

**An Exploration of the British Labour Market Experiences of
Second-Generation Irish: Still Nursing and Navvying?**

**A Doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of Doctor of Social Science at the
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by

**Geraldine O'Malley BA. MA. FCIPD.
Centre for Labour Market Studies
University of Leicester**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines accounts of the labour market experiences of second-generation Irish to determine if their work histories replicate parental career patterns. For two centuries a narrow range of sectors absorbed waves of Irish migrants, with occupational patterns clustered in gendered and stereotyped roles in construction and nursing, yet their descendants careers have not been scrutinised in any depth. Despite being the largest ethnic minority group in Britain there has been no systematic collection of statistics for the Irish as a multi-generational ethnic group, hence the second-generation rarely figure in official data. Consequently, conceptions of ethnicity predicated on the black/white dualism of race and assumed assimilation have ignored the Irish experience.

Data was collected via depth interviews which considered participants work histories. A biographical approach sought to reveal and understand individuals' lives in terms of their distinctiveness within their social context. Photo-elicitation techniques were used to obtain additional perspectives of participants' social existence. Interviews were transcribed in full and analysed using a tripartite approach where data was read literally, interpretively and reflexively.

Findings are categorised on two dimensions: identity & ethnicity and labour market experiences. Cultural persistence of Irishness is apparent, but not matched by external markers of ethnicity. Forced inclusion masked the ethnic origins of participants so that unlike their parents, the second-generation do not keep their heads down at work, identifying instead a propensity to speak out in the workplace. Three possible drivers were advanced to explain such behaviour: Catholicism, the legacy of colonialism and the fact that participants' origins are camouflaged. Labour market positioning revealed a highly qualified group, spread across a range of sectors. A small number of participants worked in ethnic niche occupations. Of these a significant proportion had replicated parental career patterns and the majority of those working in construction had inherited family businesses.



This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Seumas and Margaret O'Malley, neither of whom had the opportunity to pursue higher education and consequently ensured their daughter did – ecce signum

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

In accordance with the University of Leicester Regulations for Research Students I hereby certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis and that the original work is my own. Neither this thesis nor the original work contained therein has been submitted to this or any other institution for a higher degree.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION - AN EXPLORATION OF THE BRITISH LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF SECOND-GENERATION IRISH: STILL NURSING & NAVVYING?

INTRODUCTION

The principle aim of this research is to explore individual accounts of the UK labour market experiences of second-generation Irish. The central research focus seeks to build on O'Connor & Goodwin's, (2002) study of first generation Irish migrant workers which indicated the clustering of employment over an extended period of time within gendered and stereotyped occupations for this ethnic group.

The research covers second-generation Irish, in order to examine personalised accounts of in what ways, if any, their location in the UK labour market differs to that of their parents. The research does not centre on career development per se, neither does the analysis seek to provide a chronological summary of individual work profiles. An exclusive focus on career profiles was rejected in favour of a more holistic approach whereby pre-labour market entry factors, the dynamics of transition to work and aspects of individual work history which have influenced career paths and current jobs was undertaken.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

There is significant debate surrounding issues of ethnicity and the Irish community in Britain; they comprise a substantial minority group who have often been overlooked

(Hickman, 1998; Walls, 2001). This is usually ascribed to the fact that the binary view of ethnicity has dominated the landscape of British race relations (Mac an Ghail, 2000) and this has resulted in the Irish being ignored because they are predominantly white and thus assumed to have similar experiences to the general population. Furthermore, this construction of a homogenous whiteness deracialises the Irish whilst at the same time they remain frequently parodied and problematised as feckless drunks (Mac an Ghail, 2000). References to Irish men within popular culture generally portray them as working as either navvies or builders, (see for example the television programme *Fawlty Towers* where the unreliable Mr. O'Reilly is 'Torquay's worst builder'). On the other hand, Irish women are not lampooned to such an extent, as O'Connor and Goodwin (2002:30) argue they tend to be clustered in occupations that 'can be regarded as an extension of their domestic role as wife/mother/carer or in the twentieth century, nursing'. The CRE, (1997) study revealed that respondents believed that: '...the economic contribution of Irish people in Britain was undervalued, because their presence was not acknowledged' (Walter, 1999:157).

