ABSTRACT

EMPLOYMENT AND DAILY LIFE IN AN IRISH TOURIST TOWN: GENDERED INTERACTIONS OF EMPLOYMENT, MOTHERHOOD AND LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

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Are boundaries around women’s and men’s work breaking down to form more equal gender relationships or are they evolving to form new patriarchal and class structures? This question is central to the concerns of this paper that draws on initial insights gleaned from the data gathered in the course of research in Killarney town in the South West of Ireland, from 1998 – 2000. Part of a broader research project that examined the interaction between work and gendered identities in modern Ireland this analysis highlights considerations women are making in their day to day lives, as they negotiate their diverse commitments within the personal and employment options that they have open to them. In making these considerations visible it adds to the knowledge and understanding we have of the complex relationships there are between the diverse aspects of being a gendered adult in modern Ireland, where recourse to traditional norms may no longer be a realistic option. It utilises insights from feminist literature in terms of the changing face of the workforce in Ireland, and roles, responsibilities and expectations operating within household. The particular tourist-oriented local labour market that exists in Killarney has many characteristics of an increasingly flexible workforce. Furthermore, it offers an opportunity to examine the interactions between areas of work and non-work within an established and long standing concentration on atypical working patterns. Focusing on the growing importance of a tourist-oriented workforce in the area, it highlights the implications that this has for the options that are open to women. It is grounded in the decisions that they are making in their daily lives and has applicability far beyond the bounds of the South West region of Ireland.