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The Gender Continuum: Analysing Constructions of Masculinity Across the Situational Contexts of Consumption and Leisure Practices

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**The Gender Continuum: Analysing constructions of masculinity across
the situational contexts of consumption and leisure practices**

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The Gender Continuum: Analysing constructions of masculinity across the situational contexts of consumption and leisure practices

Abstract:

This paper draws upon Foucauldian theory and considers Eric Anderson's (2009) more recent inclusive masculinity theory to explore how young Irish men construct their masculine identities and come to know themselves through their engagement with consumption and leisure practices. Locating the subject within influential discursive regimes allows for the consideration of identity construction as interconnected with one's lived existence in the social world. This paper focuses on two practices: national sport and fashionable self-presentation. My findings show how new patterns of power relationships gradually develop, cultivating new constructions of masculinity. However, and challenging Anderson's emancipatory tone of inclusive masculinities as a solution to the 'constraining' powers of orthodox masculinity, this study instead highlights the cyclical nature of power and resistance in the construction of gender identity projects.

Literature Review:

While much literature investigating gender issues exists, there has been a paucity of research exploring masculinity and its relationship to consumption (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000). This gender gap in consumer research has been addressed by some prominent scholarship in more recent years (see (Belk and Costa, 1998); (Coskuner-Bali, 2008); (Elliott and Elliott, 2005); (Holt and Thompson, 2004); (Mort, 1996); (Nixon, 1996); (Östberg, 2012b); (Ourahmoune, 2009); (Patterson and Elliott, 2002); (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995); (Schroeder and Zwick, 2004); (Tuncay, 2006)).

Östberg (2012a) records how consumption has historically been connected to femininity while masculinity has been primarily associated with production. The following review traces masculinity studies within sociology to explore this gender dichotomy in consumer research and maps out the shifts in research approaches over time.

Theoretical Waves of Masculinity – A Historic Glance

Over the past half century, the sociology of masculinity has moved through three major theoretical waves. Initially such studies considered men in terms of sex role theory. In time however focus shifted from this reductionist, fixed character type to instead conceptualise multiple masculinities. This theoretical thinking is spearheaded in masculinity studies in the writings of R.W. Connell and his proposal of hegemonic masculinity. The third wave of studies critiques the latter theory as serving inevitably to privilege men over women. Critics attest that hegemonic masculinity and gender order concepts fall short when it comes to ‘understanding the dynamic and fluid relationships between political categories of gender and between individual men and women’ in contemporary cultures (Thorpe, 2010: 178). To this end, a poststructuralist approach is proposed, whereby individuals’ practices are the subject of exploration, as opposed to starting with the assumption of gendered patriarchal dichotomies.

Finally, and of pertinence to this paper, Anderson’s inclusive masculinity theory is considered. Anderson (2009) challenges Connell’s hegemonic masculinity theory as being insufficient to capture the complexity of competing masculinities. Instead he proposes his new theoretical model to explain and explore how men construct their masculinities in contemporary times (Anderson, 2009: 154).

Before broaching Anderson’s proposal a more in depth discussion of hegemonic masculinity and power relations is necessary.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell proposes masculinities ‘are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change’ (Connell, 2005). So while there could be numerous ways to perform masculinity in a particular historical moment and cultural context, men can feel obliged, consciously or unconsciously, to act out the prescribed, currently acceptable masculinity. Connell further explains that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is not fixed or given, and is subject to erosion by new groups challenging the status quo. As conditions for the defence of

patriarchy change, the foundations of a particular dominant masculinity corrode (Connell, 2005: 77).

However, this theory of hegemonic masculinity came under criticism for its location of all masculinities (and femininities) in terms of a single pattern of power, one that affirms men hold universal dominance over women (Thorpe, 2010). Wetherell and Edley point out how such hegemonic ideologies 'preserve, legitimate and naturalize the interests of the powerful – marginalizing and subordinating the claims of other groups' (Wetherell and Edley, 1999).

Wetherell and Edley chose to investigate men's identities through the site of discourse as they consider discursive practices to play a prominent role in the constitution of subjectivity. Their research findings suggests that in any particular time and place, there are multiple, varied and highly complex hegemonic forms of 'sense-making'.

Practices and Power Relations

And so, the third theoretical wave in masculinity studies came about. Influenced by feminist poststructuralism and theories of postmodernity, it places emphasis on how 'men's sense of identity is validated through dominant discursive practices of self, and how this identity work connects with (gender) power and resistance' (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001). As Seidler states, it is necessary to break away from inherited frameworks such as second-wave feminism, which have less relevance to our contemporary generation, to ask instead new kinds of questions, recognising that gender relations have transformed within patriarchal cultures (Seidler, 2006). It is these lines of enquiry that allow a more productive enquiry into masculinities.

Pringle (2005) proposes that a poststructuralist approach could allow researchers to move away from a dualistic consideration of their subject matter. Pringle explains how the Gramscian understanding of power facilitates the concept of a dominant power and thus, by dualistic default, a dominated other; whereas Foucault criticises the idea of power stemming from just one group or source, instead allowing for 'a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies' (Foucault, 1978).

Joan Cocks, a poststructuralist feminist, elaborates on the subject of power, and from a Gramscian perspective the notion of intentional rule. She warns that it would be simplistic to conceive universally of men as holders of power, and in dualistic contrast, women as such to be oppressed. Rather she draws upon Foucault's conception of power as omnipresent to encompass both males and females structuring gender relations. This perspective removes the assumption of man's dominance over woman (Cocks, 1989).