Whilst successive waves of Irish-born migrants have worked in stereotypical and gendered occupations their descendants' careers have not been scrutinised in any depth. Factors in the shaping of an ethnic identity include both an interface with the indigenous population and its' political, economic and social environments (Harding & Balarajan, 2001) and one of the environments that requires further investigation is that of the second-generation Irish at work. Any study of second-generation Irish experiences of the labour market has to remain mindful of the fact that changes in gender relations and

social reproduction over the past five decades will have impacted on changing patterns of employment, so it could be argued that any changes in the occupations of the second-generation are merely a consequence of social reproduction. For that reason, this research concentrated on eliciting individual narrative accounts of UK labour market experience rather than providing an analysis of social mobility.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

This topic was chosen because there is little extant research on second-generation Irish at work in Britain (Hickman, 1995; Hickman et al, 2001). It is relatively straightforward to identify first generation Irish-born immigrants within the UK labour market, but more difficult to locate their offspring because of the paucity of official statistics. The work makes an original and distinctive contribution because the career patterns and labour market experiences of second-generation migrants are a salient labour market issue. There is a gap in the literature so that the part the descendants of Irish immigrants have played in the British labour market is not fully documented. Narrative accounts of individuals work histories provides a unique framework for examining working lives and the research design facilitated reflection on levels of ‘cultural persistence’ of Irishness (Diner, 1983: xvi). More importantly, mass emigration from Ireland is unlikely to happen again so the opportunity to capture such data is diminishing.

THE COVENTRY CONTEXT

The sample for this research is drawn from second-generation Irish who live or work in Coventry. This research could have been undertaken in other British cities with large Irish communities, such as Manchester, Liverpool or London. However, the reason for

obtaining a sample solely within Coventry was largely pragmatic – as a part-time researcher the opportunity to undertake fieldwork was limited and restricting the sampling frame to a discrete geographical area ensured ease of access to participants. Additionally, as discussed below there are particular features of the Coventry economy and labour market which make it an interesting site in which to conduct the research. From the late nineteenth century, with the advent of the bicycle industry, the city attracted a ‘migration surge’ (Lancaster, 1986:63) as workers from across Britain and Ireland moved to Coventry for work. Table 1 below outlines the population figures for the city since 1901, which indicate that the city’s industrial base ensured that sustained growth occurred for seven decades up until 1971.

TABLE 1 POPULATION OF COVENTRY 1901-2001

| YEAR | POPULATION |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 1901 | 69,978 |
| 1911 | 106,349 |
| 1921 | 128,157 |
| 1931 | 167,083 |
| 1948 | 250,900 |
| 1951 | 258,245 |
| 1961 | 305,521 |
| 1971 | 335,235 |
| 1981 | 306,985 |
| 1991 | 282,714 |
| 2001 | 302,800 |

Source: Medical Officer of Health Report 1948; Census of Population 1901-2001

The Local Labour Market

Jobs in manufacturing, construction and services were plentiful throughout the post-war years, although the city is later described as going from ‘boom town’ to ‘doom town’ (Thoms & Donnelly, 1986:37) as the recession of the late 1970’s eroded its engineering and manufacturing base. Local labour market statistics indicate that there have been marked structural changes in employment in the city; figures showing the percentage of the city’s labour force employed in manufacturing, construction and health sectors over a thirty year period are displayed below:

TABLE 2 EMPLOYMENT BY ECONOMIC SECTOR IN COVENTRY

| YEAR | NO. OF EMPLOYEES IN COVENTRY LABOUR MKT | % EMPLOYED IN MANUFACTURING | % EMPLOYED IN CONSTRUCTION | % EMPLOYED IN HEALTH SERVICES |
|-------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1976 | 165,900 | 57 | 3 | 3 |
| 1986 | 133,750 | 44 | 3 | 5 |
| 1996 | 128,659 | 25 | 3 | 11 |
| 2006 | 145,000 | 13 | 3 | 12 |

Source: Mackie, (2008)

These demonstrate that manufacturing jobs, a quarter of which were in the car industry, dominated the local labour market at one time, although a dramatic decline has occurred over the past three decades. Throughout this period the two sectors generally associated with Irish ‘ethnic niche’ occupations have fared differently; whilst there was no growth in numbers employed in Construction, the number of local jobs in Health have quadrupled (Mackie, 2008 : 10).

It might be argued that drawing a sample of second-generation Irish only from those living and working in Coventry distorts the data generated. However, Coventry is a particularly appropriate site in which to carry out such research as it is the 11th largest city in the UK (National Statistics, 2008) and is a suitable place in which to conduct the study because it has an established Irish community and its booming post-war economy attracted large numbers of migrant workers. As Mackie, (2008:70) outlines, at the outset of the twentieth century, the local economy was not dominated by one particular industry. This lack of specialism facilitated the establishment of a wide range of manufacturing ventures, including automobiles and aircraft, textiles, armaments, radios and telephones. The population of migrant workers moving to Coventry as recorded in the Census of 1931 and Registrar General's report of 1939, show that in the eighteen years between 1921 and 1939 their numbers increased from 3,459 to 42,148 (Lancaster, 1986:67). Furthermore, in the post-war era the construction industry was buoyant as pressure for new housing alongside reconstruction of the city ensured a demand for workers. As a result there was a continuing requirement for labour, so that for the first seven decades of the twentieth century Coventry attracted migrant workers from all over Britain and abroad. The table overleaf shows a survey of birthplaces of city residents conducted in 1966. This illustrates a range of birthplaces both within Britain and overseas. Whilst some ethnic groups are not recorded separately, (instead being described as 'foreigners') there were established Indian, Polish and Ukrainian communities in the city at this time as evidenced by the application in 1952 for land on which to build a Mosque (Lancaster,1986:73) and the establishment in 1961 of two churches to serve the Polish and Ukrainian communities (Archdiocese of Birmingham, 2008: 67).

