Roots & Realities

A Profile of Irish Women in London In the 1990's

Contents

Dear Reader,

This document has been compiled with the aim of bringing together the up-to-date information on Irish women in London and follows on from The Irish Women in London report compiled by Bronwen Walter in 1988.(1) The original intent was to cover the areas of housing, employment, population and mental health statistics. The specific need to do this emerged from the fact that information about the Irish community and about Irish women is usually neglected when researchers select data from information sources.

As the work developed, it became apparent to us that there was also a need to put this basic information into some sort of context. But what is the context of Irish women's' lives as an immigrant community in London? The first two sections of the document are an attempt to underline the importance of other social circumstances that are more difficult to depict - Irish women's culture and anti-Irish racism. This is perhaps because they are not as available to statistical study, and partly because they are subject to denial and lack of acknowledgement in society. Yet it seemed important to illustrate their significance in the lives of Irish women.

Most of the population in Britain do not really understand what anti-Irish racism is and are unaware of it's overt and deeper effects. On the surface it seems easier, but in fact it is even more difficult, to describe the way in which the patriarchal nature of contemporary culture has affected our lives. On the one hand, whilst the teaching of Irish history has been distorted within British schools, Irish women's history has not been recorded at all. Consequently, not only has the autonomy of women's culture become fragmented and repressed, but the precise process of how this happened, has been forgotten. We know for instance that the coming of Christian ideology to Ireland was used to demonise women's' bodies and women's' sexuality. We can deduce this from writings by the Christian scribes. But other processes are less clear to us because records were not kept or were destroyed. So it is true, that, as women, we no longer remember what we lost. This is crucial because when we no longer remember, we then identify with the patriarchal ideology and carry on the process of oppressing ourselves (and others). A similar parallel has been drawn by Liam Greenslade (2) in relation to colonialism and mental health, and this is an important dimension to anti-Irish racism.

In reading this report one theme weaves a pattern throughout all the sections detailing Irish women's' lives - the theme of EXCLUSION. Distorting and excluding the facts of history and of current realities results in the exclusion and disempowerment of a group or groups of people in society. Therefore the significance of anti-Irish racism and patriarchal culture cannot be over-emphasised, because the processes involved in these are the direct links to exclusion.

The theme of exclusion stands out even more so when we consider the sections on Travellers, lesbians and disabled women. It becomes clear that these groups in particular are afforded very little protection by the state and within the legal system. Our society therefore, has a long negative historical legacy which needs to be acknowledged and addressed. This applies to all groups that have experienced any form of power abuse including class and race oppression and the abuse of children by adults. The pain of this exclusion goes deep.

Irish women are beginning to step through the walls of invisibility placed upon us by centuries of systematic oppression. In doing this we need to acknowledge that our own community is itself a heterogeneous one, and includes many different identities, all of whom are entitled to be respected as equals. We hope that this document will help us to make the sort of contact we need to make, with ourselves and with others, to heal the wounds of division in these modern times.

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ANTI-IRISH RACISM

ANTI-IRISH RACISM IS A BELIEF SYSTEM that has been at the root of a great deal of suffering and distress over a number of centuries. It has resulted in what can be described as a series of institutional and administrative 'flaws' or mistakes that have deep ramifications for everyone who lives on these islands. This article looks at what anti-Irish racism is, how it is perpetrated and how it affects Irish communities living in Britain today..

Anti-Irish racism originated in the English notion that the Irish are inferior to themselves (Curtis 1984).(1) This notion goes back to the 12th century. Belief in this notion was used to justify the initial and subsequent invasions of Ireland from the 12th century onwards.

Anti- Irish racism has many manifestations in everyday life. But first let's look at some current definitions of what racism is and how these might be relevant.

There are three recent 'definitions' of racism that seem particularly relevant to the Irish community in Britain;(2)

1. The Race Relations Act 1976 renders it unlawful to discriminate on racial grounds either directly or indirectly. Racial grounds are those of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, and groups defined by reference to these grounds are referred to as 'racial groups'. The Irish clearly come within the terms of The Race Relations Act as a distinct racial group. There now exists case law under the Race Relations legislation which shows that Irish people have been discriminated both directly and indirectly on the basis of their ethnic origin.
2. Liggio (1971), in describing what racism is, links colonialism to racism claiming that to be understood, racism must be looked at within the historical context. He argues that the application of brute force was only one factor in establishing the subjugation of a race or nation. He points out that the ideology of racism 'which dehumanises alternative cultures, labelling their customs savage and their mores criminal' was needed for successful colonisation.
3. Sivanandan 1985;28 states that 'racism...strictly speaking should be used to refer to structures and institutions with power to discriminate .. that the power is derived from racist laws, constitutional conventions, judicial precedents, institutional practices all of which have the primatur of the state'.

Keeping in mind these forms of definition, let us track the development of anti-Irish racist thinking and practice from it's origins to current times.

Origins

IN THE 12TH CENTURY, Ireland was inhabited by a loose confederation of Celtic peoples. Social organisation was relatively egalitarian. It was not a nation in the modern sense. According to Curtis (1984)(3) the attack on Ireland came from two sources - the Normans and the Church of Rome. It may be useful to look at these in turn because they illustrate how the language and ideology of racism extended to the Irish and justified the subjugation of the people and the takeover of land and resources;

1. The church, based in Rome, had become increasingly worldly as the feudal system gained ground in Europe. In England the Roman church gained ascendancy after 664 A.D. at the Synod of Whitby, when Roman and Celtic christians came to discuss their points of difference, and the Roman church won the day. To support their arguments for invasion, Roman churchmen cited Celtic customs such as marriage laws which permitted divorce, and allowed a man to marry his deceased brother's wife which was regarded as incest by Rome, as evidence that the Irish were not true christians.
2. The Normans began invading Ireland in 1169 presenting their invasion as a religious mission. They had conquered England 100 years earlier and reduced Anglo-Saxon farmers to serfdom. They did not have a high opinion of the native English. King Henry The Second of England obtained the papal blessing for the conquest. The Norman view of the Irish had cast a long shadow over English perceptions. The writings of Gerald of Wales, a churchman, were deeply influential in this respect. In his writings he aimed to glorify the Norman conquest. He wrote contemptuously of the Irish people portraying them as inferior in every respect ..'and they live like beasts'. Their backwardness he claimed was due to the remoteness of Ireland which he said 'cut them off from well behaved law abiding people'. He wrote that the Irish were treacherous, untrustworthy and deceitful.

Gerald's contention that the Irish were barbaric complemented English colonial ambitions and his work was quoted by historians as fact, for several centuries.

Soon, the Anglo-Normans controlled about three quarters of Ireland. From then on their power declined. Some Normans who had adapted to the Irish life, allied with the native Irish and rebelled. Full control was held by English kings in the area centred around Dublin on the East coast. By the 14th century the Normans outside this area had become so Gaelicised that the English instituted apartheid style of rule in The Statutes of Kilkenny (1366). This forbade intermarriage between native Irish and Anglo-Normans, banned religious bodies within the English-controlled area from accepting Irish people, banned settlers from speaking Irish or using Irish entertainers and it prohibited the adoption of Irish dress and customs.

In the 16th century, under the Tudor monarchs, England as a nation (in the modern sense) began to develop. English nationalism was born. Tudor monarchs sought to incorporate the Celtic nations on England's borders - Cornwall, Wales, Scotland - as well as Ireland, within the boundaries of the state. The policy of population plantation was adopted at this time to make Ireland strategically secure. The Tudors as Protestant rulers of England were concerned that Catholic Ireland could be used as a base for attack on England by traditional enemies, Catholic France and Catholic Spain. This was the deliberately sectarian nature of colonisation and this will be discussed further below. The Irish were driven off their lands and replaced with English protestant settlers. The latter part of the 16th century saw a ferocious and continuous war which left large tracts of Ireland devastated.

The Elizabethans classified the Irish as barbarians who had missed out on the supposed benefits of Roman colonisation and frequently likened them to other peoples whom they also saw as 'barbarous'. Gaelic customs - dress, hairstyle, Brehon Laws, their poets and not least their violent resistance - all provided reason to the Elizabethans to conquer and brutalise. They condemned Irish religious practices, criticising them more for failing to practice catholicism properly than for the rejection of

Anti-Irish Racism...

protestantism. Their colonising methods were brutal in the extreme.

The colonisation of Ireland was the prelude to the English colonisation of America. The same pretexts were used for the extermination of the native Americans as had been used in the 1560's and 1570's for the slaughter of the Irish - and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By the end of Elizabeth's reign the power of the Celtic lords was finally broken. Subsequent attempts by the Irish to rebel were ascribed by English writers to the back-wardness of the Irish which, it was claimed, made them unable to understand or appreciate England's efforts to civilise them.

In 1649 Oliver Cromwell launched a violent campaign to crush Irish resistance. His intention was to 'carry on the great work against the barbarous and bloodthirsty Irish'. Cromwell's campaign and its aftermath left Ireland devastated. About 100,000 people were rounded up and transported to the new colonies in the the Caribbean and the Americas, as slaves.

By the end of the 1600's, power now lay with the 'Ascendancy' - the new landowning class, protestant in religion, English in sympathy who owned about 80% of the land. The church of England was the only recognised church. Native Irish and English settlers lived in extreme poverty. The Penal Laws denied catholics and dissenting protestants religious freedom, the right to vote, access to education, all access to government jobs, and drastically cut the right to own land. By 1775 only 5% of land remained in Catholic hands. Ireland became a colonial economy. Trade to Ireland was the most important branch of England's overseas trade. Irish industries were suppressed and Ireland was forbidden to trade with other British colonies. The woods and forests of Ireland were cleared and vast areas of land were depopulated for English use. The Irish peasantry now lived in a level of squalor that was unequalled in Europe. Famine was endemic. British intellectuals and philosophers continued to denigrate the Irish.

The Act of Union in 1800 united England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland into one political unit. Ireland was still subjected to a repressive administration and laws whilst the rest of Britain was not. Racist ideas were used to justify the different standard of government applied abroad and in Britain. The movement towards 'scientific racism' grew in the 19th century. Theorists began to divide humanity into races based on external features. These races were then placed in an hierarchical order - Teutons (who included Anglo- Saxons) were placed at the top; black people at the bottom, and Celts and Jews somewhere in between.

From the 1860's onwards, scientists debated about the relationship of humans to apes. British racists made frequent comparisons between black people, Irish people and apes. Resistance in Ireland against British rule at this time took three forms :
- the Fenian movement was dedicated to liberation through the force of arms and the return of the land to the people:
- constitutional agitation was underway in Parliament in the Home Rule Party:
- agrarian poverty led to the development of the Land League.

Supporters, followers and leaders of all these movements were characterised as having ape-like features, even by some liberal writers at the time.

Links from Past to Present

The state of Northern Ireland was set up in 1922 by means of the Government of Ireland Act 1920. This was two years after President Woodrow Wilson of The United States had proclaimed his 14 points which included the right to national self-determination. Partition was imposed on Ireland against the express wishes of the majority of the Irish people - violent Unionist rebellion in the second decade of the 20th century was rewarded with partition of Ireland; the boundaries of the new statelet were drawn to ensure the Unionists had a two-thirds overall majority.

Historians have identified that fostering division has been one of the hallmarks of colonialism. Religion was the main feature distinguishing the settler population in Ireland from the people they had dispossessed. As referred to earlier, within Ireland, Catholics became the target of hostility. This sectarianism had been originally initiated by the Tudors through the policy of Plantation. This religious bigotry against Catholics came to be virulently expressed by the ruling class within Ireland. So, the colonialism of Ireland can be seen in the context of sectarianism; fear of being vulnerable to attack on two sides from Catholic countries had prompted the Tudors to accelerate and deepen the English Protestant control over Ireland. The 'Protestant Ascendancy' wanted to keep their dominant position within Ireland and the British link on which that depended. They had begun to disguise their political aims with religious rhetoric even as early as the 1830's (during the Repeal movement). In the 1890's 'Home Rule is Rome Rule' became the battle cry of the Ulster Unionists, during the campaign for Irish self-government. So,in order to maintain control in the new statelet which comprised 6 of the 9 counties of Ulster, the Unionist establishment institutionalised discrimination against Catholics in housing, jobs and voting rights. Protestant workers were guaranteed a privileged position over Catholics by political leaders who held the balance of power in the new state. For instance, in July 1933 Sir Basil Brooke, a Stormont MP(4) appealed to Loyalists to 'wherever possible, to employ good protestant lads and lassies'. Again in April 1934 James Craig, Stormont Prime Minister said..' all I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant state'. Similar attitudes have been expressed by Fundamentalists led by Rev. Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party in the NI Assembly. In 1984 Sir George Seawright,(5) a representative of the party said that money spent on educating 'Fenian scum' would be better spent on buying incinerators and burning Catholics and their priests. His remarks caused a storm but he refused to withdraw them saying there would be 'no retraction, no apology, no compromise and no surrender'.

This split is one major consequence of Britain's divide and rule strategies over the centuries (McBride 1986).(6) Sean McBride, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, claimed that the part religion plays in the conflict are artificially created - 'it is the divisive factor introduced to fan the flames of sectarianism', and that the Unionist opposition to unification of Ireland has been 'systematically encouraged and supported politically, financially and militarily by successive British governments' (McBride 1986)(7). Indeed the contemporary British view that in the North of Ireland the conflict is an outdated and mad sectarian conflict between the warring, religiously crazed Irish can be refuted because it can be shown, as outlined above, sectarianism was a deliberate element in the English colonisation of Ireland.

In fact the different communities in the North of Ireland are better identified by their ideas of nationality than by religion. Catholics see themselves as Irish and Protestants as British, and this is a direct consequence of colonisation. As we have described, the main forms of colonisation were Plantation and Subjugation; the native Irish (Catholics) had their lands confiscated and became 'serf-labour' while the colonist settlers were given security of tenure and therefore bond, loyalty, to England and the Crown. England maintained their settlers and the settlers maintained their loyalty to England. Unionism, Loyalism, therefore can be seen as another facet of anti-Irish racism, as it has it's roots in colonisation, in the denigration of the native Irish and the perceived superiority of the British. The result is that these divisions and their consequences take centre stage, whilst the causes of the divisions are obscured. Popular political analyses treat these divisions as free standing entities which have evolved of their own volition. This approach feeds directly into any anti-Irish attitudes which have historically seen the Irish as inherently violent, irrational, unreasonable, unfit to govern themselves anyway. The existence of anti-Irish racism itself and it's precise relationship to sectarianism, is obscured and goes unrecognised. As a result, Britain can be seen to act as the 'honest broker' between warring factions of people who are unable to live together.

However, under the light of international opinion, the Irish right to reunification, independence and sovereignty is supported by universally-recognised principles of international law. The right to self-determination is enshrined in the two United Nations Covenants of 1966; - The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 1 of each covenant states; 'All peoples have the right to self determination. By virtue of that right they determine their economic, social and cultural development' - The Landmark Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among Nations in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations declares;

'all people have the right to freely determine, without external influence, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development and every state has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter'.

The partition of Ireland that took place in 1922 is in clear contravention of the United Nations' Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Article 6 states;

'Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of The United Nations'.

Further endorsement of this position comes from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, July 1975. Article 1(a) headed 'DECLARATION ON PRINCIPALS GUIDING RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPATING STATES'- Section VIII Equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

'The participating states will respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant norms of international law, including those relating to territorial integrity of States. By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self determination of peoples, all peoples always have the right in full freedom, to determine, when as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development. The participating States reaffirm the universal significance of respect for any effective exercise of equal rights and self determination of peoples for the development of friendly relations among themselves as among all states; they also recall the importance of the elimination of any form of violation of this principle'.(8)

As a direct consequence of these circumstances, Irish people who live in Britain meet with a number of attitudes, of beliefs and of practices, which are commonly held by institutions and individuals making up the dominant culture in Britain. These beliefs and practices may be described as falling into two sectors which are nevertheless inextricably linked. We can finish by a summarisation of these expressions of anti-Irish racism.

The first can be considered as institutional practices eg, those within the legal and educational systems - any laws, conventions and practices that are practiced or implemented by these institutions. This would include the media as a societal institution also. Secondly, how the Irish community, individual Irish people are viewed and regarded by non-Irish individuals; what attitudes are prevalent, what are the named feelings towards Irish people and how these are acted upon by individuals in society.

1. in relation to current politics and events in NI, it is commonly perceived by individuals that the basis of the problem lies in the basic propensity of the Irish for violence, and internal squabbling; concurrently it is perceived that Britain's role is that of the 'honest broker' keeping the peace and making all attempts to find a solution to the 'Troubles' there are very few people who would see that the existence of the six county state is in itself an expression of anti-Irish racism.

2. there is a general lack of awareness or knowledge about how and why the statelet of Northern Ireland came into being.

3. the educational system consistently fails to meet it's responsibility to teach an adequate understanding of Irish culture or the relationship between Britain and Ireland historically or in contemporary times.

4 Prevention of Terrorism Act has conferred 'draconian' powers on the police and the courts. The use of the PTA has been experienced by the majority of Irish people in London as a form of intimidation and harassment. Many people have had their lives ruined and several false convictions have come to light due to the powers of this Act.

5. media reporting can be used to whip up resentment against the Irish community especially after an outrage has occurred.

6 anti-Irish jokes still appear to be acceptable and can still appear in publications or told in company; 'Irish' mugs and other paraphernalia can still be purchased.

The word 'Irish' itself has become part of the English language meaning thick, stupid, drunken , childish, violent (see Dictionary). Often unconscious of the origins of such terms as 'throw a Paddy', 'take the Mickey', these have passed into acceptable colloquial speech.

7. the view that had the Romans succeeded in conquering Ireland, their 'civilising' influence would have rendered Ireland's history and current circumstances more 'civilised' - is still part of current thinking.

It goes without saying that anti-Irish racism, is a deeply embedded aspect of British society and (thanks to the media, the educational system and other governing institutions), is also invisible to the main body of people in Britain.The fact that anti-Irish racism and it's implications are not taken seriously by institutions in Britain, is a very worrying reality. It's implications directly affect the Irish community but also go far beyond that, to affect all citizens in this country. The Irish community has begun to address this and for the most part are met with ignorance and resistance. All institutions that are part of this system will need to take up the challenge in coming years to play their part in creating a more just and peaceful society.

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CULTURE

THE FOLLOWING SECTION ON IRISH WOMEN'S CULTURE in London is aimed at opening discussion and debate on the subject. We will attempt to give a broad as possible but brief description of cultural activity within the community. Within this we will try to convey what seems as the great loss of cultural autonomy that has been part of the experience of Irish women over the past couple of thousand years. In doing this we will attempt to describe both the nature of this loss as well as the social/political/cultural forces that contributed to this violent revolution.