Inclusive Masculinity Theory

More recently, Anderson (2009) has devised inclusive masculinity theory as a response to changes in today's culture, which, he proposes, renders Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity outdated. He points to a number of social changes, to include the lessening of orthodox views and institutional control of gender, sexual and relationship types, alongside the increasing number of legal acts permitting once outlawed sexual unions, to

highlight shifting cultural attitudes towards gender and sexuality (Anderson, 2009: 6). In this more liberal society he deems Connell's patriarchal proposal less useful for considering masculinity. Rather, Anderson simultaneously incorporates and expands upon Connell's theory. Anderson (2009) accounts for multiple masculinities existing in any one culture without hierarchy or hegemony, a proposition Connell does not encompass. In a similar vein to Wetherell and Edley (1999), Anderson criticises hegemonic masculinity for only allowing for one hegemonic archetype of masculinity (Anderson, 2009: 94). Instead he proposes that oppositional masculinities, each with equal influence, can coexist within one setting, without one assuming a position of dominance over the other(s) (Anderson and McGuire, 2010). To this end Anderson puts forward two esteemed versions of masculinity which he labels as orthodox masculinity and inclusive masculinity. The former label captures the traditional masculine values of violence, stoicism, risk, patriarchy, misogyny and homophobia (Anderson, 2009: 30). The latter encompasses an inclusive approach to masculinity whereby there is social inclusion of the forms of masculinities once marginalised by hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2009: 8). However, rather than suggest that these two opposing masculinity types can coexist harmoniously at all times, Anderson's inclusive masculinity theory instead proposes three cultural Zeitgeists across which these types can come into play – moments of elevated cultural homophobia, diminishing cultural homophobia, and diminished homophobia. At this point, I devise the diagram shown in Figure 1 (see appendix 1) to explain Anderson's theory graphically.

The diagram illustrates the widening of space for men to express themselves in a culture of diminishing homophobia, and how this space continues to expand as cultural attitudes become more accepting of diversity in masculinities. Although Anderson's research is particularly interested in the social inclusion of homosexual men in sport, his concept is proposed as applicable to all studies on men's masculinity as it 'helps capture and explain men's gendered behaviours, attitudes and identities in a culture (or setting) of diminishing homophobia' (Anderson and McGuire, 2010: 258).

The horizontal platform of multiple masculinities illustrated in Figure 2 (see appendix 2) facilitates the conceptualising of contrasting identities existing at any one time without hegemony, rather than adhering to the idea of just one hegemonic masculinity dominating a setting. However, the scope for flexibility across this spectrum depends on the environment being researched and the level of diminishing cultural homophobia existent in this culture. Along this horizontal platform the complexities of masculinity-making can be explored with the acceptance that power is emanating from multiple sources, rather than any one overarching power.

And so Anderson's theory incorporates Foucauldian understandings of omnipresent power relations to examine the construction of masculinity. Looking at the everyday practices and interchanges of men without the constraint of an assumed dominant hegemonic masculinity allows scope to look at actual interactions and exchanges that in turn constitute a man's being.

Research Methodology:

Foucauldian theory is employed to conceptualise men as intertwined within their social environs, the recipients of socio-cultural inscription. Through consideration of the body as produced through discourse as well as disciplinary practices, Foucauldian theory facilitates exploration of the effects of power on the individual. The subject remains discursively and socially conditioned in power relations, yet within this configuration the individual's agency to 'define their own identity, to master their body and desires, and to forge a practice of freedom through techniques of the self' (Best and Kellner, 1991) is upheld.

Data was collected through the process of qualitative interviews. Each interview transcript is considered in light of the interviewer's knowledge that the data given is the interviewee's individual account of the social world according to them. However the interview data does not merely reflect people's subjective experience, but rather is considered 'social texts'; that is, 'complex cultural, social and psychological products, which construct a particular version of those experiences' (Moisander, Valtonen, and Hirsto, 2009). And so each interview text is read with the awareness that the interview is operating within a certain discourse, or 'a certain network of practices of power and constraining institutions' (Foucault, 1988).

Akin to Foucauldian thinking, Bruner argues that individuals '*become* the autobiographical narratives by which they tell about their lives' (Bruner, 1987). And so in order to be understood, 'these private constructions of identity must mesh with a community of life stories, or "deep structures" about the nature of life itself in a particular culture'. It is through this consideration of identity in terms of narrative that selves and identities can be seen as embedded in the social world (Lawler, 2008). This focus on narrative replaces the concept of the atomised individual with the concept of 'a person enmeshed in – and produced within – webs of social relations' (Lawler, 2008).

The first discursive practice selected is one of Ireland's national sports – Gaelic football. This emerged as a logical context in which to consider Irish masculinity. Sport in Ireland has long been a centrally important vehicle for the transmission of ideology and identity (Cronin, 1999). From its inception, the Gaelic Athletic Association¹ (GAA) has strategically aligned Irish masculinity with national identity, with the 'GAA man' epitomising the strong, skilful and moral Irishman (Cronin, 2007). The major influence of this sporting organisation within Irish sporting and cultural life, with clubs spread throughout most parishes in the country, made it an attractive field of analysis for this study. In order to gain a better understanding of the discursive regime of Gaelic sport, additional data was gathered through participant observation at Gaelic football matches, reviewing online Gaelic sport websites, newspaper articles and blogs, close reading of

¹ The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is an Irish sports organisation founded in 1884. It remains a community-led, wholly amateur sporting association.

Gaelic sport advertising material, and researching history books recording the history and social significance of Gaelic Sport in Ireland.

The second practice presented is the contextual domain of self-presentation and fashion. Ging proposes that the recent rise in consumerism in Ireland is ‘affecting the ways in which we mediate and talk about gender behaviours, identities and relationships in contemporary Ireland’ (Ging, 2009). With the recent upsurge of Irish lifestyle and fashion guides for men in the form of magazines (Irish Tatler for Men), websites (www.joe.ie), style blogs (www.male-mode.com), and increasing newspaper column space (see The Irish Independent Weekend magazine), it is apparent that a gap in the Irish male consumer market has been identified. Given that fashion consumption practices have traditionally been dominated by women (Ourahmoune, 2009), this domain was identified as an ideal site to explore possible emerging shifts in Irish masculine performances and constructions of identity. The term ‘Consumptionisto’ is drawn upon to describe men in this discursive regime. Consumptionistos are men who identify with practices of self-presentation (Duffy, 2012).