TABLE 3 BIRTH PLACE OF COVENTRY RESIDENTS, 1966

| PLACE | NUMBER |
|--|---------------|
| Not stated | 460 |
| British Isles | 311,880 |
| England | 266,370 |
| Northern Region | 11,580 |
| York & Humberside | 6,630 |
| North West | 11,220 |
| East Midlands | 10,310 |
| West Midlands | 201,550 |
| East Anglia | 2,450 |
| South East | 17,140 |
| South West | 5,280 |
| England, not stated | 210 |
| Wales | 11,410 |
| Scotland | 12,320 |
| N. Ireland | 4,080 |
| Eire | 16,790 |
| Isle of Man & Channel Isles | 240 |
| Commonwealth Countries, Colonies & Protectorates | 11,340 |
| Foreigners | 5,130 |

Source: Census Report, 1966 cited in Lancaster, (1986:75)

Using Coventry as the site for this of research is appropriate for several reasons; for the majority of the past one hundred years it has attracted workers from throughout Britain and overseas which means that the Irish community were not the only source of migrant labour. It should be noted that the scale of post-war reconstruction was unprecedented so that jobs in construction were plentiful and such work may have been a major factor in attracting Irish labour to the city. However, because the local economy was dominated by manufacturing up until the late 1970's (Mackie, 2008:8), opportunities for work outside the traditional Irish ethnic niche areas of nursing and construction were abundant. Hence Coventry provided plentiful jobs in a variety of occupations for an ethnically diverse workforce; which needs be taken in to account when considering the impact the locality has had on the outcomes of this research.

The Irish in Coventry

There have been Irish-born residents in Coventry for a significant period of time. Up until the 1930's the Irish community was relatively small, comprising just over 1% of the population (Census, 1931). However, by the end of the Second World War distinct 'Irish areas' of the city had evolved (Lancaster, 1986:73). The table overleaf illustrates the number of Irish-born in Coventry. It should be noted at this point that caution is needed with regard to the 2001 Census figures, which include those who self-ascribed a 'White Irish' ethnicity, although their place of birth may be outside of Ireland.

TABLE 4 IRISH-BORN IN COVENTRY 1901-2001

| YEAR | NUMBER | % OF TOTAL POP. OF COVENTRY |
|-------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1901 | 416 | 0.58 |
| 1911 | 620 | 0.59 |
| 1921 | 1,079 | 0.84 |
| 1931 | 2,106 | 1.18 |
| 1951 | 9,983 | 3.87 |
| 1961 | 19,416 | 6.10 |
| 1971 | 20,360 | 6.05 |
| 1981 | 16,500 | 5.26 |
| 1991 | 13,540 | 4.6 |
| 2001 | 10,401 | 3.5 |

Source: Census of Population, 1901-2001

Hence the figures 1901-1991 only count the Irish-born residing in Coventry whilst the 2001 census counts an individuals own description of their ethnicity. Also the only census category that includes an Irish ethnicity option is that of ‘White Irish’ and it therefore precludes a ‘Non- White Irish’ response.

Currently, according to the 2001 Census returns some 3.5% of Coventry’s population self-ascribe an Irish ethnicity; although by applying the Hickman & Walter, (1997) suggested multiplier that takes into account second and subsequent generations, the true figure is estimated to be closer to between 8.64% and 10.4%; that is approximately 25,988 to 31,185 individuals; which as the Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) study (FIS, 2007a) records is significantly higher than either the Irish population of England of 4.1%

or the West Midlands region at 4.4% (FIS, 2007a: 9). The bulk of migration to Coventry from Ireland took place during the 1940's and 1960's (Kneafsey & Cox, 2002) so that by 1961 the number of Irish-born in the city amounted to 6.10% of the population (King et al, 1989:68).

More recently the FIS, (2007a) report on the 2001 Census provides a snapshot of the Irish community in Coventry including the types of work they are engaged in. There is broad indication that findings from previous studies (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002; Hickman & Walter, 1997) relating to occupations are replicated in the 2001 census results, with 21.3% of men engaged in construction whilst a high percentage of females are occupied are in the public sector, some 47.6% of Irish women are employed in either public services, health or social services (FIS, 2007a: 21). Other issues to note are the high proportion of Irish men in skilled trades (24.9%), process, plant & machine operatives (19.5%) and elementary roles (18%) whilst a relatively modest number are in managerial and professional jobs (28%) (FIS, 2007a: 18). Irish women are predominantly involved in elementary (20%), administrative and secretarial (16.2%) and associate professional and technical occupations (15%).