To describe culture is to describe the ways that people share and communicate their experience through both expressive and intimate mediums - written and spoken language, art, movement, dance, music, belief and custom. Culture is about the ways humans apprehend experience. When we think of culture, we think of shared understandings and of a connection to something that is personal as well as collective, eg. the tribe, the nation, female culture. A useful way to understand culture is to think of it as being about 'relationship'. Culture is about the relationship of the individual, not only to others, but also to ONESELF. Indeed, to describe culture is to describe the relationship of the individual to themself, and through that to Life itself.

Irish Women's Culture in Britain

THE IRISH COMMUNITY IS AN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY in Britain. Traditionally Irish cultural activity in London has been organised around the Catholic church, Irish pubs, the big dance halls, smaller church halls, Irish societies, Irish county associations, and the Gaelic Athletic Association. Schools of Irish dancing were established. Traditional music sessions took place in people's houses or in pubs. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (an association of Irish musicians and supporters for the advancement of traditional Irish music) organised feiseanna and other events which kept the musical tradition alive. These activities have been particularly strong since the post-war period of the 1940's. Irish newspapers and magazines in Britain are full of events, classes and meetings based on the Irish community's expression of it's own culture.

The very first Irish community centre was established in the 1950's with the assistance of the church. The Irish Post, the first community newspaper for the Irish in Britain was founded in 1970. All of these have been very important forums for contact within the Irish community, which often experiences itself as an alien and unacknowledged culture within British mainstream culture.

From the mid seventies/early 1980's onwards, Irish cultural activity and expression began to expand and diversify. This movement has seen the growth of numerous community centres, the establishment of many social and activist/campaigning groups, the emergence of Irish radio programming, video and theatre groups and a tremendous growth in Irish studies programmes, newspapers, magazines, retail outlets in books, records and other goods. Networks of communication and debate increased rapidly.

The Irish community as a whole became more vocal and more 'politicised'. Issues of cultural identity were brought to the forefront of debate. The community as a whole began to challenge and question existing negative stereotypes of Irish identity within British culture and to present and promote a more rounded and multi-dimensional picture. The attitudes and practices of national and local establishments - the media, the educational establishments and other institutional bodies, the legal system, service delivery authorities - that discriminated against or promoted negative images of Irish people, began to be confronted. The community had begun to address it's own issues very publicly and to challenge the old strategy of post-war survival - 'keeping your head down, your mouth shut and going about your business without rocking the boat'. The old networks of the pub, the church and the workplace survived and remained vibrant and intact. But, the culture as a whole began to integrate new facets and dimensions such as new forms of music, a self-conscious second generation population and a more intensely politicised search for expression.

Taking on the Patriarchy

THE LATE 1970'S AND THE EARLY 1980'S saw women come to the fore to challenge the male dominated nature of Irish culture. Women identified the forms of alienation and oppression that they were experiencing within the dominant culture.

They identified that this oppression and exclusion operated on two levels;

(1) where women were directly or indirectly excluded from direct participation in many aspects of cultural life - women being allocated the role of caretaker thereby being prevented from partaking fully in public cultural life. A deep-seated belief in the culture that woman's place is in the home meant that the absence of women in public life was not even considered problematic. As a result women were excluded from decision-making processes and the cultural recognition or rewards that would automatically follow such involvement did not take place.

(2) where within the cultural expression itself women were invisible and forgotten. The presented images of Irish women were male-created and male-controlled. These images, where they existed were problematic and narrow. Even more pertinent was the enormous LOSS of Irish women's cultural expression because the contributions made by women had either been re-worked or re-written from a male perspective. The great networks of traditional life did nothing to take account of the needs of women or of female identity.

These distortions had huge implications for women at all levels of life experience. Irish women attempted to articulate these splits and distortions within the culture. Women's groups formed with the specific aim of challenging and offsetting the absence of voice or recognition within the culture, and to work towards the creation of a new culture which would take women's experiences into account. The work of these groups spanned the whole range of interests and issues. Two in particular, The London Irish Women's Centre and Irish Women in Islington Group were to concentrate mainly on frontline direct service delivery, but would also provide a safe space which Irish women could use for their own needs.

A variety of other groups formed too - theatre, art, dance and music groups, lesbian groups, groups which worked on issues such as housing, anti-Irish racism, prisoners, mental health, Five London Irish Women's conferences took place throughout the 1980's. These provided larger forums for communication and debate and many groups began life as a result of these. Irish women became more

vocal within the culture and called continuously for recognition and space for women, and for the integration of diversity and tolerance into the existing Irish culture.

Outside of these developments, Irish women began a greater participation in wider community involvement, becoming more fully involved in many campaigns and community activities. But, in a patriarchal society where structures are ordered in terms of forced domination (and submission), women are treated as second-class citizens. The rewards and recognition for cultural achievements within such a society are just NOT forthcoming to women. A very recent major example of this (1991) for Irish women has to be the publication of 'The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing'. This was published in Ireland - and it is a 'prestigious' 1,500 year history of Irish achievement in writing, great and small, literary and non-literary . This long-awaited work 'achieved' the almost complete exclusion of women from it's three thick volumes. An 'outsider' reading these could be forgiven for assuming that Irish women simply do not exist. This is a literary publication that is given the authority by the cultural establishment, to represent Ireland worldwide. Yet the entire enterprise did not draw on the knowledge or expertise of even one woman editor in a panel of more than 20 members.

Following intense and prolonged protest by women on the publication of the Field Day anthology, an additional volume with women's writing will now be produced.

This event, though directly pertaining to women in Ireland, was symbolic in it's importance to Irish women everywhere, as being an OVERT and easily identifiable demonstration of the patriarchal rejection of women and of the female. Irish women in London saw it's significance and were wounded at this occurrence because these are issues that affect Irish women's identity everywhere.The event was important and significant in and of itself and useful as an example, but parallel processes form part of the fabric of everyday life for Irish women. Many of these processes may be smaller but no less insidious. Many too are 'great events' of the equal or greater status to the event described above. It isn't as simple as that women have been written out of history or literature but that the very foundation of female culture has been erased and almost completely wiped out from centuries of patriarchal domination.

But how has it it happened that Irish women have become so marginalised and so excluded within their own culture. Was this always the case and if not, what have Irish women lost?.

Before Patriarchy*

IN HER BOOK, 'THE SERPENT AND THE GODDESS'(1) Mary Condren looks at origins. Her work describes how the transition to, and the loss of the feminine in Ireland happened, and how this struggle is fought in modern times. Condren's work in respect of the transition to patriarchal cultures from earlier cultures is borne out by other research relating to a similar process happening in other areas throughout the world. In this respect Irish women's history (her story) is intimately linked to the story of women throughout the world and cannot be separated from this.

Condren bases her material on the study of Irish mythology. According to her,goddesses permeated ancient Ireland. Mountains, valleys, rivers, wells, all testify to her presence. Around the 11th century Ireland become known as Éire, a name derived from the Goddess Éiriú,

one of the triple goddesses, Éiriú, Banba and Fódhla. In one story of the Celtic invasions, Eiriú makes it clear that anyone wishing to enter Ireland would have to revere the goddesses if they wished to prosper and be fruitful. Ireland was often called 'the island of Banba of the women'.

Rivers were a crucial source of life; they were a source of food, transportation, water and a reference point for clan boundaries. Rivers were also the womb openings of the Great Mother, the symbol of Life and often bore her name. Sacred temples were often situated near these sources of life. Brúgh na Bóinne, the present day Newgrange, in the Boyne Valley is one such. According to Condren, the river Boyne holds the secrets of early Irish life within her. The oldest form of this name is Boand, who had many associations with cow symbolism. Other rivers such as The Liffey and The Shannon took their names from goddesses Life and Sinnann.

Throughout Irish mythology, relationships to the mother are emphasised. The Tuatha De Danann were 'children of the Goddess Dana'. Buanann was 'mother of heroes' and the goddess Anu was known as 'mother of the gods'. Descent was sometimes traced through the mother and sometimes through the father. Women were respected and honoured and the feminine energies were integrated into the social fabric.

The Celts and Origins

SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS OF CELTS(2), a patriarchal people from Northern Europe, invaded Ireland in the centuries just before christianity. A warrior people, they traced their lineage through their fathers. The Celts thrived on heroic sagas where the violent death of the male in battle assured him of future immortality. Many inroads were made into Irish culture and the Irish consciousness. By the 6th century A.D. (when we have direct internal evidence)(3) Irish is the dominant language throughout Ireland. The Irish language is one of the Celtic group, though there are '... many features which distinguish it from British and continental Celtic'. Liam de Paor states the Celtic impact on Ireland was probably less than on Gaul or Britain, but by the time the Romans were on the Irish Sea the place-names and tribal names reported from Ireland were all Celtic in form.

Condren describes how dramatic the change was with the coming of christianity. The christian scribes played a major role in establishing the patriarchal revolution. Their first task was to launch a major propaganda war against the symbols of the old religion. Christianity brought writing (as we know it today), to Ireland and the scribes busied themselves composing satires ridiculing the ancient goddesses - in some cases elaborating upon existing folktales, so that those tales, initially complementary to women, eventually showed their downfall. According to Condren this process shows itself in the Dindshenchas, the stories of how places in Ireland got their names. 'Naming' itself was a form of conquest. Condren outlines many instances of this occurrence. For instance,in the stories of how the rivers Liffey, Shannon and Boyne got their names, the goddesses are undermined and punished for haughtiness, pride or the use of magic.

One prime example of this is the treatment of the goddess Macha, one of the most important goddesses in ancient Ireland. Condren states that the 'overthrow of Macha could be described as the foundation myth of Irish patriarchal culture'. A steady and ominous change took place in the images and activities of Macha. She appears

as 'Grian' (Sun of Womanfolk), or 'bright Grian and pure Macha', in the stories where she appears as a woman in her own right. When she appears as wife of Nemed (son of one of the earliest Irish invaders) she is powerless and unable to prevent the carnage she foresees in the coming Táin. Finally she becomes part of the the trio of the 'war goddesses'- Macha, Badb and Morrigan. Her status has declined from Mother Goddess, to consort, to daughter.

The Triumph of the Irish Hero

LIKEWISE, IF THE IRISH HEROES WERE TO KEEP control on their newfound power, contact with women would have to be severely curtailed at crucial warrior moments, if they were not to lose their prowess and 'reasoning' powers. Condren states that the shunning of women forms the theme of several 'death' stories of Irish heroes. In 'Death Tales of Ulster Heroes', one after the other, the brave warriors meet their deaths through the cunning or seductiveness of women. She continues, 'The Triple Goddess, whose spiral imagery represented life, death and the cycle of eternal return, was torn apart. The integration of the matricentered religion as represented by the Serpent/ Goddess in the from of the Triple Spiral would be overcome and eventually replaced by the Sign of the Cross. Cyclical regeneration would give way to linear history and the cycle of eternal return would be replaced by the quest of personal immortality. The Triple Goddess would be replaced by the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As christianity took hold in Ireland it created alliances and compromises with the warriors and provided alternative occupations for the old male religious leadership. The christian church which historically became the carrier of patriarchal values and symbols in the West, effectively declared that women would be equal to men only when they renounced their femaleness and become 'as men'.'

Because the warrior culture of the Celts was patriarchal the religion honouring the Mother in her various forms was losing power even before christianity arrived in Ireland. But the new mythology/theology brought by christianity to Ireland promoted a profound dualism between the spirit and the flesh. The old goddesses were tied to particular places and were intimately identified with the land itself. But now, for all practical purposes men inhabited the world of spirit and culture, while women inhabited the world of flesh and nature.

Cultures of Other Women

A PARALLEL PROCESS WAS HAPPENING in other places too. Demetra George(4) says that in the psychology of humanity 'there occurred a polarisation between the male gods who came from above, bearers of the light, and the female divinities, who dwelt in the darkness of the caves and the earth. Light was equated with good and dark with evil. The wars against the goddesses were conceptualised as battles between the forces of light and darkness.

'As the Goddess became distorted from an image of the compassionate mother, the source and sustainer of all life, into a symbol associated with the forces of darkness and evil, women, her earthly manifestations, were likewise considered impure, evil, and guilty of original sin - people who must be punished. They became the property of their fathers and husbands. Women who had sexual relations outside the patriarchal monogamous marriage contract threatened the certainty of patriarchal bloodline transmission, and were ostracised and killed as whores and harlots; their illegitimate children were deprived of all legal rights and social acceptance'.

Other historians too have described how mytho-historical sifting and archeological digs tell of the violent destruction that occurred during this transitional period in the habitats of goddess-worshipping peoples around the world. 'They were raped and slaughtered, their homes and communities pillaged and burned, their values and beliefs suppressed. They were enslaved, exploited and exiled. Women in these cultures were stripped of their positions of political authority and decision-making powers as leaders, and they were deprived of their spiritual authority as priestesses. Banned from functioning in their professional and healing capacities, they were progressively disempowered from expressing their sexuality, intelligence and self-sufficiency'(4).

The incredible loss of nine million 'witches' (women healers) during the Burning Times in Europe (including Ireland) is a more recent example of the mutilation of female culture and power. Those four centuries (that are erased from our history books) that preceded the 'Age of Enlightenment' have contributed to women's collective and individual amnesia.

George points out -

'it is one thing for an archetypal energy to go through change in it's normal evolutionary development, but quite another situation where the change is defined by a distortion of expediency',

as happened in the Irish tradition. She continues -

'these distorted images of the feminine deities have unfortunately become imprinted in the modern psyche. Consequently, the expression of the original archetype has

The Sheelas at the London Irish Women's Centre 10th Anniversary Celebration Ceili - February 1996

become repressed or distorted. This pathology has resulted in the frustration, unhappiness, and dis-ease that exist in the modern psyche especially as they relate to the feminine nature'.(5)

According to Lawrence Durdin-Robertson(6)', we are seeing the gradual re- emergence of female cult worship. He claims that this began with the Renaissance, and was evident also in the search for archeological discoveries in Egypt and in Crete. He says that the growing nationalist movements are part of this process - in Ireland The Celtic Twilight movement at the end of the last century and early this century represents this; this re-evoked he says 'the ancient deities of Ireland; Cessair, or Cesara, whom Professor Macalister describes as 'the Great Mother of the Irish people'; Samhain, referred to by O' Reilly as a goddess of the ancient Irish, after whom is named Samhain or November; Dana, of The Tuatha de Danaan, 'Mother of the Deities of Ireland', who figures in the writings of A.E. and James Stephens; the triad of queen-goddesses, Banba, Fódhla and Éire, also Gráinne - perhaps the ancient sun-goddess - and the queens Maeve and Niamh'.(6)

Colonialism

COLONIALISM WAS THE second major historical force to sweep Ireland, and to have a detrimental effect on the cultural lives of women. Colonialism (itself an aspect or one expres-sion of patriarchy) reinforced the effects of patriarchal domination. By means of brutal economic exploitation, and religious and cultural oppression, it destroyed the usage of many aspects of the old Irish cultural ways of being. By these means, the native language was desecrated, art forms battered and the societal system violently transformed (see anti-Irish racism).

The Language of the Mothers

WE FEEL IT IMPORTANT TO MAKE SPECIAL reference to language, because of the nature of the Irish language itself, and how the fragmentation and decline of it's use essentially amounts to a form of 'collective amnesia' for the Irish people as a whole - a forgetfulness or falling into unconsciousness. Many writers and researchers have referred to language as crucial in feeling a sense of identity. Greenslade (1992)(7) refers to the implications for mental health. According to O'Rourke (8) 'the loss of a language is, for a people akin to what loss of memory is for an individual'.

During the 19th century the policies initiated in Tudor times for the elimination of the Irish language began to show dramatic success. The National School system was introduced to Ireland in the 1830's, where English only was spoken, and the speaking of Irish was severely punished. Like with patriarchy, 'naming' was a form of conquest. For example, the Ordinance Surveys of Ireland conducted around the same time, changed the Irish place-names into English. Brian Friel's play 'Translations' describes this manoeuvre as a 'military operation'. By the end of that century (19th) English was the dominant vernacular of the Irish people. It was a century of famine, including the Great Famine of the 1840's. But the cause of the change was older than that, although the shock of the Great Famine secured the transition. The conquest of Ireland was assured since the defeat of the Irish at Kinsale in 1601. During the next 100 years after Kinsale 85% of Irish land had been transferred to colonial hands. The old Irish order with it's system of poetic patronage disappeared as a result of this, with traumatic consequences for Irish cultural traditions.

The literature of Ireland, in prose and poetry, from the earliest times until the 19th century, is predominantly in the Irish language. Because, since the Famine, the dominant vernacular of the country has been English, as a consequence, the main body of the Irish literary tradition is a closed book to all but the people speaking Irish, or the reading minority of the Irish people. In many ways the effects of this on cultural and personal identity are beyond telling.. A great deal of personal courage is needed to fully confront the extent of the loss.

What Effect Does This Have?

WITH REFERENCE TO SONGS WRITTEN OR PASSED on in the Irish language, and how these do not travel easily outside the native language, L.P. Hartley (9) states ..'in these songs it seemed to me, they think differently, they look on the world with different eyes and minds, they fall in love differently, or at least they express themselves differently about it; they grieve differently, they party and curse differently. And they do these things eloquently, imaginatively, expressively , attractively'. In other words, within this tradition there is a different WORLD-VIEW. Again in relation to song Brian O' Rourke(10) states ..'the expression seems more direct, vigorous and passionate, the imagery fresher and more inventive'. O' Rourke found that the approach to narrative in the songs is different. The Irish language songs are more allusive than informative, logical linear progression is far less common and the order of verses is in the most cases extremely flexible. The fund of ideas and motifs used in the Irish language tradition is much richer, but, he says, 'it is not clear if this is due to the greater antiquity of the Gaelic tradition or language per se'.

The linguist Elmar Ternes(11) describes the Irish language as 'noun- centred' - in other words, what we would expect to express by verbs are in fact expressed by nouns. Using her examples, Irish has no verb for 'to have'. Instead of 'I have a coat', one says 'there is a coat at me' (Tá cóta agam). Likewise there is no verb for 'to know'. Instead there is a noun which means 'knowledge' and so instead of 'I don't know', one says ' there is no knowledge at me' (Níl a fhios agam). Lastly, Irish does not have a verb 'to love'. It does have a noun 'love' and so for 'I love you' one would say 'There is love at me' (Tá grá agam dhuit). Except for the non-existence of a verb 'to have', it is essentially sensations, feelings,.mental activities and abilities that Irish expresses through the use of nouns rather than verbs. Several other grammatical factors and conditions contribute to what Ternes describes as the word in the Irish language becoming..'like a chameleon which changes it's appearance according to it's surroundings'... and the word by itself being ..'very loose, almost amorphous, and it's shape can only be defined by analysing the sentence as a whole'. Within the language this works perfectly well in practice, but will seem extremely awkward to those who think in the grammatical structures of English and other European languages.

