face contact with others. Vetted callers could be assigned to call on those in this position. The Third Age currently provide telephone chat lines for the elderly, these could be expanded with further funding.

- The health of the older men in this study is broadly within the literature expectations of an SEG 5/6 population.

Recommendations: There is significant scope for improving the health of older men with a programme or series of lectures, leaflets, DVDs and/ or free health telephone lines to educate older men on aspects of health specific services, or activities appropriate to older men's age and health circumstances.

- The educational attainments of these older men was low and was limited because of poor domestic economic circumstances, the unwillingness of the State to ensure equal educational opportunities for all, and the choice of the Church to devote locally accumulated wealth to the support the evangelisation of third world countries.

Recommendations: An assessment should be made of older men's educational requirements across a broad spectrum of competencies including operating computer technology. Classes should be made available for free at times which suite older men to attend to address their needs.

- The inadequate infrastructures of transport and social support have the effect of isolating many rural dwellers. There are no social framework or infrastructure facilities for older men wishing to develop their skills, in a conducive environment with similarly interested males to the benefit of the individual or society.

Recommendation: Ideally in a nationwide situation the involvement of a nationwide organisation would be an advantage. The current initiative of the GAA & IFA to rescue older men from rural isolation could be extended to city based clubs. This would require considerable finance to ensure appropriate transport and social support was made available, all in a confidential environment. Perhaps EU funding would be available to part finance such an initiative along with Government funds and public donations. The involvement of a large charity such as the Saint Vincent De Paul which has 9500 volunteers would also complement this arrangement and provide local knowledge and support.

- That poverty is prevalent in the lives of this selection of older men.

Poverty, while not exclusively associated with money is nevertheless ameliorated by additional funding. A full examination of all the life course services, over and above those already provided free, which older men could use should be initiated and prioritised against resource availability and the choice of additional services to be provided should be left to the older male population.

- That if older men's homes reflect the competencies needed to sustain a self-caring approach to life then more direction should be provide to help them they achieve this goal.

The National Men's Health Policy recommendation to provide Social Personal and Health Schools should be initiated in addition to Home Economic Skills training tailored to older men living alone.

- That spirituality, religiosity and socialisation are all part of the same circle where one compliments the other, especially for rural men.

Provide a non-religious based programme based on UN Human Rights Council principles on which to further consolidate spiritual/humanistic needs.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Recommendations

Aims of Study

The original aims and objectives of this study were

- To explore the biographies of older men's accounts of living through the modernisation of Irish society.

- To explore older men's subjective experiences of living alone and in poverty together with issues relating to family relationships and social networks of support.

- To identify and explore non-monetary factors that affect the quality of life of older men including health status, social relationships and housing conditions.

- To discover how existing social policies address older men's needs and how they need to improve to ensure a good quality of life for older men.

I believe I have addressed all of the aims and objectives of this study when the recommendations outlined below are taken into consideration.

Recommendations - Introduction

We can see from chapter six that a number of deficiencies exist in the lives of older single men living alone and in poverty. These deficiencies revolve mainly around a number of issues namely those of loneliness, health, education, accessibility – participation, poverty, older men's homes and spirituality and religiosity. The resolution of any one of these elements would not on its own resolve their current quality of life issues. They are interlinked in a manner requiring a multi-disciplinary approach which requires the intervention of a number of agencies and the full and willing participation of the older men. Even at this stage in their life course there is a lot that older men can do for themselves to improve their QOL. To achieve a positive and sustainable result in many areas of their lives they need to be shown how to maximise their own efforts in what are complex fields of endeavour. The key to achieving the optimum results while retaining maximum

independence and long term self-sufficiency is education in a range of disciplines, backed by appropriate resources.

Education

One of the key elements to improving life circumstances is education. Not necessarily in the traditional or conventional subjects but in life skills. This process requires an assessment of the individual's circumstances and an agreement on where that individual should and can be in relation to a full range of life goals which would reflect an improved QOL. The older man/men would undertake tailored programmes in various life skills which would address the areas of deficit identified. For many, based on the literature reviewed this coaching would include social, personal, and health skills, information on exercise, nutrition, home economics including cooking, housekeeping and budgeting. Older men would be apprised of the evidence of Richardson (2004), Davidson (2006), Davidson et al., (2003) in relation to lifestyle risk behaviours and their effects, as well as contributions from other relevant health, social and lifestyle researchers. Programmes specifically designed for rural and urban living would be made available. 'Go for life' trainers would be available to train groups of older men in strength, stamina and endurance exercises as well as training to maximise ADLs to ensure appropriate mobility skills and comfort for age and lifestyle circumstances. Where individuals identified a particular need in relation to a specific health issue these would be addressed in consultation with the appropriate medical staff. Programmes would also cover the provision of information on State entitlements and claiming procedures. Literacy classes would also be made available to address any deficiencies in reading and writing skills as well as courses on engaging with modern technology including computers and voice over internet protocols (VOIP), which maximise communication with siblings, family and friends domestically and throughout the world. This education would be supplemented with the provision of appropriate transport and centres where older men might gather to participate in hands-on activities where skills and problems could be shared with the objective of further personal development to the benefit

of the individual and the community at large. The primary objective would be to minimise morbidity and maximise DFLE.