Reviewing qualifications held suggests high levels of achievement whereby 'White Irish' 16 to 24 year olds in Coventry are the ethnic group with the lowest proportion that hold no qualifications at all. This is reflected in the statistics with 18% of 'White Irish' having high qualifications at Level 4 or 5 (FIS, 2007a: 27). Further examination of these statistics reveals a marked similarity to Hickman and Walter's, (1997) findings of a

polarity of experience; with a large proportion of Irish holding high level qualifications and also a significant number of Irish having no qualifications at all. This is exemplified in the Coventry Irish community where the younger age group has a high percentage of people with level 4 or 5 qualifications and older people hold few or no qualifications.

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The researcher is the daughter of a second-generation Irish father and third-generation Irish mother, both of whom had family roots in Co. Mayo. She grew up in rural Warwickshire and was educated at a convent boarding school near Oxford. She holds dual nationality and ticked the ‘White Irish’ option in the 2001 Census. Her career has included roles in the Public Sector, Construction and latterly, Higher Education.

METHODOLOGY

This research investigates individual accounts of the labour market experiences of second-generation Irish. According to the CRE survey carried out in 1997, the Irish are Britain’s largest ethnic minority group, 1.5% of the UK population was born in Ireland and estimations suggest that together with their children they form approximately 4.6% of the total population of Britain. However, as O’Connor and Goodwin, (2002) point out, census data alone does not provide any specific information concerning labour market experience, but simply indicates broad trends. Information concerning the second-generation’s experiences within the UK labour market was obtained through a series of individual case studies, the data for which was gathered via in-depth interviews which

were recorded and later transcribed in full. Access to thirty participants was negotiated through a number of community groups and gatekeepers.

A biographical approach was used where life story interviewing methods were deployed to ensure ‘an unambiguous focus on the respondents’ views, opinions and experiences’ (Atkinson, 2004: 43) thus providing rich in-depth data. Personal narratives were deemed a suitable method to utilise for gathering data as according to Smith, (1998:210) the accounts that a life story approach reveals ‘often facilitates the inclusion of data for previously ignored groups’. This is particularly relevant for this group as they have been categorised as an under researched group who have been rendered invisible and inaudible due, inter alia, to their similarity in colour to the majority of the English population (Walls & Williams, 2003). Biographical research was an ideal approach to adopt as it facilitated exploration of each individual’s social construction of reality; thereby revealing individual lives in terms of their distinctiveness and social context. The biographical method was supplemented with photo-elicitation techniques which sought to provide ‘richer data’ by using participants photographs to acquire perspectives of their social existence (Harper, 2002).

Data analysis combined Mason’s (2002a) tripartite approach (reading the data literally, interpretively and reflexively) with a thematic analysis that catalogued and coded main topics in the data. The experiences of second-generation Irish in the labour market and the supplementary theme regarding whether or not they still enter the construction and health sectors is addressed by collating and coding data which was then analysed. The

results of this analysis are compared to extant research findings explored in the literature review.

OUTLINE OF THESIS

The following chapter provides a review and critique of extant literature. Given the paucity of literature on second-generation Irish in the labour market this chapter, of necessity, draws upon a diverse range of issues such as ethnicity and identity, patterns of migration and writing on assimilation and racialisation of the Irish in Britain. The small body of quantitative work on second-generation Irish in the labour market is examined. Chapter 3 reviews evidence of the labour market positions of the migrant generation which indicate clustering in distinct occupational niches.

The research design and methodology employed in this research is discussed in Chapter 4 which provides a justification for the methods used to gather the empirical data.

Chapter 5 analyses responses regarding identity and ethnicity as these aspects of second-generation Irish experience are at the heart of a considerable body of extant research and theorising in the area. Through an analysis of key issues that play a part in the social construction of identity the research examines manifestations of identity and ethnicity. This is followed in Chapter 6 by an analysis of parental origins and occupations once resident in Britain. This initial theme is used as a means of grounding and contextualising participants' accounts of their own education and work histories, which sets the scene for subsequent analysis. Narrative accounts of participants' labour market experiences are

discussed, including their transition to employment, work histories and current occupations to determine if they mirror the migrant generations' propensity to work in nursing and construction. Finally conclusions are presented in Chapter 7, the contribution to existing knowledge is discussed here and suggestions for further research are explored.

CHAPTER TWO

ETHNICITY, IDENTITY AND THE SECOND-GENERATION IRISH IN BRITAIN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines and critiques extant literature regarding the second-generation Irish in Britain. In order to contextualise this study of the second-generation Irish, literature on theories, models, definition and experiences of other second-generation ethnic groups is examined (Thomson & Crul, 2007; Hussain & Baguley, 2006; Wessendorf, 2008a; Zontini, 2007). Given the relatively modest body of literature in the field of Irish studies, of necessity it examines related areas of ethnicity and identity. The purpose of such a review is to determine if these associated topics assist us in arriving at any understanding of the second-generation's labour market experiences. The prevailing hegemonic discourse on race for all of the twentieth century has led to there being no multigenerational data set for the Irish in Britain (Akenson, 1993; Holmes, 1991). Unlike other ethnic minority groups they have not figured in official statistics so even recent analyses of occupational segregation by ethnicity and trends in occupational difference and disadvantage do not provide any data regarding the second-generation's experience (Blackwell & Guinea, 2005).