In Across The Water (Irish Women's Lives in Britain)(12) Eileen Doherty, a schoolteacher in Brent, discusses how language and culture embody a people's sense of themselves. She says 'language plays a very central part in one's image of oneself. It has a very important role. It adds another dimension and goes a long way towards understanding our heritage. The loss of the language for the Irish people means that it's an impoverished culture. Our culture is impoverished in the sense that it's a restricted culture .. your language gives you that basic confidence in yourself, in your roots. You have a means of communicating with your own people which goes back and links you with your past generations'.

Broken Continuity

SO, THE IRISH PEOPLE BEAR A GREAT LOSS in terms of the fragmented continuity with past traditions in culture. We have focused on language in this instance because it seems easier to convey the sense of loss that accompanies the loss of language(s) and in the case of Ireland more documentation has been done on this. But it wasn't just the language and bardic traditions that suffered; music, dance, storytelling, craft-making and other art forms suffered too; they suffered because the people within whom they lived and developed, suffered from exploitation and poverty at every level of life. Nevertheless there is a native Irish-speaking population in London. There is too, a vibrant Irish music, dance, sporting and literary tradition in London. For the most part this takes place within the Irish community itself and is often invisible to the eyes of society outside. Sometimes, powerful links are made with other cultures in London. For instance, Asian singer Sheila Chandra, in an interview with Spare Rib magazine about her work, says that she wanted to sing the old Irish song Dónal Óg. She says 'I added Muslim-style vocals because what I noticed was that the ornaments in the Irish way of singing were very similar to the heavily ornamented North Indian and Muslim style. In one of the verses I go from very obvious Irish-sounding folk song into something that's very Muslim in improvisation. And the only thing I needed to do was change some of the notes and suddenly I had linked one ancient musical tradition with another'(13). Fanny Feehan describes (14) that when she played a recording of Máire Áine singing "Barr an tSléibhe" for an Indian Professor of music 'who refused to believe until I showed her the sleeve of the record that it was an Irish song. She claimed, and demonstrated by singing to me, that the song bore a strange resemblance to an Indian (North) rāga about a young girl being lured towards a mountain. The Professor was interested in the mode, the pitching of the voice, and certain notes which were characteristic of both the rāga and "Barr an tSléibhe" (14) When this takes place, the beauty of both cultures is affirmed.

The Search for Lost Languages

THIS PAINFUL STRUGGLE, TO RECLAIM BROKEN OR LOST languages, whether written or spoken, ancient or new, is a major concern for Irish women. Lecturer and editor, Ailbhe Smyth notes(15) ..' a concern with language and specifically with voice surfacing .. in the writings of Irish women'. She goes on to say ..'As Irish, our language has been devalued and marginalised by the colonisers from a culture which has always sought by various means to appropriate Ireland and the Irish .. As women we are she says, 'caught uneasily, awkwardly between our experiences which have no language of their own, a rhetoric which would turn us into metaphor, and the terrible magnetic pull towards the hegemonic maelstrom of English..'

Irish women's search for language is a deeper one than just the search for words alone. It is a deep inward seeking for the female experience of Self, and the female expression of Self within the context of being Irish. The work of reclamation is only beginning.

* In simplistic explanatory terms, the word 'patriarchy' connotes the dominance over women by men. However, in it's broader meanings, 'patriarchy' can be seen as any system that involves enforced 'power-over' as opposed to 'power-with' relationships. In this sense, patriarchal oppression is an umbrella term used to describe any form of 'power-over' type system eg. racism, imperialism, sexism, colonialism, heterosexism, ageism etc.

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This image of a stone found at Knockmanny, Co. Tyrone, is taken from ; " A Guide to Irish Mythology", by Daragh Smyth, Irish Academic Press, 1988.

MENTAL HEALTH

IRISH-BORN PEOPLE IN BRITAIN HAVE THE HIGHEST RATES of first and subsequent admissions to mental hospital of any immigrant group. These are the startling findings from research studies outlined below. (Greenslade 1992).

Mental Health Hospital Admission Rates

TABLE A illustrates that;

1. Irish men and Irish women had a comparable rate of overall psychiatric admission, given the gender breakdown within the Irish-born community in Britain.
2. Psychiatric admission for people born in the Irish Republic was over double that of the English-born.
3. Psychiatric admissions for women born in the Irish Republic was almost double that of English-born women.

TABLE A: Age standardised rates of admission per 100,000 population aged 16 and over. England 1981; (Cochrane & Bal 1989).(1)

Country of birth	Male	Female	Total
Irish Republic	1054	1102	1080
N. Ireland	793	880	838
England	418	583	504
Caribbean	565	532	548

TABLE B: Mental hospital admission rates by diagnosis and gender, England, 1981.(Cochrane & Bal 1989).(2)

diagnosis).

2. Irish men too have the highest rate of admission for every diagnosis except for schizophrenia (which again is exceeded by Afro-Caribbean people)
3. Irish women have an exceedingly high rate of admission for the diagnosis of depression - more than twice that for Irish men and 2.5 times the rate for English-born women.
4. Admission rates for men with a diagnosis of alcohol abuse is 2.5 times greater than that for Irish women and 8.5 times that of English-born men.

These findings are supported by other studies eg. Walls 1996 (3) and Dean et al 1981(4), in South East England, Murphy (1968)(5) in Canada, and Malzberg (1963) (6) in New York State - all showing similarly high rates of mental hospital admission for Irish people. In particular the Malzberg (1963) study showed that elevated rates of admission extended into the second generation, American-born of Irish parentage.

Attempts to explain and understand these findings have followed different avenues. These we now look at;

1. MISDIAGNOSIS - the theory that cultural misdiagnosis takes place. On this question, Littlewood (1987)(7) concluded that even if we allow for serious misdiagnosing of alcoholism with schizophrenia as found (Bagely and Binitie,1970)(8) - the rates of schizophrenia for Irish people are high anyway. The British Royal College of Psychiatrists is the body which oversees the training of Irish psychiatrists in Éire. Training of British and Irish psychiatrists is similar. Irish psychiatrists working in Ireland and British psychiatrists working in Britain use very similar patterns of diagnosis. (Kelleher & Copeland (1974).(9)
2. GENETIC FACTORS - that the Irish are more likely to be mentally ill wherever they are for genetic reasons. There have been several studies of this, all of them showing inconclusive evidence and more recent ones showing evidence against the genetic hypothesis. (Cochrane 1987).

	Republic of Ireland		Northern Ireland		England		Caribbean	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Schizophrenia	158	174	103	111	61	58	259	235
Other Psychoses	36	50	28	52	16	27	28	40
Depression	197	410	143	266	79	166	65	152
Neuroses	62	111	44	80	28	56	6	25
Personality Disorder	62	80	50	52	30	35	22	42
Alcohol Abuse	332	133	261	90	38	18	27	9
Drug Abuse	13	8	17	8	5	3	13	0

TABLE B which outlines diagnosis and gender illustrates that;

1. Irish women have the highest rate of admission of all groups for every diagnosis except schizophrenia (according to the Cochrane & Bal study they are exceeded by Afro-Caribbean people in this

3. CULTURAL FACTORS; greater propensity of the Irish community when they are ill, to go to hospital - hence the higher rate of psychiatric admission. Research trying to assess this does not seem to bear this hypothesis out. (Cochrane 1987).

4. MIGRANTS SELF SELECT - that they are not representative of the population they leave, and they self select in a way that is related to their mental health. This could be a positive (that the most stable, healthy well-adjusted emigrate) selection, or a negative (those predisposed to mental illness emigrate) selection.

5. There is something to do with being a migrant that causes mental illness - stresses of migration and adjusting to a new environment, separation, culture shock, unwelcome in new environment, hostility etc). Certainly there are stresses that go with emigration, but the evidence again does not suggest that these precipitate mental illness within immigrant groups (Cochrane & Stopes-Roe 1979;(10) Greenslade 1991) (11).

6. CULTURAL REASONS - is there something in Irish culture which makes people more prone to mental illness, some combination of religious, social, cultural factors. Some commentators on mental health in the Irish population have drawn attention to the authoritarian control of the Catholic church in Irish society.(Finnegan 1987) (12) (O'Keeffe 1992) (13). According to Littlewood (1987) studies in this suggest similar rates for both Catholics and Protestants for schizophrenia and alcoholism.

7. HISTORICAL FACTORS in Irish society. Liam Greenslade from the Institute of Irish Studies, Liverpool University explores this question using the theoretical framework of Frantz Fanon, a French psychiatrist who worked in the French colony of Algeria. The basic tenets of Greenslade's work hold that; (a) madness must be looked at within its' social context - we must look at the social relations surrounding madness. (b) colonialism is a historical legacy that Ireland has still not recovered from. According to Fanon colonised cultures are breeding grounds for psycho-social pathologies. This does not mean that colonialism causes madness but that it creates an ambience giving a sufficient quantity of misleading messages as an effect of achieving it's ends. These messages are cultural, psychological and socio-psychological ones which;
1. require the native to take part in his/her own oppression
2. the master must make the colonised subject like him/her, but outline the differences
3. the native is stripped naked of identity and a' new' identity is rebuilt in the image of the colonist

His work describes how colonialism 'constantly forces the native into a series of choices' which are 'incompatible with the formation of a non-conflictual identity'. All of the options open to the colonised are 'unsatisfactory' - whether (a) to resist the colonial power and suffer the violent consequences or (b) comply with it's demands which again will cause suffering - whether to (a) identify with 'superior rationality' or (b) submit to the Inferior indigenous culture.
'Colonialism induces in the native a sense of ruthlessness and dependency that hampers both personal and political autonomy'

states Greenslade, because;
(1) negative and inferior qualities are attributed to the colonised by the coloniser and
(2) all labour, social relations, social politics and the general organisation of space are oriented towards the upkeep of the coloniser.

These systems are kept in line by violence or/and the threat of violence. In the end states Greenslade 'not even one's emotional life belongs to oneself. The native is 'not in control of the interpretation of one's own emotional life. The spiritual and cultural life of the colonised is devalued.

According to Greenslade:
native society becomes characterised by the settler as a place where values have disappeared or never existed. The native represents the absence of values and is a negation of them. The native is destructive, the enemy of civilised values .... and is represented in animal terms, incapable of self government and of industry without supervision'

The settler then 're-writes the history of the colonised land - colonisation becomes a process of making and unmaking history itself' and is replaced 'by a Manichaean struggle of order over disorder'.

The colonisation of the native language is crucial to the process Greenslade states that 'displaced by the loss of a language in which to express aspirations or construct a coherent identity, adapting the borrowed words of the colonialists' tongue to encapsulate the fragmented experience of the present, the native lives a schizophrenic existence'. He goes on to say 'to be an colonised speaker of a colonial language is to undergo the experience of taking on a foreign culture, while remaining in your own'. Cultural identity 'undergoes a constant process of fragmentation as a result'.

In summary, Greenslade argues that 'the incidence and characteristics of mental illness amongst the Irish are best understood as psychological manifestations traceable to the sustained psychological, cultural and social effects of colonialism upon the Irish at home and abroad'.

This viewpoint is endorsed by some other mental health workers. Sue Holland, clinical psychological with White city Mental Health Project, speaking to Irish mental health conference in 1987, likened mental illness and distress to internalised attitudes of self-hatred resulting from continued political imperialism. In her paper presented at the conference she says;
'The Irish have been and still are a colonised people. Imperialism creates conditions under which psychological and psychic processes can become aspects of domination. Dominated people hate their oppressors and will consciously struggle for nationalist liberation. But, when domination is not consciously rejected but psychically internalised the consequence is self-hatred, each generation handing this onto the next. The oppressed come to believe they deserve to be oppressed because they are inferior. Racism works in this way. Families are split and fragmented by economic necessity e.g. migration, which in it's turn creates psychological damage. Children grow up believing they were rejected and abandoned by parents. Self-hatred becomes melancholic, and depression, alcoholism etc becomes the outward expression of inward

anger. Repression is a psychic form of oppression. It is within this political and psychological frame we engage with the mental misery of women who come to our White City Mental Health Project.'(14)

These are the factors that have been discussed when talking about the Irish experience of mental health as immigrants in Britain, and naturally the aspects covered are equally relevant to women and to men alike.

Colonialism has been a major factor in the lives of Irish women down through the centuries. Patriarchy is the other. A reading of the section on Culture will supplement the discussion here.

For explanatory purposes, the term 'patriarchy' will be used here as an umbrella term to indicate male oppression of women. The task of describing the ways in which colonialism and patriarchy overlapped and inter-wove with each other in their combined ramifications and effects on women, is a difficult one, and this document will leave this task to more experienced hands. However there are some points which we draw attention to, for possible clarification.

† Patriarchy had arrived in Ireland long before colonialism had, and christianity itself adhered to patriarchal values. These values considered women inferior to men in all aspects of life and existence.

† The societal system was set up to dispossess women of power and authority; women were disinherited from land and prevented from taking authority; the economic, political, social and cultural role of women was changed and institutions adapted with this aim in mind.

† It would be naive to assume that women were happy to give up their equal status and power just because men asked them to. Like in other cultures throughout the world, violence was used to attain the desired result.

† Colonialism with it's ideology of violence, enhanced and supported the oppression of women. For instance, the pre- colonial legal system in Ireland was based upon the Brehon Laws, within which women enjoyed some semblance of equality. Following the Anglo-Norman invasion this system was replaced by Roman Law, within which women were made even more inferior.

† As far as women were concerned, the church continued to play an important role in their oppression. The witch- hunts happened in Ireland too. After the Great Famine of the 1840's, the church established even greater control over the people and consequently over the lives of women. However this was not new to women. A recurrent theme in the lives of saints is of them fleeing from the sound of cows and sheep because of the danger of meeting the women minding the herds. For instance, St. Kevin says

'where there are cows there are women, where there are women there is sin, where there is sin there is the Devil, and where there is the Devil there is Hell'. (15)

Helen Lanigan Wood reports that :
'the laws relating to the inheritance of land can certainly be blamed for the scarcity of women's religious houses in early christian Ireland. Only in exceptional circumstances could a woman inherit land, and even then she only held a life interest in it'. (16)

Women and Mental Health

LET US LOOK AT THE PROCESS THAT HAPPENS to women under patriarchy.

Psychotherapists and founders of the London Women's Therapy Centre, Orbach & Eichenbaum (1983)(17) state '...women's psychology is one of unclear boundaries, of an insecure or illusive sense of self. Women often search for themselves in their relationships with others, seeking definition in contact. The central aspect of women's psychology, the one that embodies most of the major themes, is the lack of psychological separateness, the absence of boundaries within which a secure sense of self is contained'.

This, they say is the result of social conditioning girls receive as children where they ...' are taught to be aware of the ways in which their actions affect others, and as a result become cautious about their actions. They almost always bear someone else in mind when they make their decisions about appropriate behaviour ..... girls rarely experience encouragement and support for gestures of autonomy. More often than not, girls move out into the world accompanied by prohibitions, cautions, restrictions, and fears rather than expectations of success and acceptance. Girls are praised and supported for behaviour that expresses concern, thoughtfulness and care for others. Girls are told they are being selfish when they direct this same energy towards themselves'

'Women's second-class position in patriarchal culture is painfully reflected in their psychology; women do not feel whole; women do not feel confident in themselves; women feel less than equal; women feel like children, not adults; women feel powerless; women feel overdependent; women feel passive; women feel imprisoned by their anger and by the clouds of depression that often surround them. These kinds of feelings are experienced and expressed in many different forms'

'Guilt, difficulties with anger, and preponderance of depression in women have their roots in early psychological development, and should be viewed from an analysis of women's search for acceptance, for adequate and consistent relating, and for an integrated self'.

These -

'consequences of women's' psychological development' result in difficulty with feelings of anger and 'difficulties with receiving' - women then feel caught in a double bind. Within this patriarchal culture ' women's sexuality has been a means by which women have found their place, whatever their social class or ethnic background. The paradox of female sexuality being the vehicle for a woman to find a home, so to speak, and yet once she has found that home needing to hide her sexuality or channel it into producing babies, means that all women live with the split of simultaneously having to be sexual and yet having to curb their sexuality. 'Giving is something that women learn early. It is a survival tool, a deeply-rooted part of her psychic structure and experience of self, and the price she pays for economic security.'

If these are the psychological consequences of the social realities for women, then the question must be - how can women be mentally or psychologically whole whilst

growing up and surviving within a social system which is patriarchal. Many other writers and researchers have referred to society's denial and rejection of the female and the feminine. Yet,it is clear from the work of historians and archeologists (Marshack 1982(18), Gimbautas,1988(19), Noble 1991(20) that there was a time when society had been able to integrate female as well as male identity into its working structures and ideologies. Excavations in eastern Europe as well as other areas have uncovered evidence that there existed egalitarian structures within a non-violent society. Evidence points to the honouring of the functions of birthing, menstruation, reproduction, mothering, childbearing and childrearing in society. The cyclical nature of life was honoured and women's' contribution to culture was recognised and integrated. It is difficult for women to even imagine what this was like so far are we removed from our own autonomy. It is therefore difficult for us to know what we have lost, and how and where we can begin to reclaim this.

In the light of these realities, is it not in fact, a natural and 'normal' response to react with depression. Is it any wonder that Irish women have the highest rates for the diagnosis of depression, of all groups in mental hospital admissions?. This makes sense if we look at different aspects of depression. Psychological ways of looking at depression include; hopelessness, despair, powerlessness, learned helplessness, unreleased potential, repressed anger, repressed feeling, loss of sense of self, low self-worth, self-hatred. Words used to describe depression within some spiritual traditions include 'dispirited' and 'soul loss' (21). Are these not the natural responses of people dethroned of equality and respect in society? Irish women have been denied the natural historical continuity of an authentic female identity through patriarchy, and the significance of their experience as subjects of a colonising power. There are no easy solutions.