In addition to education on health issues a system of health checks would be introduced which would ensure the early detection of potential gender, age or lifestyle related diseases. Programmes involving regular checks for diseases such as diabetes, cancer, hearing and sight deterioration as well as blood tests to detect prostate, other cancers and cholesterol levels could be performed on a regular basis with the intent of minimising major disabling surgical procedures and energy consuming recuperation, particularly in relation to chemotherapy treatments. Early detection and treatment being the key to reduced morbidity and premature mortality. Instruction on testicular examination as well as early symptom identification for a range of non-communicative disease would be undertaken in addition to the judicious and effective use of medication treatments. Instruction on participation in age appropriate sports activities which would reduce the effects of respiratory and circulatory diseases would also be provided under the supervision of trained instructors, as well as cardio pulmonary resuscitation and stroke awareness instruction. In this way older men would develop an expertise which could be of use for their benefit and that of the wider community.

Accessibility - participation and socialisation

Accessibility is reflected in the ability of older men to participate in social and community interaction to the extent that it provides them with an enhanced QOL. We can see from the interviews that a number of deficiencies exist in different settings. In the rural environment considerable physical limitations restrict full integration with the surrounding community. A needs analysis would determine the optimum use of resources to maximise community accessibility to older men, and in conjunction with other innovations mentioned above would improve socialisation opportunities and consequently QOL.

Poverty

Some poverty issues can be resolved through the judicious use of limited resources as well as maximising the use of State entitlements. To this end advocates would be assigned to ensure that all of the States responsibilities to older men are implemented in a timely manner based on the principle that 'Justice delayed is justice denied'.

Older men's homes

In the provision and maintenance of older men's homes it must be a priority to ensure optimum comfort with value for money. Optimal house/apartment design combined with the use of energy efficient materials, optimal insulation standards and minimal energy usage systems would ensure that maximum use of land and capital resources was achieved. Options to move to more age friendly environments would be available to older rural men while preserving established links and asset values of these older men. Education on the advantages of living in better serviced accommodation may persuade rural dwellers to relocate to secure 'gated' facilities which offer greater lifestyle options and more convenient access for family and friends.

The combined effect of the implementation of these recommendations would be to improve the QOL of older men living alone and in poverty.

The Research question answered

The main underlying determinants for most of the life course events which impacted upon the older men in this study were the scarcity of money compounded by an inadequate education. It is disturbing to consider that in the rush for Independence that the founders of this State and successive early Governments do not appear to have thought through the implications of Independence more methodically in this regard as they relate to the older

men of this study. It is equally disturbing to note that having achieved Independence that the quality of life and personal advancement of these older men was compromised by self-inflicted economic decisions such as the economic war with Britain in the 30s, so early after the States formation. Ferriter (2010) crystallises self-interest of the time and the misfortunes of older men exemplified in this study as a 'desire for power' on the part of the political classes. Despite the political commitment of the Proclamation of 1916 and The Democratic Programme of 1919, the older Irish men of this study have lived lives of considerable hardship and disadvantage throughout their life courses, perhaps unnecessarily. The political commitments promised are synopsised as followed:

> 'equal rights for all, equal opportunity for all, the pursuit of the happiness and prosperity for the whole Nation, the cherishing of the Nations children equally, the subordination of private property to the public right and welfare, the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the Nations children, freedom from hunger, cold and lack of food or shelter and the provision of the means for all of their proper education and training as Citizens of a free and Gaelic Ireland'.

I believe that this study has demonstrated that the older men of this study did not benefit equally as Irish citizens as envisaged in the Founders Proclamation of 1916 or The Democratic Programme of 1919 as recorded in the Dáil records for the following reasons.

There is little doubt from a review of the literature (Lee, Ferriter & Coogan) and from the interviews conducted with this small and unrepresentative section of older men of this study, both rural and urban, who lived and worked in Ireland throughout the 20th century, that life was extremely difficult. The hardships endured in their youth and the deprivations encountered in adolescence and adulthood has left their indelible mark of poverty and poor quality of life to this day. A half a century of political in-fighting and economic stagnation has embedded in them a culture of low self-esteem and few expectations.