The literature on second-generation migrant experience globally is presented in order to identify major themes that are pertinent to this study. In particular issues regarding integration and hybrid identities inform our understanding of how ethnicity and culture

are reinforced through mechanisms such as religion and participation in ethnic labour markets.

Due to the paucity of official data, alongside a narrow range of work, it is necessary to examine a diverse body of extant literature in order to tease out any accounts of second-generation Irish in Britain. There are very limited reports of the Irish experience within the Social Science literature in general and the Labour Market literature in particular. Rather, what we do find is an emergent body of work published during the past two decades and an inchoate critical position; conventionally 'Irish Studies' has drawn on the fields of Literature and History to inform debate, as O'Sullivan, (2003:140) states there are clusters of work around subject specific issues, therefore it has been necessary to consult an eclectic body of literature.

Patterns of migration and debates surrounding the Irish as a Diaspora are examined in order to contextualise the research population. Finally key issues within the ethnicity and identity debate including incorporation, racialisation and assimilation are then explored.

THE SECOND GENERATION

In order to contextualise second-generation Irish experiences it is necessary to review extant theory regarding the second-generation of all nationalities. Whilst the generic term 'second-generation' is recognised within the literature, most articles deal with the specifics of the second-generation from the perspective of a particular ethnic group. The term is defined below and it is useful to consider existing work here in order to determine if there are any commonalities between second-generation groups and whether, if at all,

they relate to the second-generation Irish experience. What follows is a brief overview of the substantial amount of literature that exists in this area

Ambiguous Definitions

Despite Edmunds & Turner's, (2002:73) assertion that differing generations' have discrete experiences which render them noteworthy and of interest to academics, scholars evaluating the second-generation immigrant experience still cannot agree on who constitutes the second-generation or even an appropriate terminology. There remains a great deal of ambiguity and no clear consensus of what constitutes membership of the second-generation of an ethnic group (Zontini, 2007); although common usage suggests that when we refer to 'second-generation' we mean the children of foreign-born first generation migrants (Waters and Jiménez, 2005).

Matters are further complicated by the US usage of both 'one-and-a-half generation' and 'second-generation', where the defining characteristics of these two groups seeks to distinguish between those who were foreign-born and migrated when they were children (usually before their early teens) and are deemed 'one-and-a-half generation' because they are generally bilingual and they combine old and new cultures. In contrast, the children of foreign-born immigrants who are born in the host country are deemed second-generation. According to Roberge, (2005), the complexity of generational labelling of immigrants causes problems because they do not always correspond neatly to the genealogical generations of a family. Hence in some cases siblings can be either first, one-and-a-half or even second-generation, depending on their age on migration and where they were born. Wessendorf, (2008a: 19) discusses the lack of an agreed definition

in her study of second-generation Italians in Switzerland and determines that for her 'second-generation' applies not only to the children of migrants born in the host country but also those who 'migrated during early childhood and attended school in Switzerland'.

Other writers extend the notion of who comprises the second-generation and question the applicability of traditional explanations of the second-generation experience, proposing an alternative approach (Eckstein, 2006; Levitt, 2006; Fouron & Glick-Scheller, 2006). It is argued that transnational values are more easily retained due to recent technological innovations (Eckstein, 2006:212); hence in contrast to earlier cohorts of second-generation migrants, current connections to the homeland are prolific. In their study of the Haitian migrant experience Fouron and Glick-Schiller, (2006:193) contend that the idea of second-generation needs to be redefined to incorporate: 'the entire generation in both homeland and new land who grow up within transnational social fields linked by familial, economic, religious, social and political networks'. They are critical of the term 'second-generation' suggesting that by labelling immigrants' children as such, this perpetuates the idea of an ongoing process of incorporation which fails to take account of influences emanating from parental countries of origin and culture.

Further distinctions are drawn when parental birthplace is taken in to consideration. Ramakrishnan, (2004:381) argues that current definitions of the second-generation are inadequate because they do not take into account differences within the second-generation per se. There is a lack of precision, so that definitions do not encompass any gradations between those who have two foreign born parents and those who have one

foreign-born and one native-born parent. He suggests that such conflation ignores the differing experiences and outcomes of these two groups and argues instead that those who have both a foreign-born and native-born parent should be more accurately described as the 2.5 generation (Ramakrishnan, 2004:384). Clearly the experiences of the 2.5 generation offspring with one native-born parent are likely to differ not least because of their access to existing parental social networks, residential integration and education. However there is scant reference to the 2.5 generation within extant literature, Ramakrishnan found only 3 studies on second-generation immigrants to the US over recent decades which separate the second-generation from the 2.5 generation (Ramakrishnan, 2004:383).