'The work of seizing back what has been taken from within us by centuries of female repression and early (often brutal) childhood conditioning is a long, laborious process, requiring faith and vigilance and the willingness to learn by trial and error'

says writer Vicki Noble. (22)

'It is our female-animal instincts that have been denied and suppressed, then replaced by false, externally-imposed rules and ideas about ourselves and the world. We have lost the instinctive knowing that belonged to us by biological birthright in the millennia that preceded the development of patriarchy and male dominance. It is not a question of 'returning to the past' but one of re-awakening the instinctual senses and the empowerment needed to act on what our bodies know to be true',

She continues -

'To heal the shattered and fragmented feminine it is necessary 'for each of us women to pull her focused attention back inside herself, and to begin to actively and intelligently create the world we want. This may sound abstract, simple, and impossible at the same moment, since it seems too 'easy' to focus on oneself, and so impossible to change the world. But neither is true. For a woman to actually re-possess herself and to centre there is a monumental task, taking years of difficult, painstaking work. This is the work I am calling 'female shamanism', a gradual 'mastery' of oneself, and a healing or 'recovery' from the chronic disease of our time. And once a woman has done the work of re-membering herself, she is much more able to effectively change the world'. (22)

For Irish women it will only be appropriate for this reclamation to take place within the context of an Irish cultural identity.

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22. Vicki Noble, from Snake Power magazine, Hallowmas, 1989. p26

POPULATION

Population Figures in London
(1) Irish-born (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) women

	1981	1991	
	126,002	136,887	Increase 8.6%
Irish-born men			
	109,886	119,583	Increase 8.8%

The ratio of women/men remains exactly the same as in 1981 - 1148 women per 1,000 men (or 53.4% total)

Population of Irish born women in London

Borough	% all F	number	% change 81-91
Brent	9.0	11237	+10.8
Islington	7.1	6152	+3.7
Hamm.&Fulham	6.9	5424	-4.3
Camden	6.4	5766	-3.0
Ealing	6.1	8676	+16.1
Westminster	5.6	5167	-14.2
Haringey	5.1	5388	+8.1
Harrow	5.0	5232	+33.3
Lambeth	4.8	6107	+5.5
Southwark	4.4	5056	+11.5
Wandsworth	4.4	5787	+1.2
Ken.&Chelsea	4.2	3080	-13.2
Barnet	4.1	6379	+10.7
Hounslow	4.0	4192	+27.5
Hackney	3.9	3691	+3.1
Merton	3.6	3152	+20.4
Hillingdon	3.3	3939	+17.3
Lewisham	3.3	4008	+9.2
City of London	3.3	66	+18.2
Enfield	3.2	4285	+27.9
Richmond	3.1	2653	+17.9
Redbridge	3.0	3573	+24.9
Waltham Forest	3.0	3337	+32.9
Kingston	3.0	2072	+6.0
Croydon	2.8	4603	+9.0
Greenwich	2.8	3053	+9.1
Sutton	2.5	2215	+18.6
Tower Hamlets	2.4	1931	-0.3
Bromley	2.0	3093	+14.0
Newham	2.0	2189	+3.0
Barking & Dag	1.9	1417	+10.7
Havering	1.8	2139	-4.5
Bexley	1.6	1828	+6.9
AVERAGE	3.9	136.887	+8.6

adapted from AGIY 1995

Irish born women are clustered on the west side of Inner London and adjoining boroughs, notably in Brent (9.0%). However, growth in numbers between 1981 and 1991 was greatest in Outer London Boroughs, notably Harrow (+33.3%), Waltham Forest (+32.9%), Enfield (+27.9% and Hounslow (+27.5%).

Inner London boroughs still have high proportions of Irish-born women. If we multiply by 2.5 we can get an approximation to 1st and 2nd generation Irish, therefore for instance the total number of Irish women (including figures for women of Irish descent) in the London Borough of Brent is 22.5% of the female population.

The growth between 1981 - 1991 has been in outer boroughs;

	1981	1991	% change
Inner London	59,504	59,812	+ 0.5%
Outer London	66,497	77,075	+ 15.9%

This change is especially clear in the increases among Irish-born 20-24 year old women, the main migrant age group.

	1981	1991	% increase
Inner London	3,376	5,172	+51.8%
Outer London	3,155	7,708	+144.3%

Over half the increase in Outer London was in 4 boroughs; increase

	1981	1991	%
Brent	636	1,368	+115.0%
Ealing	351	1,047	+198.2%
Harrow	125	666	+432.8%
Barnet	273	688	+152.0%

There were also some sharp increases in Inner London boroughs eg,

	1981	1991	
Lambeth	279	604	+116.5%
Southwark	217	469	+116.1%
Wandsworth	259	555	+114.3%

This gives some indication of where new arrivals were settling in the 1980's.

Age Groups

	1981	1991	%change
0-14	2,007	4,127	+105.6%
15-24	8,323	15,107	+ 81.5%
25-44	48,226	34,537	- 28.4%
45-59	36,880	36,342	- 1.5%
60+	30,566	37,370	+ 22.1%

So, the main increases have been in young people and the old.

Older Irish Women

Again there has been a greater increase in outer boroughs in the 60+ age group.

	1981	1991	% change
Inner London	14,756	17,435	+ 18.2%
Outer London	15,791	19,935	+ 26.2%

In the Inner London boroughs the largest increases have been in;

Tower Hamlets	385	560	+ 45.5%
Islington	1,111	1,611	+ 45.0%
Southwark	936	1,288	+ 37.6%

In Outer London boroughs the main increases have been in;

Redbridge	566	860	+ 51.9%
Waltham Forest	433	614	+ 41.85
Bexley	405	574	+ 41.7%

Limiting Long-term Illness

For the first time this has been included in the census. Irishwomen seem close to the average;

WOMEN age 16+ (Total pop.)	IRISH-BORN 16+
15.5%	15.9%
MEN 16+ (Total pop.)	IRISH-BORN 16+
13.6%	16.2%

HOUSING

DATA FROM THE 1991 POPULATION CENSUS SHOWS the following figures for housing amongst the Irish-born community. A gender breakdown is not available from the census. The following data is based on 'head of household' tabulations. All of the following figures refer to London.

TABLE 1: Housing Tenure
Irish-born households heads as % of total H/holds in London;

     1981 - 4.1%
     1991 - 5.0%

	Total Population		Irish-born		'White' exc. Irish-born
	1981	1991	1981	1991	1991
Owner-occupied	48.6	57.2	34.5	43.9	59.3
Local Auth. rented	30.7	23.3	39.3	28.9	21.9
Housing Assoc. rented	4.1	5.6	6.4	8.0	5.1

TABLE 2: Amenities

	Total		Irish- born	
	1981	1991	1981	1991
% Hshlds without exclusive use of bath and /or inside wc	7.0	2.4	9.9	3.6
% Hshlds over 1.5 persons per room (measure of overcrowding)	2.2	1.4	2.7	1.6
% Hshlds in self contained accommodation.	4.5	2.7	7.4	5.2
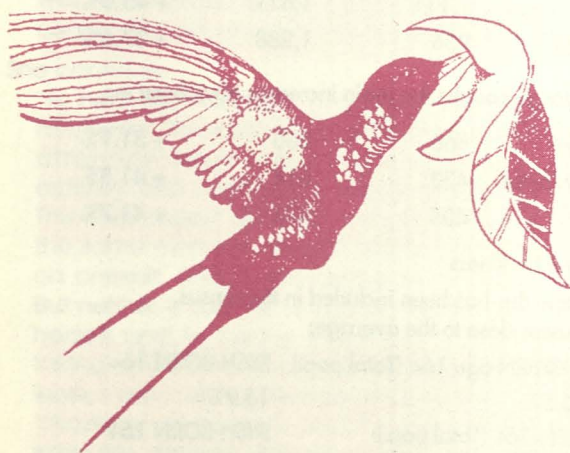
Comments

1. Like the population as a whole many Irish-born people moved into owner-occupation during the 1980's but the overall proportion is still well below the 'white' population (44% Irish-born compared with 59% of the remaining 'white' population).

2. There are still more Irish-born people in Local Authority housing (29% Irish-born compared with 22% of the remaining 'white' population and 23% within the overall population) but the proportion of Irish-born in this category has fallen sharply from 40% in 1981. There has been a decline in council housing as a result of government policies which has removed housing stock from local authorities while preventing their replacement. The government also encouraged the sale of council housing through the 1980 Housing Act, which gave tenants the right to buy their own homes. Local Authorities are allowed to spend only 25% of income from these sales on building more homes. In addition the government is promoting the transfer of profitable council stock to housing associations and private landlords through the Housing Act and the Housing and Planning Act 1986. All of this combines to reduce housing available/affordable to those sections of the population who are more vulnerable to homelessness, on low incomes or unemployed. In the population as a whole homelessness has doubled in the past 10 years, whilst at present, council house building is at its lowest level since the 1939-45 war.

3. Numbers of the Irish-born in privately rented accommodation have also fallen (20% in 1981 to 17% in 1991) as the sector has declined generally (from 17% in 1981 to 12% in 1991 within the overall population). As the tables illustrate, the Irish born are still very much over-represented in this category of housing. The 1988 Housing Act was an attempt to revive the private rented sector by introducing higher rents and making it easier for landlords to evict. Traditionally this sector has been characterised by (and still is) insecurity of tenure, poor housing conditions, and vulnerability to harassment for women.

4. Above average proportions of Irish-born people rent from Housing Associations (8% of the Irish-born compared with less than 6% of the overall population). For the Irish-born this figure of 8% represents an increase since 1981 (6%). This increase in numbers may be due to the emergence of frontline Irish advice agencies that have campaigned to obtain referral rights to housing associations, to the fact that SOME housing associations have responded to this obvious need within the Irish community, and to the development of the very few Irish housing associations in London that developed during the 1980's.

5. There appears to have been a sharp improvement overall in measures of poor amenity in housing, BUT IRISH-BORN PEOPLE STILL FARE WORSE THAN AVERAGE ie.

▼ 3.6% have no exclusive use of a bath/shower and/or no inside wc (av = 2.4%)

▼ 1.6% of households are overcrowded (av = 1.4%)

▼ 5.2% are not in self-contained accommodation (av = 2.7%)

Details for comparisons of Inner & Outer London Boroughs

TABLE 3: Tenure - Inner London

	Irish bn	'white'excl.Irish	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Total
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Owner-occupied -outright	8 (28)	12 (41)	6 (33)	12 (62)	10 (38)
-buying	20	29	27	50	28
Private Rented	17	17	5	12	16
Hous. Ass. rented	12	9	13	6	9
Local Auth rented	41	31	48	18	34
% total Hshlds	6	74	7	2	100

TABLE 4: Tenure - Outer London

	Irish bn	'white'excl.Irish	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Total
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Owner-occupied -outright	18(58)	25 (70)	8 (63)	12 (84)	23 (70)
-buying	40	45	55	72	47
Private Rented	17	9	5	6	10
Hous. Ass. rented	5	3	7	2	3
Local Auth rented	18	17	24	7	16
% total Hshlds	4	83	3	4	100

Household Amenities/Quality of Housing

TABLE 5: Measures on households as separate units; Inner London

	Irish-bn	White exc Irish-bn	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Total
1. Lack/share	4.2	3.2	1.8	2.6	3.3
2. No ch	25.6	21.8	16.5	14.0	20.9
3. Not self cont.	6.0	3.9	2.7	3.1	4.1
4. 1.5 + p per r	1.9	1.3	2.0	4.3	2.2

Outer London

	Irish-bn	White exc Irish-bn	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Total
1. Lack/share	3.0	1.7	1.4	1.0	1.8
2. No ch	18.9	18.5	12.0	5.7	17.4
3. Not self cont.	4.4	1.5	2.1	1.0	1.8
4. 1.5 + p per r	1.4	0.5	1.3	2.9	0.8

Comments

1. In both Outer and Inner London, Irish-born households are well below average in their rates of owner occupation (therefore do not benefit from mortgage tax relief, the major form of housing subsidy). But the proportion of Irish-born owner-occupiers in Outer London is twice as high as the Irish-born rate of owner-occupation in Inner London - a greater difference than for any other group. (The Afro-Caribbean population show a similar trend to a slightly smaller extent).

2. In Inner London, a much higher proportion of Irish-born people (41% Irish-born compared to 34% of the average population) are in Local Authority rented housing, a sector which has lost its better quality units to Right-to-Buy policies leaving hard-to-let housing for remaining tenants.

These indices are used to measure the quality of housing experienced by different groups. These are provided both for households as separate units, and for ALL RESIDENTS OF HOUSEHOLDS (ie. numbers of people affected).

Indices;

1. Lack of, or sharing use of bath/shower and/or inside wc.
2. No central heating.
3. Not self contained accommodation.
4. 1.5 + persons per room.

Comments

On almost all of these measures, in both Inner and Outer London, the Irish- born population has the worst conditions of any group included here. They are particularly disadvantaged by a lack of privacy and independently controlled types of accommodation. More Irish- born households lack central heating than average (25% Irish-born compared with 20% of the total population).

TABLE 6: Measures for all residents in households Inner London

	Irish-bn	White exc Irish-bn	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Total
1. Lack/share	2.7	2.2	1.2	1.8	2.2
2. No ch	22.9	19.2	14.7	12.2	18.1
3. Not self cont.	3.9	2.8	1.9	1.8	2.8
4. 1.5 + p per r	3.0	2.0	3.2	6.7	4.2

	Irish-bn	White exc Irish-bn	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Total
1. Lack/share	1.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.5
2. No ch	16.2	15.2	10.7	4.8	14.4
3. Not self cont.	2.5	0.9	1.3	0.6	1.1
4. 1.5 + p per r	1.9	0.7	1.8	4.7	1.5

Comments

Although Irish-born people in Outer London have better housing than in Inner boroughs, relatively, conditions are worse than average.

*Footnote

Comparisons between the Irish-born, the Afro-Caribbean community and the Asian community have been made because these represent the largest 'ethnic' groups in Britain. In all cases in this document ,the term 'Afro-Caribbean' refers to the "black Caribbean' category in the census tabulation data. Again in all cases, 'Asian' in this document refers to the category "Indian" in the census, meaning those people born in the Indian subcontinent.

Homelessness

The full extent of homelessness in London is difficult to define. Producing reliable estimates of the numbers of single homeless requires extensive research. Resources are needed to produce this, and it can quickly become outdated. 'Unofficial' homelessness covers all homelessness which falls outside the limited legal definition. Research studies undertaken into the number of single people in London who do not have a permanent home, vary in their findings because of differing definitions for 'homeless'. The London Housing Survey in 1987 estimated that there were 74,000 people who were living unwillingly as part of another's household. Other sources have estimated that a further 50,000 single people were living in temporary accommodation or sleeping out. In 1995, SHiL drew together various estimates to provide an indicative figure of 43,350. In addition, SHiL estimates that there are at least 32,000 single people living unwillingly as part of someone else's household in overcrowded conditions. (1)

Housing Corporation research in 1995 (2) estimates a need for 30,000 housing units per year nationally, to enable hostel and special need scheme residents to move on into permanent accommodation. However the research showed that housing associations nationally would be providing 3254 units of move-on permanent accommodation in the year 1994/5. This illustrates the gap between level of provision and the actual need. SHiL's report 'Time to Move On' estimated that in London '18,000 units are need immediately, followed by a further 10,500 units to rehouse single people living in hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation' (3). An addition 7,500 units per year would be required to keep pace with need. SHiL's research on hostel provision shows that only 20% of hostel bedspaces in London are in women-only accommodation - an illustration of the comparative lack of provision for single women who are in need of safe emergency/temporary accommodation (3).

The lack of affordable permanent housing in London has become increasingly evident since the mid 1980's. A number of factors have contributed to this situation, including a squeeze on the development of social and public housing, a range of new social security legislation and an increase in single person households. Private sector leasing by local authorities needing temporary accommodation for those deemed in priority need under the 1985 Housing Act has sharply increased. All of this has meant that rents have increased and there is a shortage of affordable property for single people Concurrent Government cutbacks in social security benefits and the regulation of rents under new housing benefit legislation, means that single people who are on low incomes or unemployed remain at ever greater risk of becoming and remaining homeless. SHiL states 'unless further measure are taken to reverse the decline in the supply of affordable rented housing in he Capital current levels of homelessness will at best remain static and more likely increase'. (4)

Young Single Women

CHAR (HOUSING CAMPAIGN FOR SINGLE PEOPLE) in their report '4 in 10', (6) draw attention to the myths that surround young homelessness - one of these being that the reason for young homelessness is primarily economic. They claim that campaigners,in an attempt to get resources for housing, tend to portray the economic reasons but that this touches the surface of the issue. In the case of young women large numbers become homeless because of sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse. In their research they found that 4 in 10 young women become homeless as a result of sexual abuse in the home as children or as teenagers. Homelessness, they state, results from a set of social conditions and large numbers of women are affected, becoming homeless as a result of

'the abuse of power of adult men (and women to a much lesser extent) over girls and young women'.

Therefore, housing organisations are asked to rethink their position regarding child sexual abuse.

For young single women who are homeless there are far fewer bedspaces available than for young men. Young Homelessness Group (7) report that in London there are 3,622 out of 22,424 hostel spaces designated for women only. Many homeless women avoid hostels and centres for the homeless because they are vulnerable in a male-dominated environment. For instance, 19 women under the age of 18 (7% of women residents) who stayed at the Children's Society's Central London Teenage Project between 1985 and 1986 had been raped whilst homeless, some while they had been squatting. Evidence shows that many young women become involved in prostitution as a result of being homeless. Many young homeless women are approached by pimps whilst they are using homeless shelters and hostels. There is evidence that homelessness makes young people more vulnerable to drug abuse and that for young

'Irish immigrants, the combination of homelessness and the prejudice they face in England can result in serious depression and other forms of mental distress. Homelessness doubles the disadvantage of these young people because it also restricts their access to medical and counselling services that are available to the rest of the population'.

So, in relation to single homelessness at least, the lack of hostel provision combined with inadequate statistics has led to a tendency to see homelessness as a male problem. Yet, in 1988, Housing Advice Switchboard London received 10,000 calls, 60% of which were from women. There is need for further research into the full extent of homelessness amongst young women and into the dangers they face once homeless. Women in general are over-represented among the homeless. in 1986, 35% of households accepted as homeless in London were single parent households, most of them women-headed households,(London Housing Questionnaire 1986). Domestic violence figures largely in women's' homelessness. For instance between 16-30% of homelessness cases accepted by local authorities result from domestic violence (8).

Irish Women and Homelessness

IRISH WOMEN ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO homelessness both as new arrivals and as longer established low-paid workers. Irish women are concentrated in the lower paid professions and jobs (see Employment). They are often unfamiliar with legislation in housing. The London Irish Women's Centre deals with many cases of women with families who are vulnerable to being browbeaten by local authorities who make narrow interpretations of housing legislation.