The need to survive occupied the National consciousness and resulted in the emigration of hundreds of thousands of young men and women from these shores, most never to return to live here. Many of these emigrants succeeded in securing a good standard of living for themselves … many did not, and died in appalling circumstances, trying. Those who stayed

behind were left to contend with a rigid a highly stratified class structure dominated by the Catholic Church, supported and sponsored by Government, which deprived many citizens many human rights. The older men of this study endured successive Governments who lacked the experience and expertise in governance, politics and trade. Successive Governments maintained an inherited elitist structure in society, the professions and Government administration to the detriment of many of its citizens. This denied large sections of the population, mainly the working class of this study, the educational opportunity for social and financial self-advancement. As Hout (1989) pointed out there has been little social mobility between classes and the middleclass with influence, wealth and position used it to further their own interests and that of their family and friends. This 'cronyism' continues to this day and is regularly referred to in all the media particularly in relation to business, finance and the legal profession. So pervasive is it that it is embedded in the structures of national governance in the form of 'self-regulation' throughout the professional classes on the pretext of avoiding Government expense for their regulation. In some instances where State regulatory rules are enshrined in law, they are ignored or pressure is brought to bear not to invoke regulatory action, to the benefit of those regulated. This is evidenced in the recent lack of regulatory action which precipitated the current financial crisis which is already impacting on older men and will continue to do so over the next decade.

Ireland's accession to the European Union in 1973 mollified some domestic inequities over the past three decades, and brought to the farming community in particular, improved incomes, improved standards of living and reasonable retirement packages which benefited some of our interviewees. Access to European Union markets dramatically changed the face of Irish industry by attracting massive foreign direct investment, mostly from America. This has had a positive effect for many in the economy and has directly benefited some of the older men of this study. Since '73, European laws have been introduced which offer greater equality, protection, rights and freedom of action which might not have existed otherwise, as well as encouraged the care and welfare of citizens. The constant monitoring of Government performance by unbiased EU and international agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) the European Central

Bank ensures that the reasonable economic welfare of the State and its citizens is assured over the longer term. Without these influences the recent progress towards a fairer society would not have occurred.

We have seen that many of the older men of this study rely on registered charities to provide their basic needs for shelter and heat. Some live in conditions which, in other Western societies, would be condemned as uninhabitable. While some chose to live in their remote family homes the price they pay is virtual isolation due to lack of transport infrastructure, which limits them to an unsocial lifestyle. The incomes of many of those interviewed are considered to be on or below the poverty line and the care and wellbeing of many of them is determined by one-off financed social schemes which monitor their lifestyle from time to time. These schemes provide them with assistance and information on entitlements which they might not otherwise know about. Education in the basic skills of living in relation to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, gender and age related health matters are not readily or universally available to them. Some have waited for excessively long periods to have essential life sustaining medical operations made available to them, and are then faced with minimalist resources to support them in their recovery period. When older single men living alone avail of State hospital facilities after major operations, because they have no one at home to care for them, they are labelled as 'bed-blockers' due to the lack of appropriate step down nursing home places in the community. Small farmers living alone have to depend on the kindness of neighbours to look after their holdings while undergoing major operations. The closure of pubs, post offices and small grocery outlets impose considerable restrictions on many older rural single men and limits them to shopping in far away towns without the benefit of timely transport. The denuding of the Irish countryside of small holdings because of the lack of families to pass these small farms on to, limits the social interaction of those remaining.

Urban and rural older single men have no appropriate male oriented outlets, venues or facilities to visit to develop new friendships. Many urban older men are reluctant to participate in active retirement clubs because of the dominance of females. As a society we forget that many of these older men are not a product of a technology age, they are not comfortable with modern technology. They were raised in a time when one to one

conversations were their main social outlet, when live music and dances in the kitchen of/with neighbours was common and when everyone was expected to have a 'party piece' to entertain their friends at gatherings. For urban and rural older men alike this social capital no longer exists because of the demise of the nuclear family, the dispersal of siblings, sons and daughters to far away countries and remote new housing estates because of the lack of affordable local housing.

Therefore in relation to the major question of this research as outlined above it is clear from this study that the State has not provided either the environment or the resources for this section of society in which to flourish. The sparse financial circumstances which many live under, their dependence on charitable or voluntary agencies and the prevalence of chronic illnesses limits their ability, and perhaps willingness, to engage in a more expansive lifestyle. Low expectations cultivated over years of neglect have taught many of these older men that there is little use in complaining about their true needs as they are unlikely to be addressed. They therefore adopt a stoical, and perhaps sceptical approach to life, content to adopt an 'invisible' profile.

Despite the enormous changes that have occurred over the last 80 years the older men of this study can take considerable consolation from the knowledge that they have achieved enormous material advances for all citizens and have done so in a spirit of tolerance and understanding and with great gentleness and humility. Through their dedication and perseverance they can be justifiably proud of having created a Nation from virtually nothing with nothing, to the benefit of generations to come. Hopefully their contribution will be recognised and sufficient support will be forthcoming in their remaining years to live a life of tranquillity, contentment and dignity.

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Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3