Ethnic identity is not a fixed construct, as Alba, (1990:306) suggests it can be symbolic and may be 'concerned with the symbols of ethnic cultures rather than the cultures themselves'. Thus Waters, (1990) highlights ethnic identification as being a personal choice that is individualised and entails varying, (often marginal), rewards and acknowledges that those of mixed heritage may 'switch and amend their primary ethnic affiliations' (Cerulo,1997:389).Hence any all-encompassing definition of the second-generation is unlikely to capture the myriad nuanced experiences of the children of migrants.

Throughout this thesis Hickman's, (2002a: 24) definition of second-generation Irish is used and therefore describes '*anyone born in Britain with at least one Irish-born parent*'. Whilst this definition does not acknowledge the complexities of who may or may not

describe themselves as second-generation, or incorporate any distinctions between those with one or two Irish-born parents, it is nevertheless a recognised and accepted descriptor employed in the current literature on second-generation Irish.

Differing Perspectives

The differences between US-based models of second-generation integration and European approaches are explored by Thomson & Crul, (2007) who propose that the one-nation location of US research does not take in to account national context which is key in explaining second-generation experiences in Europe; not least because of the often complex relationships between the host country and migrants and their descendants from former colonies. Migrants from ex-colonies who move to the former colonial power face a unique set of issues. There are a number of factors that require consideration; whilst such migrants may benefit from what Thomson & Crul, (2007:1034) describe as ‘positive factors’ that will influence their integration – shared history, language and educational systems being exemplars, they may also have to face pervasive racial stereotyping.

Generally, US models of integration which emphasise assimilation and the concomitant ethnic cohesion accompanying upward mobility within the host country (Alba & Nee, 2003), do not easily transfer to Europe. There is evidence that distinct ‘ethnic niches’ develop in the labour market which become associated with particular ethnic groups and, it could be argued, may even account for their lack of upward mobility (Crul & Vermuelen, 2003a).

Integration

Castles & Miller, (2003:21) note that the effects of migration are far reaching and are not confined solely to the migrant generation but also affect following generations, however international comparative research on the second-generation is a relatively recent development (Crul & Vermeuelen, 2003a). One measure invoked to determine how the second-generation have fared is their levels of integration in the host society. It is important to be aware of the different models of integration: the melting pot, assimilation and cultural pluralism; yet as Giddens, (2006:497) points out these models are ‘ideal types’ and as such may not be attained in reality, despite government policy. Briefly, the basis of these models are that either the customs and culture of migrants of all races are intermingled with those of the host nation whilst retaining elements of their own customs (melting pot) or newcomers and their descendants assimilate into the host culture by adopting the language and culture of the new country, so that ethnic differences are minimised (assimilation), or different ethnic groups co-exist retaining their own culture with all groups participating in society (cultural pluralism). It is useful at this juncture to draw a distinction between integration and acculturation (as they are sometimes used interchangeably), however the latter term is generally used to describe the effects of dealings with the host community which result in changes in migrants’ attitude, behaviour and values (Phinney, 1990:501).

Integration is not a straightforward process and given its multifaceted nature is not easily quantifiable. There is a broad consensus that integration is influenced by a multiplicity of factors at both structural and agency level; the outcomes of which assume that as the

length of time in the host country increases there is a concomitant advance in the 'social position of immigrant groups' (Thomson & Crul, 2007: 1035). Although they caution that the experience of migrants and second-generation from former colonies may not always reflect this due to problematic relationships between migrants' descendants and the former colonial power.

There are various interpretations of what constitutes integration, these include the tightly defined view proposed by Kurthen & Heisler, (2009: 141) that it constitutes:

'...a process leading to parity between foreign-born newcomers (including their native-born descendants) and established populations (native-born for more than three generations) where the end result – integration - is the economic and social congruence between these groups in terms of statistically measurable empirical indicator averages'

which implies that levels of integration are calculable. However this ignores softer aspects and Thomson & Crul, (2007: 1027) suggest that alongside structural issues there exist features such as religious affiliation and persistence of cultural mores which are not easily quantified; contending that integration occurs at both individual and collective levels and is also influenced, inter alia, by legislation and key political events.

In deconstructing the arguments relating to integration Thomson & Crul identify a number of pertinent factors that influence the second-generation experience (including national policy, the role of religion and levels of racism in the host society), whilst also drawing attention to the fact that such factors are usually beyond the control of the second-generation. They argue that the role of agency in integration is reinforced through matters such as schooling and labour market positioning described by Gans,

(1992) as a ‘formal acculturation’ mechanism which occurs alongside more informal casual encounters experienced in other settings outside education or work, which they argue, may be more noteworthy in determining levels of integration (Thomson & Crul, 2007:1029).