As is the case with women generally, Irish women are less likely to appear in statistics on homelessness because they do not seem to make the demands on formal agencies to the same extent as men. A number of surveys of Irish advice agencies have borne this out (Irish Women in London 1988) (9). A very recent survey of Irish advice agencies in Britain funded by DION (a committee which allocates Irish government funds for the welfare of emigrants overseas) reveals that demands upon these welfare agencies in terms of gender breakdown on average show a 66% men to 33% women ratio. In terms of demand on accommodation agencies funded by DION the ratio is a startling average of 80% men to 20% women. (Source; personal communication, Melanie Pine, chair of the DION Committee). This pattern does not confine itself to the Irish community advice and accommodation agencies . The Piccadilly Advice Centre report on Irish

homeless callers to their centre in 1991(10) showed that only 16% of Irish callers were women. Irish lesbians made up only 1.5% of the total callers.

In his survey of Irish youth in 1985, Connor (11) reports that homelessness often arises when the initial stay with friends and relatives has to be ended. 28% of the sample surveyed reported accommodation to be the main problem in London. For women in the sample accommodation problems ranked equal with 'communications' which included homesickness, disorientation in the city and hostility to the Irish (Connor, 1985)(12).

It is clear from research that homelessness in itself is not a singular event. It is an experience comprising many different aspects - the major one being the lack of decent and affordable housing. Homelessness can be an intensely traumatic personal experience. Finding oneself homeless can be the beginning of a process which can continue for years. Homelessness and its compounding factors can have the effect of depleting a person's emotional and other resources so that they are rendered less able or unable to deal with other issues of survival. The ability to manage and deal with feelings of stress, anxiety, fear and loneliness can be inhibited. Women are more vulnerable to becoming involved with or staying in abusive relationships in an attempt to escape from the trap of homelessness. Thus, depression and increasing feelings of low self-esteem can develop in an ever increasing round of despair, making it all the more difficult to mobilise inner self help abilities. In addition as research indicates, women are in very real danger of being raped or being sexually assaulted.

Recent research indicates death rates amongst homeless people sleeping rough are three times higher than the rest of the population; that the homeless are 150 times more likely to be killed in an assault; 34 times more likely to kill themselves; 8 times more likely to die in an accident and 3 times more likely to die of pneumonia. A survey of a sample of death certificates by CRISIS revealed an average age of death for homeless people is 47 years compared with an average life expectancy in Britain of 73 for men and 79 for women (Front Door magazine Feb 1993).

Continuing Need

THOUGH THE TOTAL FIGURES for new arrivals from Ireland to Britain has decreased in the past couple of years, the problem of homelessness has not abated. There is a general tendency to believe that now that emigration figures have decreased, the problems no longer exist to the same extent. This is simply not the case. The escalation of homelessness continues in Britain to the scale of being nothing short of a national crisis. It is a problem not confined to the Irish community but the Irish community suffer in particular because of the general lack of affordable housing. Irish advice agencies continued to be flooded with housing need queries, to a much greater extent than they have resources to meet them.

Homelessness amongst single Irish people has been at the forefront of discussions within the Irish community for several years now. Surveys have consistently revealed the chronic levels of housing need; recent studies confirm a continuing trend;

† more than 30% of homeless people encountered on the street were Irish. (Bondway Night Shelter 1990).

† one in 5 staying in emergency accommodation were Irish (Simon Community, Kings Cross, 1990)

† one in 3 clients attending drop-in centres for the homeless were Irish, (Barnet Churches 1990)

† 55% of clients attending the project were Irish (Broadway Homeless Project, Hammersmith 1990)

† over 20% of people attending Southwark Day Centre were Irish (Annual Report 1990).

† the largest ethnic group using severe weather shelters in London, opened during January and February 1991, were those of Irish origin (SHiL).

Nor does the problem of homelessness end with finding a bed in a hostel or a run-down privately rented bedsit. These are but short-term solutions to longer-term problems. Piccadilly Advice Centre report states 'what is clearly needed, as is the case with all homeless people, is intervention at all levels which does not just provide a crisis response but also includes a long term strategy as well as a preventative dimension'. Shelter's report 'Urgent Need for Homes', estimates that over the next 5 years between 1,485,000 and 2,105,000 households in England will need a rented home from a local authority or housing association.

In 'Homelessness - What's the Problem?' Shelter states,

'in areas where there has been an expansion in housing, the government has failed to address the issue of affordability and access to housing for people on low incomes. Whilst the Government has brought in legislation which is likely to mean dramatic rent increases, especially in the private-rented sector, it has not compensated for this by increased housing subsidies, except for those who own their own homes. On the contrary, cuts in housing benefits, covering housing costs for many groups, will inevitably lead to more homelessness for many groups'.

In view of this Shelter believe that the Government needs to make available an average of 100,000 additional low-cost rented homes over the next 5 years, as part of an emergency housing programme, stating that 'because the Government is not prepared to recognise the root cause of homelessness-a lack of affordable rented housing nationwide-the homelessness initiatives (This refers to the crises shelters provided by government money) will remain cosmetic measures benefiting only a small proportion of homeless people'.

Housing Associations & Local Authorities

IN 1991, CARA IRISH HOUSING ASSOCIATION CARRIED OUT A survey (11) of 60 Housing Associations (58% of the target group in a survey). Sixty two % of these monitored for ethnicity. The study looks at (1) applications for housing (2) allocations of housing (3) links with voluntary Irish organisations, (4)local authority housing and single Irish people.

CARA's research found that 'few of the Associations were able to provide records on the numbers of single Irish applicants/referrals seeking accommodation. The numbers of associations monitoring and recording applications for accommodation by single Irish people compares unfavourably with overall levels of monitoring of single applicants and overall ethnic monitoring of single applicants. Just 28% of associations surveyed recorded the number of single Irish people who approached or were referred to them for housing.'

Thus, ONLY 8 OUT OF 60 ASSOCIATIONS COULD PROVIDE AN ACCURATE ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBERS OF SINGLE IRISH PEOPLE WHO HAD APPLIED FOR OR HAD BEEN REFERRED TO THEM FOR HOUSING.

Allocation of Housing

AGAIN, IN RELATION TO THE ALLOCATION of accommodation; (1) only 5 associations in the survey could provide exact statistics on the number of single Irish people they had housed. (2) approx. only 25% recorded allocations made to single Irish people. (3) the monitoring and recording of allocations of accommodation to single Irish people compared unfavourably with overall levels of monitoring and allocations to single people.

Links with Irish Voluntary Agencies.

ONLY 8 ASSOCIATIONS IN THE SURVEY HAD 'MOVE ON' referral arrangements with Irish agencies. Of the Associations with policies to target minority groups, only two Associations surveyed had such policies which specifically included Irish people, and only a few had been involved in discussions on housing needs and Irish people.

CARA's report concludes-'in spite of the fact that some housing associations have taken individual steps to combat the particular problem of homelessness faced by Irish people, the absence of more widespread monitoring and collating data gives a very hazy impression of how Irish single people are faring with regards to access to suitable permanent housing via housing associations. The lack of data on applications for housing by Irish single people and the number of units allocated to them, results in a lack of awareness of their needs and inadequate resources directed to meet those needs. As a consequence poor expectations are reinforced'.

The CARA research revealed that the needs of Irish single homeless people, as recorded by 'frontline' agencies, are not being transmitted to housing associations. The lack of data means that housing associations cannot ensure appropriate provision is being made for those with particular needs amongst Irish single homeless people. 'FOR EXAMPLE, VIRTUALLY NO DATA IS COLLECTED DETAILING APPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING BY SINGLE IRISH WOMEN IN HOUSING NEED'. (our emphasis).

The report 'Moving on Housing' (NFHA/SHiL 1989) indicated that proportionately far too few Irish single homeless people living in hostel accommodation gain access to permanent suitable and affordable accommodation. For instance research has shown that 32% of hostel residents were Irish yet only 4% of Irish hostel residents secured permanent accommodation. In comparison the same study recorded 45% of hostel residents as being UK white; 47% of these residents obtained permanent accommodation.

CARA's report states that although some organisations (Housing Associations) had links with Irish agencies 'the majority of organisations had no such links with Irish agencies'. (5)

Housing Associations are funded by the Housing Corporation 'which has not specific obligation to include an Irish dimension in the assessment of housing need and indeed is still in the process of acknowledging the needs of the Irish as a separate group'. Research by CARA (5) Irish Housing Association outlines that the 'number of homes produced by Irish Housing Associations with Housing Corporation money is consistently less than 0.2% of the number of homes produced by the Corporation backed schemes within the London area. Moreover, few Housing Associations include the Irish within their Equal Opportunities Policy in relation to either applicants for housing or as employees'. (5)

Local Authorities

THE EVIDENCE FROM AMONGST Local Authorities in the survey indicates that a lack of data gives at best an extremely limited picture of the housing needs of Irish single homeless people from amongst applicants to Local Authorities and that there is 'little evidence from which to gauge if appropriate provision is being directed to meet the needs of these Irish people'. The report states that the 'data available does not ensure discrimination is not taking place'. For example, although 'frontline' agencies record very visible numbers of Irish single homeless people many of whom may be 'vulnerable', Local Authority acceptances of Irish single homeless people for housing on grounds of vulnerability go virtually unrecorded.

In addition

> 'the survey shows the need for many Local Authorities to consult closely on the needs of local Irish communities and agencies. A number of Local Authorities, including some who did not respond to this survey, have taken positive steps to consult with the local Irish community and Irish organisations in their area. These consultations were held with a view to improving service provision to the particular needs of Irish people. Such initiatives are to be welcomed. Local Authorities not involved in such exercises should be encouraged to follow these examples'.

HOMELESS FAMILIES

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSING homeless families falls primarily on Local Authorities. In recent years many Irish women have had to enlist the knowledge and assistance of frontline advice agencies to help them understand the housing legislation and to support them in challenging local authorities that make narrow interpretations of housing law. As immigrants who do not have fore-knowledge of their rights, or of the housing system in this country, Irish women are often vulnerable to this and fall foul of the system.

Again because of the lack of adequate monitoring it is impossible to ascertain exactly how many families are living in B&B accommodation, but it is very likely that the figure exceeds many thousands. As carers, women bear the brunt of the stresses of B&B accommodation, having to deal with schools and health centres, housing offices, children who have no play facilities and live in overcrowded conditions.

The problems faced by homeless Irish families were aggravated in the late 1980's when it came to light that some local authorities were in the practice of issuing travel warrants to Irish families to return to Ireland. Irish welfare

and community groups including the Irish Women's Housing Action Group launched a campaign on the issue.

Anti-Irish media smears in relation to housing make matters worse. For instance, in June 1991, an Irish woman fleeing from her violent male partner, was housed with her children by the London Borough of Camden in privately leased accommodation (which was cheaper than B&B). The Sun, The Evening Standard and The Daily Mail newspapers carried articles on this information, misrepresenting the facts and leaving the woman vulnerable to racial abuse and in danger of her ex-partner's return as her full address was given in the paper. The Irish Women's Housing Action Group took the case to the Press Complaints commission and to the Sun Ombudsman.

Summarising Points

* Irish women continue to be over-represented in private rented sector housing. Irish-born women still fare worse than average in measures of poor amenity in housing although there has been an overall improvement since 1981.

* Like other groups Irish-born women moved into owner-occupation during the 1980's but the overall proportion is still well below average in both Inner and Outer London.

* Above average numbers of Irish-born women are in housing association and local authority housing stock.

* There is an urgent need for housing associations and local authorities to monitor the needs of single Irish people and Irish families.

* There is a need for frontline advice agencies to pass on information about the housing needs of Irish users to housing associations and local authorities.

* Access to housing, conditions of housing and homelessness continue to be major issues in the lives of Irish women in London.

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DISABILITY

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The Hidden Issue

WITHIN DISABILITY GROUPS Irish women are silent, one rarely meets them'- this is how one female member of the Irish Disability Group describes the experience of Irish disabled women. (1)

Within the Irish community disability remains a hidden issue. Although much is discussed and written on mental health, this is not from the standpoint of disability. There is indeed the tacit assumption that those Irish people who emigrate are able-bodied. Disabled Irish people have received substandard welfare and housing advice from Irish community advice organisations. They are frequently not given informed advice on benefits, travel allowances, employment and training opportunities, housing rights and other facilities. Added to this, the able-bodied community rarely take up issues of disability.

Disability for disabled people is first and foremost a social oppression-in other words the major difficulties confronted by disabled people originate in society's prejudicial attitudes towards them as a minority group. Some of this discrimination is open and apparent, but much of it is hidden and subtle and all the more powerful because of this.

Disabled people have to contend with both individual and institutional oppression. There isn't the same legal protection for disabled people as there is for people covered by the Race Relations Act and The Sex Discrimination Act. Anti-discrimination legislation for disabled people does not exist.

Disability events and services are on the whole, organised by the dominant culture. Within this the Irish identity of disabled Irish women is not recognised. A recent example of this is worth mention. In May 1991 Greater London Association for the Disabled (GLAD) organised a conference inviting black and ethnic minority groups to attend and participate. However, at both the steering group stage of organising and on the day of the conference itself, Irish people were not allowed to participate as an ethnic minority group and thus were excluded from the conference. (2)

Irish disabled women feel themselves to be excluded from full participation within both the Irish and the mainstream British cultures. To be heard and seen in both cultures would open the doors to opportunity and fulfilment.

EMPLOYMENT

Fulltime/Part-time Work & Irish Women
63% fulltime
25% part time
- the fulltime figure is slightly above average (61%)
- part time is also above average (23%) and is higher than for any other 'ethnic' group.

Unemployment
IRISH WOMEN APPEAR TO be below average in their registered unemployment (8.1% compared to the average 9.1%).
This is well below any other 'ethnic' group eg. Black Caribbean 13.9%; Bangladeshi 36.6%%; White 12.4%.

For under 25's the same pattern holds - Irish women 9.6% (compared to the average 14.3%), Black Caribbean 24.4%; Bangladeshi 38.6%; White 11.9%.

However, in a study on young Irish migrants, employment and qualifications, Geoffrey Randall concluded 'although the employment opportunities in London were much better for young migrants than they had been in Ireland, there is evidence that they are not getting access to the full range of jobs and that they are very often in insecure work without the usual employment rights'.(1).

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS ON IRISH WOMEN refer to Irish-born women only - they do not include second generation Irish women. For this reason they are not directly comparable with other groups. Multiplying the Irish-born figure by 2 or 2.5 will give an approximation for the second generation women.

There are 73,653 economically active (ie. in the workforce, though may be unemployed) Irish-born women in London as a whole.

This compares with the largest 'ethnic' group - 'Black Caribbean' women - 83,541, which includes second and later generations. So, Irish women are by far the largest ethnic group in the workforce (at least 150,000).

Occupations
LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, (LFS) 1989,90,91 were averaged to give details of Women's occupational categories. Information obtained can be compared with those in the Irish Women in London Report 1988 which were based on LFS 1979 - 81 & 83 averaged. (Table 2)

Table 1: Women's Occupational categories by birthplace/ethnic groups. London,%. Source LFS (Labour Force Surveys 1989,90 & 91).

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONS (KOS groupings)					
	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
II Professional & related, health, education etc	19	14	20	8	14
V Managerial	7	7	4	9	7
VI Clerical & related	28	36	32	35	35
VII Selling	5	8	5	6	8
IX Personal services, catering, cleaning.	29	16	27	10	17
XII Printing, painting, assembling.	2	1	2	10	2
Other	9	18	11	22	18
TOTAL	59314	1112858	62840	68367	1391934

Table 2: Women's Occupational categories by birth place/ethnic groups. London % LFS 1979,'81 & '83.

II	20	12	24	10	14
V	3	5	2	7	5
VI	22	42	26	32	38
VII	7	8	3	13	8
IX.	39	17	26	10	19
XIII	3	2	5	13	2
Other	6	14	14	15	14
TOTAL	49553	1287229	58632	48636	1277896

Comments

(1) The main changes during the 1980s are the sharp increase in numbers of Irish women in administrative and office -white collar services - work. Although there was little change in the proportion of all women in these categories (V and VI - 43% in 1981 and 42% in 1990), Irish-born women increased from 25% to 35%. The proportion of Afro-Caribbean women in these two categories also increased from 28% to 36%. For Irish women this includes an increase from 3% to 7% in the managerial category, the most marked amongst the ethnic groups listed. Although, both Irish- born and Afro-Caribbean women are still below the proportions of White UK born women in these areas, there was a decline in the proportion of White UK born women from 47% to 43%. In other words, the pattern of work of Irish-born and Afro-Caribbean women, which remains similar, is converging with that of the White UK born over time, though a distinction remains. This could be thought to reflect higher qualifications amongst newly arrived Irish women and British-born Afro-Caribbean women, but the Qualifications table does not bear this out in fact.

(2) This change is paralleled by a decrease in the proportion of Irish-born women engaged in Category IX, personal services which includes catering and cleaning jobs. There was a significant fall from 39% to 29%, whereas the decline amongst the total population was only slight (19% to 17%). In fact, the proportion hardly changed for Afro-Caribbean women (27%). So, although Irish women still have a well above average proportion in this 'unskilled' manual labour sector, the difference has been reduced.

(3) The proportion of Irish women in Category 11, professional and related work, remains high and unchanged over the 1980s. Nursing accounts for the majority of this group, although it also includes teachers and other professionally qualified people. There was a small decline in the proportion of Afro-Caribbean women in this category, perhaps reflecting the changed employment patterns amongst the British-born section of the population.

(4) Few Irish women are employed in factory assembly work (XIII) where Asian women are more clustered.

Employment.