The next section presents selected data that serves to illustrate how individual men negotiate their masculine selves in relation to the broader structures of power surrounding them.

Findings:

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) Community

Foucault ascribed the term ‘biopower’ to modern power’s ‘administration of bodies and the calculated management of life’ (Foucault, 1978: 140). He identified how the development of this subtle power, in particular through its ‘integration into systems of efficient and economic controls’ (an exemplar being the institution of the GAA), served as techniques to discipline the body – both the anatomical and the social body (Foucault, 1978: 139). Taking this conceptual framework of power, let us firstly consider the progression of Dublin County football player Peter from GAA ‘nursery’ and summer camps to be selected to play for his county. His story can shed light on practices, knowledge and sets of norms operating within the GAA organisation (to include management, trainers, coaches, players, members, supporters and spectators) that ‘produce specific bodily capacities and particular attitudes towards the body and self’ (Smith Maguire, 2002).

Peter comes from a staunch GAA family. When asked how he got into the GAA, he references his parents straight away, proceeding to trace their familial roots to a small, rural, traditionally GAA village in North County Dublin. He describes how the GAA was the focal socialising point for his parents when they were young, as it was for their parents before them. His father played football, while his mother went along to support the team and meet up with friends; the GAA games were the weekend entertainment outlet and meeting point for these villagers – a way of life. In tracing his parents’ ancestral association with the GAA, Peter describes an almost foregone conclusion that he too should follow in their footsteps, which he surely does – at the age of five years he is brought by his parents to his first Finian’s GAA summer camp. (Incidentally, our interview takes place on a summer afternoon in a dug-out by the playing field after a now 23-year-old Peter wraps up a morning coaching session with a Finian’s juvenile summer camp group.) From there he pinpoints certain catchment points in place with the GAA, such as development panels, whereby the organisation can identify, select and mould young players with potential. From the age of 13 Peter was on such a panel, on his way to being sculpted into a GAA county player.

Interviewer: OK, so, let’s see. How did you get into the GAA?

Peter: Well, I got into it, I suppose when I was five years of age, my mam and dad sent me down here to Finian’s to a few of the summer camps ... one week maybe doing football and one week doing hurling and that’s where it all started and then ... So it was just a natural kind of a progression staying here, like, you know ... My mam and my dad would have been very, very keen Gaelic supporters, like, you know and still are to this day, like, my mam and dad are from Ballybay, North County Dublin, and like, they would have spent all their weekends going to football matches, like, you know, and their parents would have brought them to football matches, like ... and they were from the same club out there so it would have been a close-knit community out there, like, big time ... the football matches would be like, it’d be the meeting point for like, it’d be the socialising point of the weekend, like, for a lot of families, like you know, if they

were bringing their kids or whatever, especially my mam and dad like wouldn't have been big drinkers but they would have went to all the games and met their friends there at the games ... they would have just went to their matches like as the socialising aspect of things as well. My dad would have been playing and my mam would have been, would have known all the women that would have been watching as well ... But like, out there, it was just, it was burned into them, like, you know, everything they done, like, you know, they would have been training and playing. They were playing two games a day then also. I suppose my dad was keen to get me into it at a young age and I suppose it just kind of catapulted from there, like, you know?

The teenage years are renowned in GAA circles for dwindling members on the minor squads. Young players find other recreational outlets – the main rival for the GAA being 'foreign' sports such as soccer and rugby. However, Peter, the ideal GAA protégé, never played any other sport, and so did not defect. Peter describes how the development panels for which he was selected took place in the off-season, a season when other young lads had the opportunity to commit to different sports. Therefore to participate on these off-season panels, he was constrained from trying out new sports. Peter himself describes how this year-round entrenchment in Gaelic football ensured his total commitment to the game, with quitting never an option:

Peter: Yeah. I had to give it a lot of commitment because I was on like development panels for Dublin teams from the age of 13, like, around 13 ... and like, a lot of players, when the season was finished during the summer they would have been going to different sports like ... but I never did. I always played the Gaelic like so, a lot of them would have ... maybe half-committed to both, like, you know, and then when it comes down to it, when they get that bit older then, they kind of just lose that commitment so I suppose it's just, dedicating so much to it like at a young age, it kind of just, it was never an option really giving it up, like, you know?

The other contenders causing young players to abscond from their GAA commitments are pubs, discos and alcohol. In describing his teen years, Peter champions his family and in particular his parents as a supportive force behind his perseverance with his football training and matches schedule. And while he may ascribe his determination and commitment to being 'intrinsically motivated', his stories reveal an influential home life that gravitates towards the GAA. Throughout his teens, his older brothers-in-law brought him to all the Dublin matches in Croke Park (main stadium and headquarters of the GAA). Peter told how watching his 'heroes' in action at the home of the GAA on these family trips always served to inspire and drive him; 'Jesus, I'd really love to be a part of that.' In discussing how focused he was on making it on the Dublin senior panel, Peter raises the obstacles of teenage youth – drink and discos. He describes how himself and his friends were beginning to go to teenage discos and how there was peer pressure to have a few drinks. While he dabbled with drinking, he firmly 'had to knock it on the head when things kind of got really serious' with the football. At an age when young men are renowned for rebellion, Peter's dedication to the game is steadfast. And while this

commitment may require one to be ‘intrinsically motivated’, this inherent motivation can be more accurately attributed to an ‘inherited motivation’. Peter’s story goes on to reveal the instructive role his parents played in his disciplined behaviour. They would be aware of his match fixtures and on these weekends, he was expected to be home early on the Saturday evening prior to a Sunday morning match. In describing pre-match nights, Peter asserts his parents to be quite strict – a firmness contingent on GAA commitments. Their actions ensured he was well rested prior to the match and that he attended every game ready to play.