Noting that integration patterns differ according to national context Crul & Vermuelen, (2003b) posit that there are two theories of integration which seek to explain this; the Citizenship approach and the Institutional approach. The Citizenship approach is predicated on the idea that national models of integration result in a variety of different outcomes due to the divergence of national customs. Castles & Miller, (2003) suggest that for the second-generation the acquisition of citizenship is an important factor in facilitating integration. Citing the issues surrounding different national legislation on the conferring of citizenship they conclude that in countries where *ius soli* (i.e. citizenship is granted to children of immigrant parents born in the new country) is a mechanism for obtaining citizenship the second-generation can have ‘multiple cultural identities’ because they have ‘a secure legal basis on which to make decisions about their life perspectives’ (Castles & Miller, 2003:248).

Despite taking into account different national contexts, Crul & Vermuelen, (2003b) argue that the Citizenship approach cannot adequately explain patterns of integration because the role of institutional factors is not accounted for. They cite education and transition to the labour market as examples of institutional arrangements that influence second-generation integration. Castles & Miller, (2003: 234) provide an illustration of one of the

outcomes of different institutional approaches, giving the example of Germany where segregated education initiatives resulted in special classes for non-native German speakers and ultimately hindered integration (Castles et al, 1984).

In Crul & Vermuelen's study of Turkish and Moroccan migrants to the Netherlands several factors were uncovered which demonstrate the complexities of integrating the second-generation in practice. Despite both groups receiving a Dutch education there is a marked difference in levels of attainment where Turkish second-generation spent less time in education, generally pursuing vocational education whilst greater numbers of second-generation Moroccans were in higher education; which they argue is influenced by the earlier use of spoken Dutch in Moroccan families thereby giving their offspring an advantage when they enter primary school. In contrast, they found that second-generation Turkish females were more likely to experience fragmented education, being sent back to Turkey for part of their schooling and being more likely to cease education earlier. Hence for the second-generation Turks the consequence of strong ethnic cohesion ultimately affected their labour market positions (Crul & Vermuelen, 2003a: 973).

Theoretical models regarding integration reviewed thus far are diverse in their explanations; however Freeman, (2004:946) proposes an alternative hypothesis, arguing instead that integration is not a linear process and that it takes place in a 'patchwork of multidimensional frameworks'. Such an approach acknowledges the plethora of factors that influence the second-generation although Freeman outlines four sectors namely the state, market, welfare and culture as being pivotal in shaping the second-generation experience. Certainly Kurthen & Heisler's, (2009:163) comparative study of the latter

three sectors indicates that: ‘integration in Western democracies is happening not monolithically, or in a linear fashion, but rather in the form of irregular patchworks’ with degree and pace of integration varying between countries.

Given the varying approaches to defining integration, explanations of the second-generation experience are somewhat partial and neither capture nor codify the entire situation. It is useful to now review aspects of assimilation to determine if they can add to our understanding of the second-generation experience.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the term used to describes a process whereby immigrants from a different (usually minority) ethnic background become absorbed into the host society. The processual nature of assimilation is well documented in research carried out in the early part of the twentieth century which examined European immigration to the United States between 1880 and 1920, when it was defined as: ‘a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups; and by sharing their experiences and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life’ (Park & Burgess, 1924:735). It is a dynamic process that can take place at either an individual or group level when changes in immigrant’s values occur and the migrants are accepted by the dominant group (Teske & Nelson, 1974:365).

Extant US research has traditionally measured assimilation on four key dimensions: socioeconomic status, residential segregation, language use and intermarriage. These

dimensions were used by researchers as a mechanism through which to establish the differences and/or similarities of immigrants and their children to other Americans. The process of assimilation was most evident in generational changes highlighted by Gordon, (1964) where the immigrant (foreign-born) generation are less assimilated and have less exposure to American life than their children, the second-generation (Waters & Jimenez, 2005:106). Gordon's seminal work identifies seven assimilation variables each of which are described as 'constituting a particular stage of assimilation' (Gordon, 1964:70). The seven types of assimilation, (which occur in varying anticipation degrees), relate to immigrants' change of cultural or behavioural patterns so that they become assimilated into mainstream society through a process of acculturation. Once immigrants enter institutions or clubs in the new country they are deemed to be structurally assimilated. This may be followed by amalgamation which is achieved via intermarriage. When immigrants start to identify with the host society they experience identificational assimilation which is underpinned by an absence of prejudice, enabling attitudinal assimilation. Lack of discrimination in the host society results in behavioural receptional assimilation and finally an absence of value and power conflict facilitates civic assimilation (Gordon, 1964:71). Hence the classic assimilation model is typified by what Portes & Zhou, (1993: 82) describe as a belief that: 'the foreign-born and their offspring will first acculturate and then seek entry and acceptance among native-born as a prerequisite for their social and economic advancement' However, more recently it has been proposed that assimilation is not entirely linear and that it can become segmented (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Segmented assimilation

The process of second-generation adaption and its attendant outcomes are disparate. Early work in the area related to the US experience where Portes & Zhou, (1993) highlighted the possibility that not all the second-generation automatically experienced acculturation and upward social mobility once integrated into the host country. Where once it was assumed that the migrant generation would take menial unskilled jobs whilst their offspring experienced upward mobility through better access to education and thence better jobs and careers, there was evidence to suggest this was not so now. Their seminal work identified that methods of assimilation had changed with the advent of what was termed the ‘new’ second-generation who are the children of post-1965 immigrants whose assimilation appeared to have become segmented. Unlike previous cohorts of second-generation migrants some of these children experienced ‘downward assimilation’ whereby they became integrated within specific, usually disaffected, ethnic pockets that operated outside the mainstream.