Men's occupational groups by birthplace/ethnic groups
Table3 (Source; Labour Force Surveys, 1989,'90 & '91)

MEN'S OCCUPATIONS (KOS groupings)					
	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
I Professional & Administrative	9	14	3	11	13
V Managerial	12	14	5	21	14
VI Clerical & related	7	11	12	15	11
IX Personal Services	6	5	7	5	5
XI Materials processing (not Metals & electric)	9	5	6	8	5
XII Processing (metals & electric)	13	11	20	10	11
XIII Printing, painting, & associated.	3	2	4	3	2
XIV Construction	20	5	4	1	4
XV Transport	10	8	16	7	8
Other	12	26	22	18	26
TOTAL	60 643	1 432 940	65 183	115 881	1 790 123

Table 4:Men's Occupational categories by birthplace/ethnic groups London% LSF 1979, '81 & '83
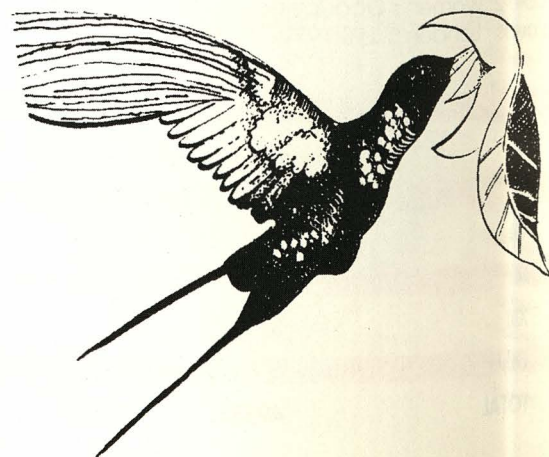
	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
I	3	9	1	6	8
V	8	12	3	17	12
VI	8	13	8	15	12
IX	5	4	10	5	6
XI.	9	6	13	11	7
XII	11	14	22	14	13
XIII	6	3	9	4	3
XIV	22	4	6	1	5
XV	13	10	13	8	9
Other	15	25	15	19	25
TOTAL	58 491	1 385 073	60 997	100 728	1 756 348

Comments

(1) As with Irish women, Irish men have increaseed their representation in white-collar administrative levels, but in this case, particularly in the higher managerial levels (Categories I and V) rather than in the clerical level (VI). Categories I and V have increased from 11% in the early 1980's to 21% by the end of the decade. This was a sharper rate of increase than for the population as a whole (20% to 27%).

(2) Unlike in the case of Irish women, however, the pattern of men's work in other areas remains relatively unchanged. There have apparently been small declines in assembly work (XIII) and transport (XV) though these may not be significant. Construction remains an important area of work for Irish men, and continues to distinguish their pattern of work from that of any other ethnic group.

(3) Overall, Irish people have shared in the general shift towards white collar employment, but at a faster pace than the population as a whole. For Irish women this change has been matched by a corresponding decrease in domestic service work, whereas men still find employment in the construction industry at the same proportional rate. Thus while a distinctive pattern remains, there has been a noticeable reduction in differences.

Qualifications

AGAIN, QUALIFICATIONS ARE averaged from 1989, '90 and '91 Labour Force Survey, and can be compared with surveys from 1979, '81 & '83.

Comments

(1) Perhaps surprisingly, the proportion of Irish women with qualifications at 'A' level and above has not changed during the 1980's. In LFS 1979, 81, 83, 20% of Irish women were in the top three categories and in 1990 the proportion was 21%. The distribution within these groupings has changed slightly, with fewer women in the HNC/Nursing/Education category and more in the ONC/City & Guilds/A level (ie higher school leaving range), but these differences may not be significant. Of Irish women in the HNC etc category, 84% were nurses.

Amongst the population as a whole, women's levels of qualification apparently rose from 20% in these groups to 27%, so that Irish-born women are no longer amongst the best qualified in the capital. Indeed, the proportion of Afro-Caribbean women with 'A'-level and above qualifications was 29%, with particularly high proportions in the higher school-leaving range.

Although the proportion of women with no qualifications appears to have dropped dramatically (total LFS 1981: 53% to LFS 1990: 21%), this may reflect data recording methods as the numbers in the 'not known/no reply' category is much higher in the later period. Relative to the White UK-born population, however, the Irish-born proportion remains high.

(2) A very different pattern emerges for Irish men, however. There has been a dramatic increase in the proportion with 'A'-level and higher qualifications. in the earlier period 12% of Irish born men were recorded with these qualifications, but by 1990 this has risen to 33%, with a particularly sharp increase from 9% to 24% in the higher school leaving range (ONC, C+G, 'A' level).

This could account for the more marked shift into professional/managerial employment categories noted earlier. But it is part of a pattern applying to all men in the sample who seem to share a markedly greater clustering in this category. Irish men share the higher rate of population 16+ with no qualifications, however, with a slightly higher proportion (35%) than women (32%).

Whilst Irish men have clearly moved up the ladder of qualifications relative to the total population, as have Afro-Caribbean men, some observed differences may be due to recording methods. For example, no information is available for 27% of Irish women, compared with 16% of Irish men, so conclusions should be drawn with care.

Table 5: WOMEN 16+ Qualifications by birthplace/ethnic groups and gender, **London%** LSF 1989, '90 & '91

	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
Degree	3	8	4	9	8
HNC, Nurs, Educ.	8	6	10	6	7
ONC, C&G, A level	10	11	15	12	12
O level	7	16	21	18	16
CSE other grades	0	3	8	3	3
Other Qualifications	12	6	6	12	7
No Qualifications	32	20	27	33	21
Not known/no reply	27	31	10	8	27
TOTAL	111 787	2 209 832	102 028	160 300	2 761 167

Table 6: WOMEN 16+ Qualifications by birthplace/ethnic groups and gender, London% LSF 1979, '81 & '83

	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
Degree	2	6	1	10	6
HNC, Nurs, Educ.	11	6	10	5	7
ONC, C&G, A level	7	8	6	7	7
O level	10	17	14	18	13
CSE other grades	5	5	9	4	3
Other Qualifications	4	5	3	3	6
No Qualifications	57	46	47	46	53
Not known/no reply	4	7	10	7	5
TOTAL	80176	1 564 218	101 403	114 364	1 346 151

Table 7: MEN 16+ (Source LSF 1989, '90 & '91)

	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
Degree	7	15	4	14	15
HNC, Nurs, Educ.	2	3	2	3	3
ONC, C&G, A level	24	23	33	21	24
O level	5	12	15	16	12
CSE other grades	0	3	6	2	3
Other Qualifications	10	5	5	10	6
No Qualifications	35	22	30	26	22
Not known/no reply	16	14	6	6	16
TOTAL	89 564	2 028 148	92 117	172 257	2 551 901

Table 8: MEN 16+ (Source LSF 1979, '81 & '83)

	IR-born	White-UK born	Afro-Car.	Asian	Total
Degree	3	12	2	14	13
HNC, Nurs, Educ.	0	3	1	2	2
ONC, C&G, A level	9	8	9	12	14
O level	6	12	5	13	12
CSE other grades	1	10	8	6	4
Other Qualifications	2	4	4	6	4
No Qualifications	67	40	56	39	40
Not known/no reply	12	11	15	8	11
TOTAL	67 842	1 590 843	86 345	116 066	2 126 634

CIVIL LIBERTIES

THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) (PTA) was introduced in November 1974,following the bombings in Birmingham pubs in that year. The PTA provided the police with extended powers of arrest and detention and gave them new powers to control the movement of people entering and leaving Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It also gave the Secretary of State the power to issue an exclusion order banning a person from living in any part of the United Kingdom. In addition it proscribed the Irish Republican Army and made the display of support for it illegal. The PTA has been amended and extended in 1976, 1984, 1989 and 1996. Neither the Government nor its institutions have ever investigated the effects of the PTA on the Irish community. The Government, through the 1994 Criminal Justice Act, extended the powers of the PTA. Powers now allow police to effectively draw a cordon around entire regions or communities for 28 days. Within these areas police have the power to stop any person at random and search anything they are carrying. Vehicles in the area are also subject to searches. Under section 16, anyone detained will have to prove that possession of any information, records or documents, including photos, which police might deem useful in 'terrorist activity' found on them or their property is there for entirely innocent reasons. In April 1996, the Government, supported by the Labour Party leadership extended the PTA still further to include random body searches and powers to search non-residential buildings. There has been no reflection on the full extent of the abuses of civil liberties involved, and the PTA has now gained a permanency on the statute books that belies it's title.

The introduction of this legislation in effect created a dual system of criminal justice in Britain. Existing powers and procedures for dealing with other crimes and offenses were considered to be insufficient to deal with those people suspected of being involved in political violence connected with Northern Ireland. (Paddy Hillyard's book 'Suspect Community'(1) reports that 465 homicides, 429 attempted murders, 58,000 woundings, and 1,000 rapes were notified to police in 1973 alone the year before the introduction of the PTA).

The PTA not only introduced a dual system of justice but also created a system with the potential to bring into custody ANYONE, irrespective of whether or not there was any evidence against them, because the principal arrest required no reasonable suspicion of an offence. Of the 7,412 people who have been detained in connection with Northern Ireland affairs under the PTA, from the introduction of the Act in 1974 until 31:12:95, 92.5% were neither excluded nor charged with any criminal offence. Only 233 people of those detained were charged with offences under the PTA, and 465 people were charged with offences under ordinary criminal law.

Apart from those detained, every year, a further estimated 86,000 individuals are stopped and questioned by police at ports and airports for under the period of an hour. During this time extensive amounts of information can be obtained, fingerprints and photographs taken, and a Special Branch file opened.

A Liberty briefing (March 1993)(2) states that 'almost without exception these people could have been arrested under ordinary criminal law. The Act has instead been used to harass and intimidate innocent people, curtail free speech, set up a system of internal exile and significantly undermine the rights of accused people to a fair trial'. In an earlier briefing paper on the PTA (January 1985) (3)Liberty states; 'the most common misconception is that the PTA is applied only to terrorists and that it concerns the sentencing by the courts of individuals found guilty of involvement in acts of political violence. This is not the case'.

Information Gathering

WHEN ARRESTED UNDER THE PTA, detainees are asked a huge range of political and personal questions which they are legally obliged to answer despite the fact that for the first 48 hours of detention they will also be denied access to the outside world and to legal advice. In Paddy Hillyard's study (4) of the effects of the PTA there is evidence that a high proportion of those stopped and examined were involved in political affairs and 'suggests that there is a deliberate policy to use the PTA to police Irish politics'. Those people most likely to be stopped include students, people who carry political literature, a person who lives in a nationalist area in Northern Ireland, someone who questions the authority of the examining officer or someone who has contact with Sinn Fein. Hillyard says 'the authorities may not like their politics, but all these people are involved in perfectly legitimate activities and in a democratic society should be able to travel freely without being subject to detailed interrogation'.

Many people are questioned about their political views. For example Cllr. Sheena Clarke was detained at Manchester Airport on her return from a housing conference in Belfast; 'She was questioned about her opinions on events in Ireland, whether she had been on Irish demonstrations, what she thought of the Labour Party policy on Ireland, and even if she had been on Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament demonstrations'. (Leeds Other Paper 28.6.85).

When a person is stopped, they are typically asked to produce identity. This is followed by questions - purpose of travel, place of residence, other questions on identity. Then the range of questions broadens and deals with family and friends - dates of birth, where they live, in-laws, number of children, political beliefs, political beliefs of family and relatives, political beliefs of friends. Some people are questioned extensively about politics. Personal documents are examined and photocopied. Diaries, letters and newspaper articles are read.

Women who are stopped under the PTA will usually have different circumstances to men. They will frequently have family responsibilities. Some may be pregnant. Hillyard's study shows that special facilities to cater for women's' circumstances are not made available. In fact there is a real danger that children will end up in care if a mother is arrested. In one case cited, a mother was not allowed to change the nappies of her two young children. In other cases, had not the children been taken by relatives they would have been put in care. This is an example of the way that other agencies of the state can become part of the system that mobilises against a person who is detained for questioning under the PTA.

Little mercy is shown in these cases. For instance, Kate Magee's(5) child, aged 6, was taken away from her. Information on her children's whereabouts and health was refused for the first 6 days of her detention, after which a short phone call was allowed as long as Kate would not reveal where she was being held. Siobhan McKane(6) was separated from her small child and held in prison for six months before being released.

There is evidence too that women who are held are frequently subject to a different type of interrogation. Women are often used for gathering information about family and relatives eg. dates of birth, numbers of children, all the minor but crucial personal details about in-laws and relations. There is no evidence that stripsearching of women is a routine procedure, but when it happens, women invariably find it degrading and humiliating (possibly because of the close link that stripsearching has with rape in it's effects; (see stripsearching below).

Hillyard concludes 'it is obvious from the nature of the questioning and the type of documents read that the principal aim of the examining officers is not to establish a person's identity nor to ascertain whether 'the person is or has been involved in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism' but to gather intelligence' (7)

Viscount Colville reported that 'there is widespread feeling that both port procedures and detentions are often 'fishing trips' to gather information rather than an exercise directed at people who might themselves be terrorists' (Viscount Colville's Annual Report on the operation of the PTA in 1986).

The powers of the Act to detain an individual without charge in order to obtain information have received widespread condemnation. Article 5 of the European Convention of Human rights states that no person shall be arrested or deprived of their liberty except for the purpose of bringing them promptly before a court.

Hillyard found further evidence of abuses under the Act that had not previously been identified;-custody records are not always kept if a suspect is held under the PTA-the police have no obligation to destroy fingerprints of those released without charge-there is no requirement for the police to record how long a person is held incommunicado or denied access to a lawyer.

Detention

UNDER THE POWERS of the Act the police can quite legally hold a person incommunicado at ports and airports for the full 7 days of detention without access to a solicitor or friend. In arrests which take place outside of ports and airports (eg .inland), the Codes of Practice for the Detention, Treatment and Questioning of Persons by the police in PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984) apply - which means that contact with a solicitor cannot be delayed beyond 48 hours. Detainees are obliged in all cases to answer questions even in the absence of a solicitor.

The European Court has recently ruled (June 1993) that the extended detentions permitted by the PTA are legal..Liberty intend to continue to challenge Britain's right to do this. According to Liberty '..availability of long periods of detention for interrogation encourages the police to rely on confession instead of independent evidence and hence undermines the principle that a suspect is innocent until PROVED guilty. In theory, someone held under the Act is entitled to apply for a writ of HABEAS CORPUS. According to Liberty 'this centuries-old remedy against unlawful detention has been nullified by the Prevention of Terrorism Act'.(8)

'By giving examining officers objectionably wide powers of arrest and by making detention beyond 48 hours lawful with the home Secretary's consent, the Act makes it impossible in practice to challenge the lawfulness of the detention. In any case, the courts have refused to treat such applications seriously'.

The extensive powers of arrest, detention and search have been defended on the grounds that they result in convictions which would otherwise not be obtained and that they enable police to gather information about terrorist activity. But according to Liberty.'neither of these arguments is legitimate. The extended powers cannot be justified by the need to bring suspects before the courts on criminal charges because the police already had wide powers to arrest anyone suspected of involvement in terrorist activity'.In any case, Liberty point out that 'all the people detained under the Act and subsequently charged with criminal offenses could have been arrested and questioned without using the detention powers of the Act itself'.(10)

The potential and actual impact on individuals, is however, considered unfortunate but necessary. Douglas Hurd in the Commons debate 1987 said; 'The justification for these powers, as opposed to the ordinary powers of criminal law, is that they enable police to prevent horrors before they happen. It is certainly possible that after a time there would be evidence which would have enabled the police to detain, interview and perhaps charge the people. But I do not think that the opposition would seriously argue that the police should in such cases be content to wait until evidence became available' (Hansard 10.2.87). Such argument 'justifies taking pre-emptive action based on speculation and conjecture' (Working Together to End Stripsearching LSPU 1987).

Exclusion Orders

EXCLUSION ORDERS HAVE RECEIVED widespread criticism. The government-appointed Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, 1985-86 criticised this provision. Lord Colville who has carried out reviews on the Act on the government's behalf, has recommended the abandonment of exclusion orders.

Exclusion orders are at the discretion of the Secretary of State acting on advice from the police. A Secretary of State may exercise the exclusion powers conferred on him or her ' in such a way as appears to him expedient to prevent acts of terrorism.....connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland' Like the powers of arrest and detention, exclusion does not require suspicion of a criminal offence. A person being excluded has no right to know the evidence supporting their exclusion, to cross-examine that evidence, to offer a defence or to have the case held in public. When the PTA was first introduced anyone could be excluded or deported if they had been resident in Britain for less than 20 years. The 1984 and 1989 Acts reduced this to 3 years. Residents of Britain or Northern Ireland cannot be excluded from the United Kingdom entirely but can be restricted to living in Britain or Northern Ireland. Hillyard's study reveals that suspects are intimidated into accepting deportation in order to avoid prolonged detention without trial.

He outlines that the powers of exclusion violate at least 6 fundamental human rights; ,
 - the right to freedom of movement.
 - the right to a fair and public trial.
 - the right to family life.
 - the right to freely associate with others.
 - the right tp participate in public affairs.
 - the right to seek work and improved economic prospects.

Britain is unable to ratify protocol 4 of the European

Human Rights Convention. BRITAIN IS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN EUROPE TO HAVE A SYSTEM OF IMPOSING INTERNAL EXILE ON IT'S OWN CITIZENS. In March 1993 a person subject to an order was granted leave for a judicial review in the Court of Appeal challenging exclusion Orders as breaching both Article 6 of the European Convention,
on the right to a fair trial, and European law on the free movement of labour.

The Media and its Role

ALTHOUGH ONLY A SMALL PROPORTION OF ARRESTS and detentions made under the PTA are reported in the media, some receive a great deal of inaccurate and sensationalised reporting that is prejudicial. These reports have a detrimental impact on the Irish community in Britain as well as for those who are charged and for those later released without charge.

Key words that are often used in the headline reporting include; 'IRA gang' 'Terrorists', 'Irishmen', 'bombgang'-all of which carry emotive meanings and associations. In many cases reports have appeared immediately after arrests are made and before police have made decisions about what should happen to the detained. The reports have implied that those arrested have connections with the IRA. In some cases detainees have been judged by the tabloids long before the courts. The Winchester Three is such an example. Although the convictions were later quashed, the three were then served with exclusion orders.

Hillyard states that the police play a central role in reporting the PTA arrests. They are the 'gateways' to the information supplied to the press. They decide whether any information on a particular arrest is given to the press or to let the press know of a detainee being moved from one police station to another under heavy security. He further points out that this is particularly important in cases where a person is subsequently charged with conspiracy. The essential characteristic of a conspiracy charge is that the person need not have committed any substantive criminal offence. Conspiracy carries the same penalty as the actual commission of the crime alleged. The media can play a supportive role in the speculatory leaps 'from a number of circumstantial pieces of evidence'.(11)

Very rarely will the same amount of coverage be given to the release of those arrested.Nuala Kelly, co-ordinator for the Dublin-based Commission for Prisoners Overseas, says that what is 'worrying are the statements by police in the media requesting information on Irish people who are looking for accommodation or who have recently moved into new employment in an area'. (Irish Post 29.8.92)

Liberty say that 'Such public targeting of anyone Irish as a suspect renders the whole community vulnerable and defenceless and leads to incidents where Irish people going about their business are detained and slandered in the press'. One Evening Standard headline announcing the release of 5 Irish people detained for intense questioning for 7 days in 1992 read; 'Mystery as police free 'IRA group''. The 5 detainees, three men and two sisters, were arrested after police raids on addresses in West London, Cheshunt and Hertfordshire, and the police announcement that explosives and munitions had been discovered. None of the five people were charged.