Peter’s experience illustrates Foucault’s conception of how modern power operates, reaching ‘into the very grain of individuals ... their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday life’ (Foucault, 1980). The social institution of the family unit, infiltrated by the GAA organisation, enabled power to work on Peter through which he comes to know himself.

The next narrative reveals further the increasingly structured community of the GAA. While it was at one time socially accepted that sporting games were violent by design, (Dolan and Connolly, 2009) document a civilising of Gaelic sport and thus the necessity to decree narratives of discipline and control and vilify violent, aggressive behaviour. Sociologist Norbert Elias coined the term ‘sportisation’ for this process of standardising the rules of sport (Dunning, 2002). Dolan and Connolly document how through the establishment of the GAA as a centralised organisation in 1884, governing officials were able to gradually ‘impose relative discipline through rule standardisation, more consistent rule implementation, neutralisation of referees and other disciplining social functionaries, surveillance and bureaucratisation of rule transgression, and the learning by players themselves of the consequences of such transgressions’ (Dolan and Connolly, 2009: 198). Through Peter’s storytelling, the following two extracts serve to illustrate this gradual process of Gaelic football shifting from what he perceives as a ‘rugged physicality’ to a ‘disciplined physicality’. Peter is looking at various newspaper photos of the game in action and describing the images:

Peter: It’s a different kind of physicality to say, rugby or whatever ’cos rugby is a real disciplined ... it’s a disciplined physicality but it’s [Gaelic football] a rugged kind of physicality like, it’s just so unique because of it ... I suppose it’s just it’s such a fast-moving game, like you know, and with the physical aspect of it which is kind of I suppose dying, it’s not as physical as it used to be, you know but ...

Interviewer: Is it? Why not?

Peter: Well, it wouldn’t be as dirty maybe as it used to be. It’s probably still as physical but not as dirty, like, they’re not allowing like some of the things that there used to be, like if you watch a game from back in the 1970s like, it’s completely different, you know?

Interviewer: And do you think that’s better for the game or what?

Peter: No, I don’t think it’s better for the game to be honest with you ’cos I love listening to stories and like my uncles and granddad used to tell me about like games about, ‘Oh this happened, do you wanna see?’ and this lad burst this lad or

something like that but nothing happened, the referee just played it on and they'd shake hands after the game, like, you know, but it would never be like malicious or anything like that, it would just be kind of the way the game was, but now you wouldn't get away with doing anything like that, like. This sounds bad but you could hit a lot of blokes back then and it would just be a spur of the moment thing and you'd probably play on and shake hands but now if you'd done it, you'd get a three-month suspension, you know that kind of way, so that kind of physicality is gone and they're not allowing these hard hits going in either.

Peter: My dad used to tell me great stories, you know, just about, say for instance, 'There'd be tough men on the team' like you know, on their team, Ballybay, and if there was anyone acting the devil there'd be always that one lad who'd sort them out, you know, even if he wasn't in the same part of the field, he'd get an opportunity to sort him out ... My uncle would, you know, and my uncle has these massive big hands, you know, say if the ball went up in the air and everybody was looking in the air, by the time the ball came down to the ground, that lad would be on the ground and my uncle would be ten yards away from him but no-one would know what happened because they'd be looking at the ball while it was in the air, like, you know, so just things like that, they don't seem to happen anymore as you know ... now maybe it wasn't as tough as they say but it just – the stories were great. I wouldn't have a story to tell like that, you know ... it just doesn't happen, like, you know, it's more official and ...

As Dolan and Connolly document, over time players are expected to 'exert greater self-control'. They propose increasing numbers of regulators and the implementation of stricter sanctions as a rationale for exercising self-control (Dolan and Connolly, 2009: 202). Accordingly Peter reveals how his reasoning for not exhibiting violence on the pitch was primarily to avoid a 'three-month suspension' and not due to any moral or ethical stance. His motive is not 'malicious' and he does not wish to cause harm intentionally to another man but rather he laments the demise of traditional 'rugged physicality' of play and the interference of a referee in the flow of the game.

Each of the GAA respondents in turn repeated the importance of self-control and discipline on the field; however, this did not necessarily equate to one having to wholly suppress acts of violence. There was an undercurrent in their talk revealing outward displays of losing self-control to be unforgivable; however, if you can harm your opponent without getting caught, this is acceptable – it's a (discreet) part of the game play. Dolan and Connolly suggest that even with the advancement of disciplining in GAA sports there is not necessarily a decrease in violence; however, they maintain that 'the "threshold of repugnance" towards displays of violence has advanced' (Dolan and Connolly, 2009: 199) So while societal influences and shifts, including the continual updating of the rules and regulations of GAA sport, require these players to adopt a position of shame or embarrassment for outward acts of violence towards another, there is the somewhat contradictory, inconspicuous knowledge that one can use force against another, so long as it is discreet, and above all, does not inhibit the team's chances of

winning the match. Respondent Dan illustrates this point in the following extract as he tries to explain the rule of 'a fair shoulder' in GAA football. This is the only contact a player can make when tackling his opponent – he can hit into his opponent's shoulder with his own. Such manoeuvres must be executed with 'controlled aggression':

Dan: You could be fired up, well that's discipline I think you know, you have to, 'controlled aggression' is what we hear all the time.

Interviewer: 'Controlled aggression'.

Dan: You have to fire yourself up for a game in a controlled way. You can't just go out and be really aggressive and start taking the head off lads. You have to be controlled, you know. You have to do it in the right way, you have to release it in the right way, you have to release it at the right time as in, you know, a 50/50 ball there to be won, you have to get in fairly honestly but very hard, you know that sort of way? Again, controlled aggression is the term that we hear.

Interviewer: Isn't that such a contradiction? ... You're being told to be aggressive but be controlled.

Dan: Yeah, well, I understand I suppose, you can be aggressive but fairly aggressive as in, go very hard for a ball, like, you know, go fully-blooded for a ball, hit a lad as hard as you can with a fair shoulder instead of hitting a lad a box into the face, so you know what I'm saying.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. So shoulder, using your shoulder is fairer?