In the Irish Post Review of 1992 assessing developments regarding the PTA and it's relationship both to anti-Irish racism and the media, the columnist states that 'the miscarriages of justice in the mid-seventies also, however, involved sections of the British media. The Guildford Four, The Maguires, the Birmingham Six and Judith Ward were tried and condemned by the tabloids long before any judge passed sentence, with scant if any regard for truth and fair play. All were victims of the apparent inability of the tabloids to give the Irish a square deal. That prejudice continues, of course. But the vindication in this past year (1992) of Judy Ward helps in no small way in the battle still being waged to nail the racists and the xenophobes who people sections of the British media'.(Irish Post Jan 1993).

The powers of the PTA have extended to the media - the impact of the offence of with-holding information has permeated into the work of journalists and reporters. Threats of prosecution have been made against journalists reporting events in Northern Ireland. More recently, the PTA has been used to curtail the activities of investigative journalists, as revealed by the case of Box Productions and Channel 4 over a programme in its 'Dispatches' series because they could not reveal the identity of their principal informant. The powers of the Act run counter to the journalistic principle of protecting confidential sources.

Strip-searching

AT PRESENT, DIFFERING LEGISLATIONS define the process of a stripsearch, depending upon whether the person is stripsearched in prison (Prison Rules), police custody (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984), customs, (Customs and Excise & Management Act 1979) or immigration (Immigration Act 1971). Prison Rule 39 for England and Wales and Prison Rule 9 for Northern Ireland states that prisoners will be searched on reception to prison and at such subsequent times as the governor thinks necessary. No records are kept of searches nor of complaints made by prisoners about stripsearches. Neither has a prisoner the right to challenge being stripsearched in a court of law.In 1986 Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer challenged this and attempted to obtain a judicial review of the extent and frequency of the stripsearching they were experiencing in the run up to their trial, which was hampering their efforts to concentrate and prepare their defence. This was turned down by the High Court

'Prisoners stripsearched regularly could not get used to it and invariably experienced anticipatory anxiety symptoms before court appearances, when they knew they would be stripsearched beforehand. The stripsearching worried them even more than the progress of their trial. Up to two years after release the ex-prisoners were still suffering flashbacks of the stripsearching accompanied by recurrence of severe anxiety. Several reported headaches, insomnia and/or nightmares. They still felt uncomfortable undressing in front of their husbands and one said that she could not undress even Partially in front of her closest friends'.

but the publicity given to their case and the number of parliamentary questions asked, led to their stripsearches in Brixton and Durham prisons being recorded.

In Police Custody, (whether at a police station or outside police station) a constable's powers to search a person (this includes stripsearch) are largely contained in the PACE Codes of Practice. A full record of the search must be made, where at all practicable, and a copy made available to the person searched.

Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, a constable can search any suspect, whether arrested or not, to ascertain whether they have documents or other articles which may constitute evidence that they are liable to arrest. (Some of those detained will merely have been accused of withholding information). Different

regulations are involved when an intimate search takes place.

The official justification for stripsearching is that it is; 'a routine security measure for the detection of small items of contraband, in particular weapons and drugs, which can be easily concealed about the person and cannot be detected by other methods of searching' (Hansard 30.10.85) The standard justification for strips-searching is one of security considerations. David Mellor admitted in a parliamentary reply that 'on no occasion has a stripsearch lead to the discovery of prohibited articles.....as regards the women who are on remand in Brixton', and went on to say that 'the justification for stripsearching lies not only in the fact that staff do discover items.. but also in the deterrent effect which such stripsearching undoubtedly has'. (Hansard 23.4.86).

This statement gives support to the suspicions of many that stripsearching has no use as a security measure but used as nothing more than 'a form of torture'. its use has attracted concern and condemnation from many disparate groups. The conclusion of a report from an inter-denominational group (including the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility) says that 'there was a time when the use of torture was regarded by almost all societies as an acceptable and highly efficacious means of preserving order, and eliciting information beneficial to the security of prisons was advanced by the use of treadmills, flogging, the silence rule and hard labour. It is our advocacy that the practice of stripsearching should go the way of torture and the treadmill and be deemed no longer acceptable'.(12)
In 1987 Amnesty International confirmed its view that 'stripsearching constitutes ill-treatment when it is carried out with the deliberate intention of humiliating or degrading prisoners. Furthermore the organisation considers that the practice of stripsearching, given its nature, is open to abuse'(13)

Ivor Browne, professor at University College Dublin explained 'stripsearching is a rather violent procedure and a tremendous intrusion on a human being. It's a violent act and I think, in this sense, rapacious'.(Ref. 14).

In 1987 the London based Stop the Stripsearches Campaign began an initiative to convene an enquiry by senior psychiatrists into the psychological effects of stripsearching. In Nov. 1988 responsibility for the enquiry was taken over by the newly-formed United Campaign Against Stripsearching. The report uses the work of seven psychiatrists. In referring to the effects of stripsearching it states ' that all those interviewed had catastrophic reactions to the first experience of stripsearching. They recalled feeling dis-orientated, powerless, defiled, degraded and angry. Some had expressed the anger verbally, others resisting physically an assault for which they were totally unprepared, which had led to forcible stripping with excessive violence. Others were paralysed by shock, or in a Police station, by fear that they would not be released if they did not comply. For several weeks after the search they were depressed, withdrawn, had lost confidence and felt ashamed of having given in, and in some strange way, guilty. These feelings are identical with the feelings experienced by rape victims. Prisoners stripsearched regularly could not get used to it and invariably experienced anticipatory anxiety symptoms before court appearances, when they knew they would be stripsearched beforehand. The stripsearching worried them even more than the progress of their trial. Up to two years after release the ex-prisoners were still suffering flashbacks of the stripsearching accompanied by recurrence of severe anxiety. Several reported headaches, insomnia and/or nightmares. They still felt uncomfortable undressing in front of their husbands and one said that she could not undress even partially in front of her closest friends'.(14)

One victims describes;
'Twice my pants have been forcibly removed when I refused to take them off because I had a period. It wasn't defiance. I just couldn't bring myself to take them off. I just couldn't do it. You feel so helpless standing there, like you have no dignity; no control over your own body.There are no internal searches; all they do is look, but you can't imagine what it's like to stand there absolutely naked and have someone look over you like cattle at a market' (Irish Times 18.11.84). Another victim alleges that she was *'stripped naked to confront me with their control, to enforce on me my own vulnerability, to degrade me'.*(15)
If this were substantiated, it could be argued that Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights had been breached and that stripsearching as practiced amounts to 'inhuman and degrading treatment'.(16)

In the case of Ireland against the United Kingdom (Council of Europe Judgement of the European Court of Human Rights Jan 1978) 'degrading' treatment was held to be that 'such as to arouse in their victims feelings of fear, anguish and inferiority capable of humiliating and debasing them and possibly breaking their physical or moral resistance'.(17)

Conclusion

HILLYARD STATES THAT the various layers of the PTA are carefully constructed to result in a particularly frightening piece of legislation and that there is much evidence to support the allegation that the powers of the Act are used to harass Irish people travelling to and from Ireland. The operation of the PTA has led 'to a reduction in the travelling public's civil liberties, involving a considerable restriction on their freedom of movement and their right to participate in public affairs and, more specifically, creating a frontier between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. In addition they involve an extensive invasion of people's privacy and cause considerable distress to a large number of people. Finally, using the powers to police politics rather than terrorism is undemocratic.'(18) Moreover there has been no evidence produced to support the argument that the PTA prevents political violence.

The evidence outlined above illustrates that stripsearching is violent to the person and is in particular a degrading and humiliating experience for women, with its effects akin to those of rape. Again there is no security argument to support the use of stripsearching in any circumstance.

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1.Paddy Hillyard, 'Suspect Community; People's experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Britain'. Pluto Press 1993. p4. Hillyard has carried out the only extensive study of the actual impact of the PTA on it's main target -the Irish community.
2.Liberty Briefing, March 1993.
3. Liberty Briefing, January 1985.
4. Paddy Hillyard, 'Suspect Community' p66.
5. Kate Magee was detained 14/4/1992. After 66 days in prison, the prosecution dropped the major criminal charge, leaving the charge of with-holding information. A campaign is underway to 'drop the charges'.
6. Siobhan McKane was arrested in the Kilburn area along with 9 other young Irish people over the w/end Nov 10/11 1990. None of the nine were found guilty of any crime. Siobhan was one of those who spent months in prison on remand before the charges were dropped.
7. Paddy Hillyard, 'Suspect Community' p58.
8. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 1985 (3rd ed). p48.
9. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 1985 (3rd ed).p48.
10.The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 1985 (3rd ed) p47.
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16. 'Working Together to End Stripsearching'; report of a conference Dec.1987, London Strategic Policy Unit,1988.p43
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LESBIANS

THERE IS NO LEGAL PROTECTION FOR LESBIANS FROM discrimination on the grounds of their sexuality, either in employment, housing, or anything else. Although some local authorities mention sexuality in their anti-discrimination employment statements there is no government legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sexuality. Lesbians are usually considered by the courts to be unsuitable to be award-ed custody of their children and their rights as mothers are devalued or completely removed by reasons of their sexuality.

The Department of Education and Science sex education circular August 1986 provides no guidance or mention of tackling anti-Lesbian prejudice in schools. Instead para. 22 says of lesbian and gay sexuality; 'there is no place in any school in any circumstance for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour, which presents it as the 'norm' or encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils'.

Similarly Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill which became law in June 1988 stated; 'A local authority shall not (a) Intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality. (b) Promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'.
The government also slipped through a 'morality clause' which threatens local authorities in ways similar to Clause 28. The clause, part of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, states that; 'publicity should not attack, nor appear to undermine, generally accepted moral standards'.

It is not illegal to be a lesbian in this country and it has never been the subject of any specific criminal law. However this does not mean that lesbians and heterosexual women are equal before the law. If lesbians are over 16 their relationship is 'legal'. If one is over 16 and the other under 16 it is possible that the older woman in the relationship could be charged with indecent assault.

In 1921 an attempt was made to criminalise lesbians. It was rejected by the house of Lords but the debate in both houses of parliament demonstrated a universal condemnation of lesbianism, and acknowledged that lesbianism was a threat to the established order, religion and institution of marriage, and family life.

Because of their 'freedom' from the social control of these institutions, lesbians are regarded as a threat and are targeted for state control and male violence.

There appears to be very little research on lesbians as a group. What little there is has been done by the lesbian community itself. Research on Irish lesbians as a specific group is non-existent. What little there is has been done as part of a general lesbian survey, eg. Janet Underwood's study on Lesbians' Experiences of Crime and Policing, 1989,(1)(which included Irish lesbians) and Irish lesbians were included in a survey of callers to the Piccadilly Advice Centre in 1991(2).

Underwood's study showed that lesbians experience a high level of crime, much of which is perceived by them as anti-lesbian behaviour on the part of the perpetrator(s). Lesbians also have a very high fear level of crime. Lesbians in the survey 'experienced fairly high incidents of negative treatment from the police'. The picture that emerged from the survey showed that lesbians rely on informal support networks and friends for support and help.

Lesbian Information Service in Lancashire (3)conducted research in an isolated Northern town with young lesbians where there is no provision for lesbians. This research shows;
(1) that young lesbians are disproportionately represented in the statistics of attempted suicide. A staggering 69% had made suicide attempts. U.S research suggests that 30% of completed youth suicides are by lesbians and gay youth.
(2) that all the participants had used alcohol, many had misused it; 38% had current alcohol problems. U.S. research shows that one in three lesbians have serious alcohol problems.
(3) most of the participants had used drugs, both illicit and tobacco.
(4) 61% had been homeless. The report continues 'there is nothing abnormal in being lesbian. The reason many young lesbians are suicidal, alcohol and drug mis-users, homeless and are rejected by their parents is because we live in a society that is heterosexist, homophobic and sexist. Young lesbians (and their parents) internalise negative images of lesbianism'.

The document reports that none of the statutory organisations approached during stage 1 of the research, eg. health service, social services, youth service, education service, probation service, housing and voluntary organisations including the Citizens Advice Bureau, The Samaritans or The Well Woman Centre, recognised the particular difficulties of young lesbians.

It would seem that young lesbians are particularly vulnerable - and that their distress is the direct result of social oppression they experience at all levels of society. Is the picture any different for lesbians in other age groups? The most visible Irish lesbians are in the 25-40 age group, with others between ages 40-50. Older Irish lesbians are an invisible section of the population. Yet, Irish lesbians according to statistics of the average make up 5% of the Irish women's community.

All lesbians find themselves the subject of stereotyping and generalisation - and these are numerous; lesbians look like boys; lesbians don't have children; lesbians wear short hair; lesbians hate men; lesbians wear men's clothes - and are the result of ignorance and rigid thinking patterns. Stereotypes dehumanise their objects, and breed violence. Lesbians suffer as a result of these stereotypes because they intensify the experience of isolation.

For most lesbians, violence is an issue. Many lesbians experience violence because of their sexuality. This can range from comments on the street, harassment in the home, being thrown out of pubs, clubs and other public and private venues, to actual physical assault. Safety considerations are part of the life of every lesbian; is it safe to go here? is it safe to tell this person I'm gay? Will it affect my housing application? Will my neighbour harass me? This has serious implications for individual freedom of movement and speech on a day to day basis.

What Irish lesbians need - like all other human beings - is to be accepted and acknowledged as equal persons in society. Mainstream society rejects the homosexual identity; lesbians are outsiders. They are stripped of rights, of credibility and of recognition. They have no historical continuity; there are no images; there is no identity. Irish lesbians struggle to retain the integrity of an Irish identity whilst simultaneously embracing a condemned sexual identity.

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OLDER WOMEN

BETWEEN 1981 AND 1991 THE POPULATION INCREASE IN THE age group 60+ has been 22.1%. This represents a numerical increase of 30,566 to 37,370.

This is an increase of 26.2% in Outer London and 18.2% in Inner London.

The 1991 census shows that London's population of older women is almost evenly divided between Inner and Outer London boroughs.

The Inner London increases have taken place mainly in Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Islington. In Outer London, the main increases have been in Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Bexley.

Older Irish women frequently suffer from extremes of loneliness and isolation being cut off from a home country that has changed out of all recognition since they left. Their ties to Ireland may be weakened through emigration or family and friends in Ireland having since died. Their ability to travel to and from Ireland will often be hampered by ill health or poverty. This can be a major factor in weakening links and increasing isolation in old age.

Bronwen Walter states that 'it must be remembered that these migrants arrived in and lived through times very different from those confronting present day arrivals. Most were from rural backgrounds with very few formal qualifications. Overwhelmingly, they entered less skilled areas of work, and although a number improved their situation in Britain, most are likely to depend on a basic pension and to have been able to accumulate only minimal savings. Women in employment with tied accommodation, such as nurses and catering staff, have particular difficulty in moving into the housing market'. (1)

As Alison Norman states in 'Triple Jeopardy', 'European physical characteristics do not by themselves guarantee integration into English society and in the opinion of one Irish social worker 'are as Irish now as the day they left home. Nothing in the new culture has impinged upon their lives.''(2)

Although there are a few Irish pensioner groups/luncheon clubs in London that are organised by Irish community centres, little systematic study of Irish older peoples' needs has been carried out - The Social Situation of Irish Elderly in Haringey(3) being possibly the only one. That report concludes 'that there are clear links between the racial disadvantage experienced by those surveyed, their experience of employment disadvantage in Britain, and deprivation in old age. In sum, their ethnicity appears to be a significant contributing factor to their life experiences in Britain....

In considering the context of older Irish women's' lives in Britain, it may be useful to remember that they will have lived during the decades when there was a prevalence of signs such as 'No Blacks, no Irish, no dogs' on boarding houses and adverts. There was indeed little choice open to them but to slot into the categories of labour and service provision allotted to immigrant communities. As a rule they will have kept in closely-knit communities keeping a low profile in British life but carrying on their own traditions in music, dance and song. If we consider for instance that the very first Irish newspaper in Britain was established in 1970, this can give some idea of the relative lack of communication networks that existed within the Irish community as a whole until the last two decades or so. And this will have had a profound influence on the lives of those who are now older women. We would recommend a reading of 'Across The Water'(4) for more insight into this.
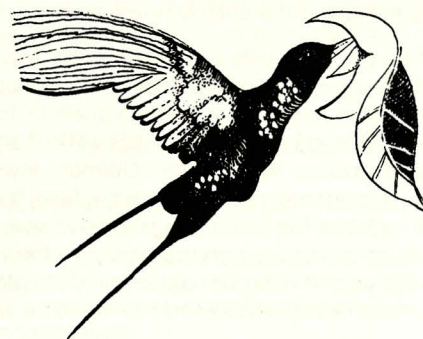
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WOMEN OF IRISH DESCENT

POPULATION STATISTICS ESTIMATE THAT THE FIGURES FOR women of Irish descent are approximately 2.5 times that of Irish-born women - giving us a figure of 342,217 thousand women of Irish descent in Greater London. Women of Irish descent encompass a large age range - being the children of Irish-born immigrants who arrived in the 1930's, 1940's, 1950's, 1960's, 1970's, 1980's and now, in the 1990's. This means that women of Irish descent can range in age anything between 0 - 50, with perhaps some exceptions in their 60's. Many of these will be mothers and even grandmothers themselves.

Women of Irish Descent and the Process of Cultural Exclusion

WOMEN OF IRISH DESCENT WILL HAVE EXPERIENCED two major institutions in society which will have left a deep impact (often conflicting) on the internalisation of their Irish identity. 'Identity', and the struggles with it, is often one of the biggest themes in the life of an immigrant of Irish descent. The family will have been an Irish family, and the school will have been an 'English' school. Irish children do not see their cultural heritage reflected in their school's environment and this has major repercussions, not just for the children involved, but for society as a whole.

In 1984, the University of Nottingham carried out a study of attitudes in 800 British-born school children aged 11-16. They were asked to identify a range of characteristics within 7 ethnic minorities; English, Indian, 'West Indian', German, Jewish, Irish and Pakistani. Asked to choose from a list of adjectives, the 'white British' (which included the Irish amongst others) were the only group to attribute any positive characteristics to the Irish, but 52% of this group still regarded the Irish as violent. Of all other groups, in each case the majority considered the Irish to be violent and dull.