Dan: Shoulder, 'cos you can hit him as hard as you want ... You know so that's being controlled I suppose instead of you hitting him into the face like and being sent off, do you understand that a little bit more? ... You have to try and fire yourself up for a game but you have to use it on the pitch in the right way, like you can't go out lunging in, you'd just give yourself that much more, a want on the pitch like, you know, you've to, like in GAA you need to have, to get your adrenalin going, you know ... 'Cos you could be flat-footed and you won't perform but you need to be fired up, you know. But again, it's not something you can go around screaming at lads ... You have to use it in the right way on the pitch, like, you know ... you could get lads, like if a lad got one up on you on the pitch, you'd get him back in the way of a good fair hit and something dirty, you know.

Interviewer: What did you say; if a lad gets one up on you?

Dan: Yeah.

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Dan: ... say you were marking a fella and he turns around and he scores a goal and next of all, you obviously shouldn't have let that goal like. Next of all, you could turn and you could give him a fair shoulder just to, you know, to let him know that you weren't happy with what he'd just done, like, you know ... So there's ways of letting your aggression out without getting sent off.

Another respondent, Dara, clearly articulates how players will take advantage of a lenient referee:

Dara: Ah, you'd have games when you'd know after five, 10 minutes that discipline has gone out the window, like if a referee lets a couple of things go, like say a couple of late tackles, then the lads will say, 'Jeez, I'll get away with that so I'll do it' you know? So it doesn't seem to be too bad, like.

Dolan and Connolly document how the recurrence of outbreaks of violence in Gaelic games suggest a 'fragile internalisation process regarding socially acceptable conduct' (Dolan and Connolly, 2009: 201). While players can rehearse the rules and extol the virtues of discipline, when the game is in play, the more base instincts can emerge, and in the heat of the moment an act of violence can be committed.

The Consumptionisto Community

The following stories told by the Consumptionisto men highlight the new territory they are embarking upon and the techniques they engage to embrace new modes of being.

In terms of men appropriating once feminine grooming practices, Consumptionisto Sean wonderfully captures this gradual ‘trickling down’ process in a story recollected from school days. He remembers buying GHD hair straighteners when they were primarily marketed to women. He transformed his trademark curly hair to a sleek, straight style. At school he got stick from ‘the lads’; however, he believes his pioneering endeavour eventually led to classmates following suit:

Sean: ... it sounds kind of big-headed but I really think I was the first one in my school, absolutely for definite, because no-one did it before that and then, as you can see now, like rugby players, guys, they do it all the time, and then I saw it trickling down in school, guys were coming and they had straight hair and they were like, ‘Oh yeah, I got that straightener’ and I was like, ‘Oh really, did you?’ and these were the same guys that were giving me stick, you know, a year ago ... so it was kind of the starting of metrosexual kind of beginnings I suppose.

Just as Brickell argued for emerging fashion trends as opening up spaces and providing ‘linguistic resources’ for women through which ‘new understandings of themselves and their lives’ could come about (Brickell, 2002), men can negotiate the available resources in consumption culture, blending them with their own living experiences, to create new understandings of themselves as men.

One technique adopted by all five Consumptionistos was the use of music and the arts as a gateway into the creative fashion arena. Each interview began with a generic question asking these men how they became interested in fashion. Within the first two minutes of conversation, each had aligned his interest in fashion and his own ‘individual’ style with music and his musical tastes, proffering musicians ranging from rappers Kanye West and Pharrell Williams to rock icons Pete Doherty and Slash of Guns N’ Roses as sources of fashion inspiration. This immediate alignment of themselves, and their interest in fashion, through the appropriation of music can be seen as a technique adopted by these men to recontextualise their appreciation of fashion away from the feminine domain and into a context wherein it is more socially acceptable for men to engage in self-expressive practices – music. Through this medium, each went on to express more confidently his own style, acting as a bricoleur, borrowing from his musical role models, in describing his self-style. Patrick exemplifies this process:

Interviewer: ... how would you describe your style?

Patrick: ... I don’t know, how would you describe it? My sister says it’s kind of rock like rocker like ... I never thought that myself I dunno how to describe it, it’s quite ... I think it’s quite versatile like ... I don’t have any particular ... I suppose I do wear skinny jeans quite a lot but then, I think it’s versatile I don’t really know is it rock or what is it ... yeh there is yeh guys that I think now that dress well and

I do take, I would like in magazines if I saw like Kanye West I think dresses very well, Pharrell Williams I like some of the stuff he wears, Justin Timberlake, Pete Doherty looks great like sometimes... like I would take little bits and piece like if I saw Pete Doherty in a magazine now or, Kanye looks great at the minute, I wore a bow tie... did I show you that picture of the bow tie at the wedding?

Interviewer: Yeh ...

Patrick: Yeh, em so I saw that on him ... at some event with a bow tie on and I goes I'm gonna fuckin wear one of those, excuse my language and I wore it at a wedding so ...

Meanwhile in Joe's description of his 'self-style', while his borrowing from musical genres is evident, we can also see the minefield one must negotiate to arrive at the correct version of 'individual' style.

Joe: I guess it's like indie-rock band kind of style ... it would be an aspect of like, hipster, the sort of much frowned-upon hipster in London, singing with the loafers with no socks and like, sort of rolled-up jeans, just very tight-fitting and like, elements of vintage ... you have to find a middle ground between looking like you're trying to be too cool and then not caring at all.

The body itself has become increasingly central to the modern individual's sense of self. The spread of 'industrialisation' and 'modernity' was followed by a reduction in power of community-oriented organisations (such as religious authorities), leaving individuals unaided to establish values and meaning from their daily lives. While this process of individualisation suggests a 'setting free' of individuals, it in turn requires individuals to actively work 'to resolve the question of how to live in a world of multiple options' (Giddens, 1991). However, while society might be increasingly individualistic, the body is still attached to its social milieu and must be considered as both 'socially constructed and socially experienced' (Turner, 1984). Individuals are not isolated entities, but exist within a 'dense field of relations between people and people, people and things, people and events' (Rose, O'Malley, and Valverde, 2006). The following extract exemplifies how the individual exists within a complex web of social influences. Here Consumptionisto Joe negotiates his social surroundings and takes 'cues' from external influences:

Joe: ... I used to wear a V-neck T-shirt but had like, quite a generously hairy chest and I really felt self-conscious about it, but I never had the, I suppose, I just didn't think it was socially acceptable to get rid of my chest hair ... My brother last year moved from Holland and he, like, he goes to the gym every day ... and he started shaving his chest because everybody did it over in Holland and once he did it, I felt like I could do it. He is my younger brother, he is like 5 years younger than me, and I was taking cues on it from my brother. But anyway, so I did that, and I was delighted ...

Taking his cue from a sibling and his adaptation of Dutchmen's socially acceptable grooming practices enabled Joe to 'decide' to shave his 'problematic' chest hair and thus to wear fashionable deep V-Neck T-Shirts less self-consciously.

This consideration of the body as a project, open to reconstruction, management and maintenance, renders the individual subject to policing the presentation of their self, as their bodies act as 'personal resources and as social symbols which give off messages about a person's self-identity' (Shilling, 2003). Individuals' responsibility for the disciplining of their bodies renders them morally culpable if they fail (Gill, Henwood, and McClean, 2005).

As with Gill et al's (2005) findings, the fear of 'letting oneself go' is palpable in the narrative of Consumptionisto Darren as he discusses his recent endeavour to lose weight. Darren is only 23 years of age, approximately 5 feet 11 inch in height, of very slim build, with perhaps the slightest evidence of weight around his waist. He is frustrated that he has gained even a couple of pounds and attributes it to having moved in with his fiancée and giving up smoking – 'those two things combined are a nasty cocktail for fat!' To combat this marginal weight gain he implements a number of weight-management techniques; he bought Kinect for his Xbox 360 to train at home, he intends to join a gym, and has initiated a radical change in his diet:

Darren: ... it's actually frustrating me because I'm so aware of it now. I'm one of these guys that either do something 100% or I don't do it at all ... So I've gone from the eating of fast food only in the past two weeks to eating salads, like, I, every day I have Alpen and a slice of banana, and then for lunch I'm eating a salad and then I'm like, making a conscious effort to reduce the size of portions for dinner, just because, like, to me, one of the worst things is looking at lads with like middle age spread, and I can't stand it, like.

In keeping with Darren's declaration of fitting the description of a 'Consumptionisto', his rationale for his latest dietary endeavours is nothing to do with health – 'I'm not really thinking about health now, I'm only 23' – and everything to do with fashioning his body to fit fashionable clothing. When Foucault discusses 'morality', he refers to the way in which individuals conduct themselves in relation to the prescriptive system (be it explicit or implicit) operative in their culture. Thus for Darren, and likewise Joe, as advocates of self-presentation practices, their understanding of how 'one ought to "conduct oneself"' in reference to 'the prescriptive elements that make up the code' (Foucault, 1984b) of a Consumptionisto centre around how one looks, and their ethical work is to transform their bodies to fit this desired look.

Darren: So I like ... your man Pete Doherty, the one who is super skinny ... I think his clothes look really cool on him. I think the skinny look makes clothes look better. So the idea for me, if I started growing like a beer belly, I wouldn't be able to get into those kind of shirts and I wouldn't feel comfortable in them at all so ...

Joe: Like, I'd go to the gym quite a bit but I'm like, not as industrious as I should be, and, but I do, like, I mean, I would go maybe four or five times a week ... And, but it's very, like, I don't know, yeah, I suppose it's quite actually pointed in that I don't want to get big in any way because then I wouldn't be able to wear the clothes that I'd want to wear ... Well because I just want to be sort of like, slim and, and because I don't think, like, the clothes that I would like to wear, which are like skinny T-shirts and skinny jeans, they don't look good on people who sort of are too well-defined or whatever ... And it also gives me a brilliant excuse to not work out as hard as I should be!

Both Consumptionistos' 'ethical work' on their self/body carries their own 'certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria' (Foucault, 1984b: 11).

Discussion:

In the previous section I began by exploring the power structures that operate through the institutional discourses and practices of the influential Gaelic Athletic Association. When looking at the highly structured community of sport we see sportsmen operating within an organisation steeped in tradition and inherited modes of practice. As with any social body that exists for a significant period of time, their practices become established and gradually become cultural truths. Such practices include prescribed modes of 'being a man'. Data gathered during the research stages of this study show that historically, virtues of bravery, strength and manliness incorporating a muscular physique ready for battle were extolled via the pulpit, sporting commentary and circulating Gaelic sport literature. Additionally, analysis of current Gaelic sports advertisements in the Irish mass media revealed similar virtues of the strong, stoic Irishman ready to take a knock on behalf of his team are still advocated. While these mythic ideologies abound in the marketplace, it is through the narrative of the sportsmen that we learn how these men must actually present themselves on the pitch, and what behaviours are actually expected of them as sportsmen.

The mythic mediated practices stand in contradiction to the increasing regulation of the game. The proliferation of rules or what has been called the sportisation or civilising of Gaelic sport (Dolan and Connolly, 2009), inhibits displays of once acceptable modes of physical, forceful behaviour. Men find themselves having to conform to revised, narrow parameters of acceptable manly conduct. It is through the inculcation of revised social rules that new social structures gradually emerge. Drawing upon Anderson's inclusive masculinity theory, the practice of sport etiquette shows how values of orthodox masculinity could be diminished through the appropriation of such formal rules and regulation. Restriction of traditional masculine practices of violence and aggression, and instead requiring discipline and self-control, could in time shift understandings of masculinity towards a more inclusive approach. However, as can be evidenced through respondents' wistful storytelling of aggressive Gaelic forefathers, a fragile internalisation process regarding socially acceptable conduct on the pitch, and the continuing proliferation of mediated images lauding the Gaelic warrior, this process towards indoctrinating an inclusive masculinity is gradual and complex. Its infiltration is dependent on young men in time adopting these disciplined practices into their everyday lives.