Dr. Phillip Ullah of the University of Sheffield (1985), in his research on aspects of cultural identity Irish people born in Britain, has found evidence that this group experience a low status definition from others. He says, that like other ethnic minority groups, they engage in psychological strategies to avoid the negative feelings resulting from this. For all of them there is a need to comply with competing demands of two cultures and to cope with contradictory messages from both. Under such pressures it is easy to understand why many Irish children cannot cope and end up denying and rejecting their Irish identity.

The Irish family, and the community that contains it, is unable by itself to counteract this continuous process of negation of Irish identity that takes place outside the home. Irish culture is denigrated in British society and so the Irish family unit is not seen as equal with a comparable white English family unit. The school that conveys these values and the peer groups that develop within the child's life are often felt \by the child as the more powerful agents of persuasion and control. Women within the family, as carers and as mothers, carry the main responsibility for cultural transmission, nurturing the child's cultural identity. Every week the long listings of various events in Britain's Irish newspapers are testimony to the fact that there are many thousands of Irish children attending Irish dancing, music, language classes and events.

Nor do Catholic schools provide an answer to the problems confronted by the individual immigrant of Irish descent. The curriculum of Catholic schools has always conformed to that of other state schools.

Many women of Irish descent report that during the teenage years, the conflict between the family and society intensifies. The Irish family which promotes its Irishness (in whatever ways it feels that to be) is experienced by the teenager as being in increasing conflict with outside peer groups and reference points. Often the young adult is unable to cope with this conflict (which is essentially a conflict of identity) and ends up splitting-rejecting either one or the other. More often, if rejection takes place, it is the Irish identity that gets rejected. She is then no longer able to 'take' nurturance from her parents and parents' community. She stops doing the hobbies that were part of her childhood such as the Irish dancing, games and music, visiting Ireland and learning and exploring this part of her heritage. This is a painful and often unspoken about phenomenon. Support and understanding that she would need to deal with this process is rarely available to her. As a result, their Irish identity is one that is frequently hidden. They can feel caught between two cultures, and painfully part of neither.

There is another aspect to the experiences of Irish women born in Britain - that is that they are often denied the right to their Irish identity by the Irish community itself. Sometimes Irish families prefer to encourage their children not to connect with their Irishness because they see this as a hindrance to the child's progress in society. Other Irish women have reported that they have been afraid to make claim to being Irish within the Irish community because Irish-born people reject them.This gives us an insight into the confusion and conflict that can be generated and draws attention to the way that anti-Irish racism works, especially when it has become internalised.

THREE GENERATIONS OF IRISH DESCENT

TRAVELLERS

ISSUES FOR TRAVELLERS

In recent decades the opportunities for Travellers to follow their nomadic way of life have been severely curtailed. The planning laws following the Second World War left all land accounted for, controlled, or with designated use. Richer Travellers who own land have difficulty in getting planning permission to live and work on their land. Often unused, derelict urban land is all accounted for in plans.

Travellers have lived in this country for centuries. They have always been denied the right to lead a nomadic **existence and for centuries have faced persecution and hostile legislation.** In 1 6th century England the death penalty was introduced for 'Egyptians' who remained in the country for more than a month and this law remained in force for the next 150 years.

More recently, modem technology has transformed the Traveller way of life. The traditional skills of the Traveller population have become more and more redundant with the mechanisation of agriculture, the introduction of plastic and enamel and the changes in people's shopping habits. These changes have led to widespread migration to towns and cities where Travellers face economic and social marginalisation. Today's urban Traveller men in paid employment are likely to be self employed and confined to casual work in construction, as scrap and other merchandise dealers and in tarmacing. Traveller women have primary responsibility for rearing often very large families.

Irish Travellers make up the majority of the Travelling population in London. They have been drawn here and to other inner cities by the same pressures of economic necessity which have attracted the settled Irish community. Irish Travellers in Britain have suffered discrimination and racism as Travellers and as Irish people. Prior to the early 1980's Irish Travellers were in the main excluded from official sites in London. With the exception of the Westway site in Hammersmith, there were virtually no Irish Travellers on official sites in London before 1983.(1)

Today, 'No Traveller' signs are prominent features in public house windows. Irish Travellers experience institutionalised discrimination in DSS offices, Homeless Persons Sections, police stations etc. Travellers children are subject to arrest and detention overnight in police stations much more readily than settled children. They are also more at risk of being taken into care. A social worker reporting to the Camden Irish Conference in 1990 stated that he had recently visited a juvenile detention centre and found 11% of the boys there were Travellers, three of them without any previous findings of guilt.(2)

In 1989, a small group of Irish Travellers who had stopped adjacent to the Risley estate in Tottenham, were subjected to days of racial abuse and harassment before the police, at the request of the local council moved the Travellers on to prevent a breach of the peace. A local shopkeeper who was Irish and who served the Travellers was also subjected to verbal and racial abuse, as were local clergy and Irish community workers who tried to support the Travellers.(3)

LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVELLERS

Since the Second World War a range of discriminatory laws have been instituted which cut the options for Travellers to stop. These have included; **the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act,** the **1959 Highways Act** and the 1960 **Caravans Sites Act.**

The **1968 Caravan Sites Act** addressed the need to make public provision for Travellers for the first time but was undermined by it's discriminatory **'designation'** provisions. The Act imposed a general duty upon London boroughs to provide a minimum of **15 pitches** for Travellers. Councils who met their quota of 15 pitches could then apply to the Department of Environment (DOE) for 'designated' powers to evict any 'surplus' Traveller caravans that stopped within their boundaries. To highlight the racism inherent in this practice, Sylvia Van Toen (Travellers Education Project) points out - 'imagine a law which restricts the numbers of

Bangladeshi families..to fifteen.. a borough'.(4)

Councils could also obtain designation status by satisfying~ing the DOE that they had no land on which to build a site or by persuading the department that it was unnecessary or inexpedient to make provision. By 1994, 26 **out of London's 33 boroughs had designated status.** Some authorities have provided more than 15 pitches and operated non-harassment policies but other designated boroughs such as Islington and Westminister have made no provision whatsoever and also deny Travellers the right to stop within their areas.(5)

The 1968 Act did lead to an increase in Traveller site provision, especially following the introduction of central government funding for sites in 1978. However, the designated powers of eviction available under **sections** 10 & 11 **of the 1968 Act Caravan Sites Act** were followed by **section 39 of the 1986 Public Order Act** which granted the police almost immediate powers of eviction. Additional powers of eviction against Travellers were introduced in the 1990 **Environmental Protection Act** and in the 1991 **Planning and Compensation Act.** These in effect, created Traveller 'no go' areas. The 1994 **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act** which has effectively outlawed the Traveller way of life.(6)

The effects of this legislation and the failure of many local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties the 1968 Caravan Sites Act have been to compel large numbers of Travellers to live outside the law. The Traveller population has increased substantially in recent decades and **despite the existence of the Act, 62% of local authorities in England has failed to provide a sufficient number of pitches by** 1992 . **(DOE sources).** Even before the repeal of the Caravan Sites Act it is estimated that 33% of this community were forced to live on unauthorised sites. **Approximately** 3,200 **families in London alone did not have access to an authorised site in** 1992 .

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC ORDER ACT (CJA)

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJA) **came into effect on 4th November** 1994. The legislation introduced a range of measures directed against community activists. People held in police custody, squatters, trade unionists and young people. The Act contains clauses which in effect discriminate against Travellers. The sections are;

Section 80; *repealed the 1968 Caravan Sites Act* . *From November 1994 onwards it was left entirely up to local authorities to decide whether to make provision for Travellers. At the same time the Central Government grant funding for Traveller sites was abolished.*

Section 61; *made it a criminal offence for Travellers not to leave land if ordered to do so by a police officer when damage had been caused or where there were six vehicles on the land. (7he police had previously had this power under the Public Order Act 1986 in instances where there were more than twelve vehicles).*

A court decision ruled that walking across a field constitutes **'damage'.**

Section 77; *made it a criminal offence to camp without* **permission once** *a local authority has directed a person to leave.*

In addition to giving rapid new eviction powers to the police and local authorities, the CJA introduced severe penalties for Travellers who refused to comply with orders to leave land. There are contained in; Sections 61(4), 62, 77 & 78; and include sanctions ranging from fines and imprisonment to the confiscation of caravans and family possessions.(7)

The CJA has been described by Liberty as **'the most wide-ranging attack on human rights in the UK in recent years'.** Its sections relating to Travellers and other groups are being challenged in the European Court of Human Rights.(8)

TRAVELLERS' RIGHTS IN LAW

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Swann Report (HMSO 1985) and many local authorities have for some time recognised the ethnic minority status of Travellers and legal judgements in the past have confirmed this.(9)

The Court of Appeal in 1983 stipulated 7 characteristics confirming ethnicity of Travellers, the first two of which were considered to be essential criteria. These were as follows; 1 . A long shared history of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups and the memory of which it keeps alive. 2. A cultural tradition of its own including family and social customs and manners, often, but not necessarily, associated with religious observance. (Mandala v. Dowell 1983 2AC 548).

Most Travellers, whether they are on the road or living in houses or on sites are conscious of having shared a long history of Travelling life. They also share many cultural traditions and values which are passed on from generation to generation.(10) In 1989 the Court of Appeal confirmed the ethnic status of Travellers in a case brought by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). This case involved a pub landlord in London Fields, Hackney who displayed in his pub window a sign saying 'No Travellers'. The court held that the term 'Traveller' encompassed both Gypsies and other caravan site dwellers and that the **'No Traveller' sign was indirectly discriminatory under the 1976 Race Relations Act.**

Not all Travellers are directly protected under the Race Relations Law. Those who have taken to the road in recent years cannot claim to have a long history of Travelling life. Although they might acquire ethnic status in the long term, in the short term they are denied protection.(11)

The 1968 Caravan Sites Act which has now been repealed, was important because it applied a non-ethnic definition of Travellers and imposed a duty on local authorities to provide adequate sites for all 'persons of a nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin' .(12)

Under International law all Travellers can claim the right to lead a nomadic existence as a basic human right.

The United Nations Charter to which the British Government is also a signatory (article 31) guarantees; **'everyone ... has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state'.**

In February 1993 the British Government accepted the Council of Europe's recommendations 1203 on Travellers in Europe which noted that; 'intolerance of Gypsies by others has existed throughout the ages. Outbursts of racial or social hatred, however, occur more and more regularly and the strained relations between communities have contributed to the deplorable situation in which the majority of Gypsies live 'national legislation and regulations that discriminate directly or indirectly against Gypsies'.

The UN Charter is a treaty binding on all Member States of the UN. **'The Criminal Justice Act is a direct contradiction of this charter'(14))**

TRAVELLERS EXPERIENCES AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Even when Travellers are settled and don't have to worry about having to move on from their sites, as a group they are left to live in appaling conditions compared to the rest of the general population. A study **'Health care Among Travellers'** carried out by the University of Kent in 1986 demonstrates that the **health of Travellers improves from Third World standards to approaching** national standards, if they are allowed to stay longer on one site .(15) Altogether, very little research has been done on the health of Travellers. the East Birmingham Hospital conference 'Health Care of Travellers' in May 1987 is one. It concluded that that there would appear to be 'a picture of nil or low response to Travellers needs' .(16) This research contacted 191 Health Authorities nationwide for information about Travellers health care. It would seem that those who live on unauthorised~ encampments suffer particular disadvantage as far as health

care is concerned. (In London one third of all Travellers live on unauthorised sites - approximately 3200 families).

This lack of access to health care has disastrous effects on Travelling communities. The average life expectancy for Travellers in this country is 48 years (17).

Women Travellers are placed at greater risk because of inhumane practices by local authorities. A survey of local authorities carried out by the association of Metropolitan Authorities in 1988 found that _almost one third of local authorities would evict a pregnant woman from an unauthorised site. Thirty three per cent would evict a woman close to birth and just over one third would evict a woman with a new born baby. (18!_

'Traveller women can often face eviction close to the birth of a baby. Few have continuous ante-natal care. because of inadequate site provision many are forced to live on hazardous sites without basic amenities ....   they also face continued stress over the threat of eviction' (19)
The help of the London Irish Women's Centre is frequently required by women Travellers needing access to health and other basic services. One woman said her GP refused to examine her 'because she was smelly'. Another case has involved the suspension of mail delivery to all of the residents on the Waterden Road Site Hackney, by Royal Mail Services
because their delivery staff had safety/protection concerns which related to some residents.
The Centre pressurised Royal Mail and Hackney Council to take steps to re-instate the mail delivery service to the site whilst taking into account that the staff health & safety concerns also needed to be addressed.

The consequences of these kinds of conditions are serious. Hyman's study indicates that the stillbirth/miscarriage/early infant death rate was 9% amongst the Travelling population. The Kent Health Study reported 8.5%. More research needs to be carried out on health in the Travelling community especially where comparisons can be made with the general population. Even less research has been carried out into the effects of enforced housing upon the psychological health of Travellers. The picture painted by reports from Travellers paints a bleak picture indeed; 'Paddy Ryan, Paddy Gavan and Michael MacDonagh have all taken overdoses and Paddy Kerrigan hung himself. These are mostly young men and one of them used to live on the site here. Suicide is new among the Traveller people and I'm sure it's big now....there's also more women on nerve tablets than ever before because they're stuck in houses and blocked in, in these places'.(20)

TRAVELLERS IN HOUSING

There is very limited recording of Travellers in housing but evidence suggests that an extremely high percentage live in houses (21). Evidence also suggests that Travellers living in houses in London are more nomadic than those living on official sites. Camden's Travellers Education Project revealed that children living on official sites were enrolled on **school records for longer and had more** settled school experience than those living in houses (22)

The movement of Travellers within housing may be related to the fact that Travellers are frequently based in temporary accommodation, and in common with other families, have little control over where councils place them or how often they are expected to move.. This is then compounded by the extreme shortage of permanent housing suitable for large families. Traveller families in housing can experience extremes of hostility from neighbours and may need to move around; 'I have 10 kids and a special needs child....they don't like it here...They've been called names 'Gypsy' and 'smelly'. The youngest have been beaten up.. and the oldest ones keep getting stopped and searched by the police on the street" Bernadette Stokes (placed in temporary accommodation in Outer London by Camden Homeless Persons Unit).(23)

Research was carried out by the London Irish Women's Centre in 1994 . The conclusions of the study are as follows

'TRAVELLER SITE PROVISION FALLS SHORT OF DEMAND '
* The majority of Travellers in London are currently living in temporary and permanent housing, many against their will.
* From the sample of 22 local authorities who responded to the survey, 19 provided at least one permanent site for Travellers. (Only 3 respondents provided more than one permanent site).
* Approximately two thirds of these sites provided 15 pitches or less, whilst just over a fifth provided more than 20 pitches.
* Only 4 local authority respondents provided temporary sites.
* Long waiting lists for access to council sites existed in many areas.

'TRAVELLERS PAY RENT AND COUNCIL TAX BUT RECEIVE VERY LITTLE IN RETURN '
* 18 of the 22 respondents collected rent and 15 collected council tax from Travellers living on permanent sites. One quarter of the councils providing temporary sites collected rent and council tax.
* The highest rent being charged by a local authority was in Brent where Travellers on it's temporary site were paying £68 for renting a double pitch.
* Travellers on permanent and temporary sites did not have the same security of tenure as council tenants.
* The majority of local authorities with permanent sites undertook refuse collections and provided water, electricity and toilets, but less than half provided laundry facilities, and fewer than one third had made provisions for children.
* No laundry and under fives facilities existed on any of the temporary sites.

'LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE FAILING TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF TRAVELLERS
* Only two local authorities carried out ethnic monitoring of Travellers.
 * Only twelve councils were able to supply any records on the numbers of Travellers in their boroughs and almost all of these related only to Travellers living on official sites.
* Only 11 councils (half of the respondents) had specific policies for Travellers and 8 provided details of specialist service provision.
* Few local authorities provided specialist staff to deal with Travellers.
* Only 4 of the 22 councils who responded to the survey recorded Travellers living in houses and only Bromley and Harrow were able to supply figures.
* Approximately two thirds of the sample carried out ethnic monitoring, and half of these councils monitored the Irish as a separate ethnic category.

* Education Departments were most likely to be carrying out some ethnic monitoring of Travellers, and to have developed specialist policies and provision.
* Only 50% of the sample were able to name a committee responsible for Travellers and of these, only one third could recall having received a report relating to Travellers within the past year. This was during a period when major legislation was going through Parliament which would have a huge impact on Travellers' lives .
Recommendations in the report are aimed to Central Government, Local Government and Voluntary Organisations including Housing Associations.

*Major source of information for this section is 'Rights for Travellers; cearta na dTaistealaithe' a London Irish Women's Centre publication, 1995.

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Launch of 'Rights for Travellers'   December 1995.
Angie Birtill, Mary Maloney, Josie Lee, Nellie Power

YOUNG WOMEN

THE 1991 CENSUS SHOWS A POPULATION OF 15,107 IRISH born women between the ages of 15-24, representing a percentage increase of 81.5% from 1981. Young women are the main migrant age group

This increase has happened especially in the Outer London boroughs; In 1991 Outer London had a population of 7,708 in this age category (compared to an Inner London figure of 5,172). The total Outer London percentage increase was 144.3% between 1981 and 1991. In Inner London the increase was 51.8%.

As outlined in POPULATION the increases took place mainly in Brent, Harrow, Barnet and Ealing. In Inner London, Lambeth, Southwark and Wands-worth took the lead in increased population of young women.

A reading of the HOUSING section will draw your attention to the critical problems faced by this group in finding accommodation that is safe, affordable and secure.

Isolation is the main feature of the social problems this age group experiences. Some Irish community organisations-   , including the London Irish Women's Centre, have established social groups for young women. These are in Inner London. Outer London boroughs would do well to look at the facilities available in their local boroughs, and the use made of these by young Irish women.

Irish women enjoying 10th Anniversary Ceili, February 1996

'The youngest age group (16-19) are most at risk, often having the fewest qualifications, lowest earning power and least experience of supporting themselves..'

according to Bronwen Walter, (Irish Women in London, 1989). (1)

The other section of the population in which a large number would fall into this category, is young women of Irish Descent. In 1981 people of Irish Descent outnumbered Irish-born in this age group by 4:1. In 1991 this ratio might have narrowed due to the high rate of Irish-born emigration during the 1980's. A more realistic ratio in 1991 is possibly 3:1.

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