The second discursive practice explored was young men's everyday participation in techniques of fashionable self-presentation. Such practices are traditionally culturally coded as feminised routines (Delhaye, 2006); (Norman, 2011). However, this research shows how young men are negotiating this domain, adopting techniques to navigate this feminised space and legitimise their position within the field of self-presentation consumption practices. The findings highlight the necessity of individual agency in contesting and reshaping orthodox attitudes to masculinities. They suggest that an inclusive form of masculinity opens up space for heterosexual men to engage in 'feminine' behaviours such as fashion consumption, traditionally policed and coded by orthodox masculine gatekeepers, without their sexuality being questioned or threatened.

However, while the concept of individualisation and agency may facilitate new modes of being for men in this research, it also gave rise to challenges experienced by ethical subjects seeking to fix their identity upon the self-presentation of their body. In a quest to perform the desired look at any given time, these young men are 'free' to engage in a perpetual cycle of fashion negotiations and body sculpting endeavours – what Delhaye (2006) termed 'techniques of individuality'. Yet this 'freedom' in the self-presentation consumptionscape is essentially the initial stages of new technologies of government forming that in turn will serve to shape identities and new social subjectivities. And while respondents in this group embrace the practice of consumption, there are those that excel at maximising their life potential through the appropriation of consumer goods. Meanwhile others reveal narratives describing an incessant pursuit to make their bodily self better than it is. Yet by the cyclical nature of the fashion world and its perpetual recreation of insatiable desires (Bordo, 1993); (Wolf, 1991), this self-project can never actually be fulfilled.

Contribution:

Askegaard and Linnet (2011) recommend that consumer culture researchers look at the 'coexistence of different orientations within cultures and also within individuals, for whom they can create tensions or function as different modes of perception and self-presentation across a range of everyday situational contexts'. I will now look across the two discursive regimes explored to draw conclusions regarding the interconnections and differences in how masculine consumer identity is constructed.

In contrast to the highly structured and regulated sport domain is The Consumptionisto, operating within the flexible, fluctuating consumptionscape of fashionable self-presentation practices. While narrower constructions of masculinity continue to exist in the sport field, as men's behaviours are highly regulated, the Consumptionisto is presented with innumerable possibilities for practising masculinity. However, men's participation in the consumption of fashionable self-presentation techniques as a social activity is relatively recent (Ourahmoune, 2009; (Rinallo, 2007), and so they do not inherit longstanding cultural tradition and regulatory systems. As such the young men are operating within a 'new configuration of power relationships' (Thompson, 2004). These men – who can be called 'early adopters' – are seen to engage in various techniques to include the art of music in an effort to constitute their masculine subjectivity within discourses of fashionable self-presentation practices. Yet this navigation of uncharted territory is fraught with social risk for these men (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes, 2000; Tuncay, 2006). As they are forging their masculine identity within a terrain historically associated with women and femininity, their manliness and sexual orientation can be challenged (Elliott and Elliott, 2005; Rinallo, 2007; Robertson, 2006). Additionally, the fashionable consumptionscape, renowned for extolling the virtues of individualism, offers a vast array of possible options yet these men are left alone to choose their desired look. And so with the ever-changing nature of fashion, and no fixed blueprint to follow, they are perpetually at risk of getting it wrong.

As these early adopters navigate this new, less regulated space and adopt new modes of performing masculinity, they come to legitimise themselves by forging new categories of existence. Through the power of individual agency (Anderson, 2009) the early adopter shows how social change is not always or solely initiated through broader social structures and institutions, but how it also comes about gradually through the collective actions of people in their everyday practices. In essence they are forging new technologies of government that in turn, through repetitive acts of performance, become systematic, cultural truths. And so it can be seen that rather than suggest that new modes of performing masculinity are an emancipatory transformation liberating men from traditional modes of knowing themselves, new patterns of power relationships emerge (Foucault, 1984; Thompson, 2004) wherein men can come to learn new ways of constructing their gender identity projects.

By looking at the discursive regime of sport and that of fashionable self-presentation practices, we can see the process of enculturation and the development of cultural truths, to include gender roles, as a continuum. In the latter discursive practice we see how the less structured environment of fashionable self-presentation for men allows for a 'freedom' to perform masculinity. Yet over time, through the multiple force relations emanating from individuals, organisations and institutions, it is proposed that this practice will take structure and become regulated in a manner similar to the discursive practice of sport. As such, men constructing their identity within this 'new' configuration of power relationships via fashionable self-presentation techniques will in time find themselves operating within a narrowing realm of possibility as these performances become routine.

In relation to consumer culture, it is these new configurations and practices that in turn facilitate the emergence of new marketplace myths and iconic cultural types, to include the Yuppie and the Metrosexual. These 'types' come to articulation, embodying prototypical traits observed, researched and reproduced by marketers, advertisers and other cultural producers (Arsel and Thompson, 2011).

Returning to the proposed diagrammatical illustration of Anderson's inclusive masculinity theory in the literature, this finding proposes an amendment to Anderson's concept. Anderson identifies the institution of sport as promulgating traditional modes of masculinity performance. As these orthodox ways of being a man are challenged and diminish over time, he proposes a wider scope wherein men can perform multiple masculinities. However, this research shows that young men do not find some emancipatory mode of being in this broadening field of possibilities. Rather, within this less structured domain young men develop new ways of knowing themselves that in time become cultural truths. And so this new relation of power will gradually become a structured truth and inherited mode of being. This cyclical nature of power and resistance is necessarily included in the revised version of my illustration of Anderson's inclusive masculinity theory (Figure 3).

Additionally I amend the diagram to place less emphasis on cultural homohysteria. As Anderson records, and Foucault researches in depth, this aversion to homosexual acts is a relatively recent phenomenon of the nineteenth century onwards. By placing the prefix 'homo' in parentheses in the figure, I am suggesting that the constriction of 'modes of performing masculinity' will be the corresponding cycle of a diminishing cultural hysteria, not necessarily a homohysteria.

Appendix 1

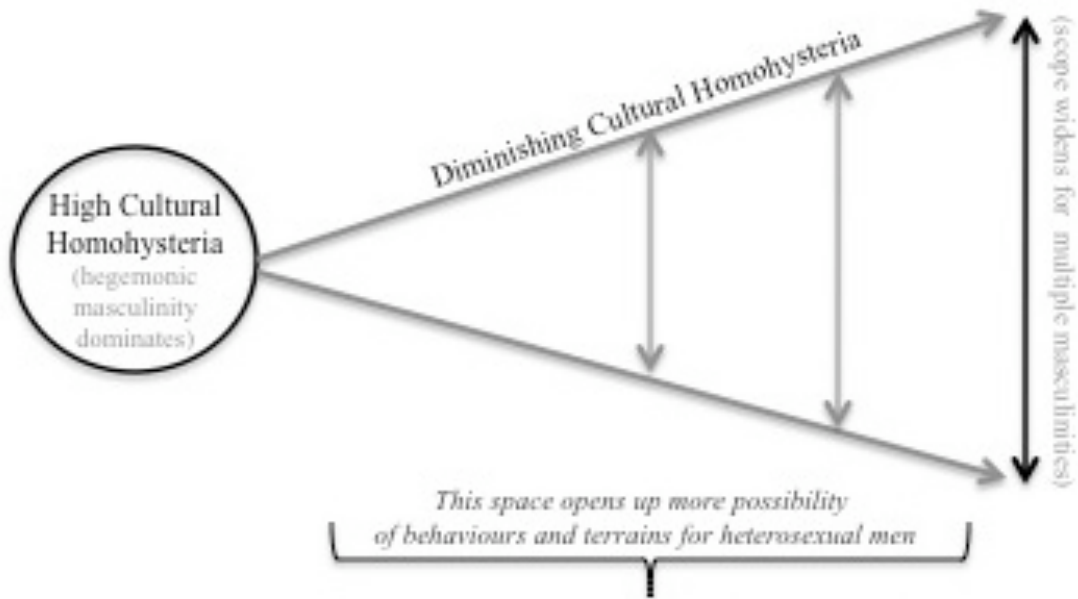


Figure 1: Diagrammatical illustration of Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory

Appendix 2:

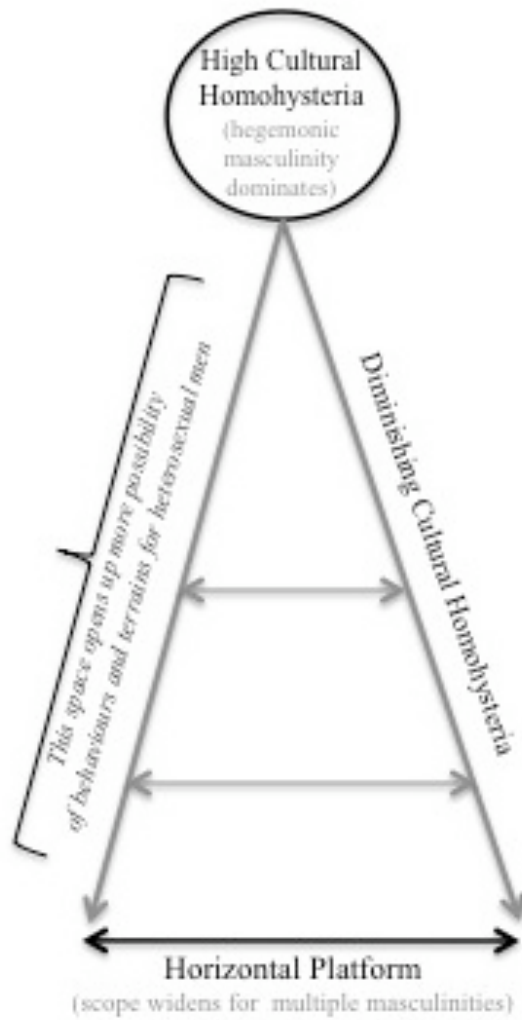


Figure 2: Rotation of diagrammatical illustration of Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory

Appendix 3

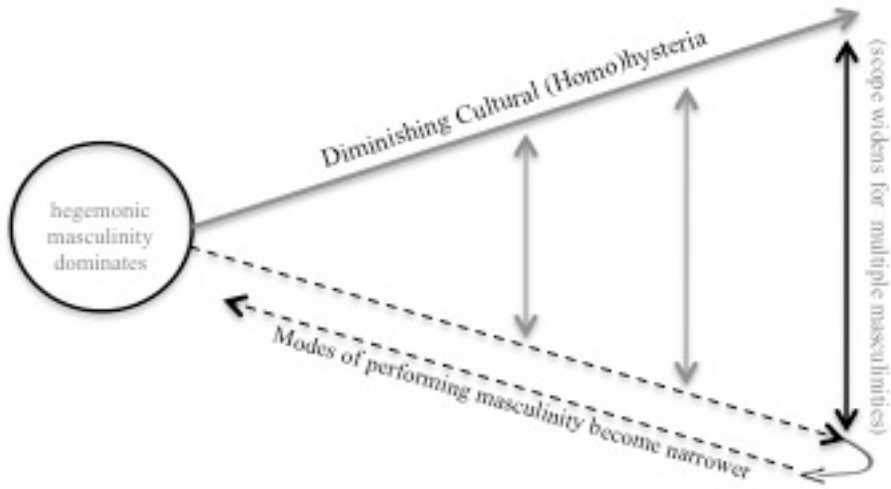


Figure 3: Reconceptualising my diagrammatical illustration of Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory

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