Moreover, they argue that this occurrence can be accounted for by three factors that impact on the social context that migrants experience namely colour, location and the absence of mobility ladders. For many of the post-1965 non-white migrants, once settled in the US their colour became a marker that was liable to incur prejudicial outcomes. Most of the settlers migrate to inner city areas where they then intermingle with resident minority groups with whom they become associated and which places them in a position that:

‘...exposes second-generation children to the adversarial sub-culture developed by marginalized native youths to cope with their own difficult situation’ Portes & Zhou, (1993: 83)

Finally, the traditional second-generation escape route through career advancement has all but disappeared as the structure of the US economy has changed, resulting in fewer mobility ladders when manufacturing jobs are replaced by service sector jobs thus providing little opportunity for career progression. One consequence of this labour market restructuring is the advent of the segmented ‘hour glass economy’ which retains low skilled jobs, whilst midrange occupations have diminished and professional occupations requiring high level qualifications remain. The corollary being that potentially upwardly mobile second-generation children are more likely to now have to make the leap from the very bottom of the occupational ladder to train for professional occupations - the financing of which might be beyond the means of their immigrant parents. Also in temporal terms the traditional move from entry-level jobs to the professions is now constricted, with an expectation that migrants’ offspring can do so in just one generation (Portes & Zhou, 1993:85). There is also a danger that if assimilation with mainstream core values does not happen, then the second-generation can gravitate towards the values of disaffected impoverished groups in entry-level jobs and assimilate downwards.

Criticisms of the concept have emerged which include the notion that predictions of downward mobility constitute ‘infected pessimism’ (Waldinger & Perlmann, 1998:5). A detailed response is provided by Waldinger & Feliciano, (2004: 395) who assert that their comparative study of first- and second-generation Mexican migrants with African-

Americans, Puerto Ricans and native Whites (sic) found scant evidence to support the downward assimilation hypothesis.

Five key issues are advanced that explain why the concept of segmented assimilation is inadequate. Drawing on the work of a number of authors they critique the hypothesis; firstly it ignores any similarities between different ethnic groups, citing Neckerman et al, (1998) who determine that mixing between immigrant groups is more likely to help second-generation advancement than prevent it. Secondly, if the migrant group is already in entry-level jobs then upward (rather than downward) mobility for their children is a realistic prospect (Farley & Alba, 2002). Moreover there is insufficient consideration of what preceding second-generation groups underwent; the focus instead being on class, or more specifically 'underclass', which ignores the experiences of middle class migrants. Additionally, the conceptualisation of an 'underclass' is muddled in its attempts to incorporate socio-economic status with issues such as marriage rates and finally the model overlooks the gendered nature of the 'oppositional culture', where the demise of blue collar jobs has negatively affected the 'sense of male worth' (Waldinger & Feliciano, 2004: 381).

Given the US context in which the concept developed it is unsurprising that Silberman et al, (2007) highlight that the model does not easily transfer to European situations. Their research on segmented assimilation in France amongst second-generation migrants from former colonies, led them to conclude that whilst there was evidence of the potential for downward mobility the segmented assimilation model did not fit the French experience.

Acknowledging that the North African groups they studied were subject to some disadvantage particularly in the labour market, with religious affiliation also contributing to negative racial stereotypes; paradoxically their levels of acculturation were high, exemplified by the dominance of their use of the French language in preference to Arabic. Yet an example of oppositional culture was also evident whereby the second-generation displayed an unwillingness to undertake military service (Silberman et al, 2007:24). Similar findings elsewhere in Europe also indicate that the likelihood of the second-generation completely assimilating is waning; this leads to the development of 'bicultural or hybrid identities' (Crul & Vermuelen, 2003:966). An alternative approach occurs when the second-generation deploy strategies of adaptation which precludes either complete integration or assimilation and instead allows the development of hybrid identity.

Hybrid identities

In order to counter negative racial stereotypes the second-generation often deploys adaptive strategies in order to preserve elements of their ethnic identity at the same time as demonstrating a degree of integration with the host society, which is described by Butler, (1999:147) as choosing a 'workable middle course' between cultures. Moreover, individuals do not have to choose between two ethnic identities entirely – they have the ability to absorb aspects of both (Phinney & Flores, 2002); a good example being the 'curry and chips' response of Asian adolescents surveyed by Ghuman, (1997: 33) who articulated their desire to meld aspects of both British and Asian culture. The ways second-generation identify with particular ethnic groups can manifest itself in four

strategies (Berry, 1994). These can be summarised as having strong or weak identification with the ethnic group and likewise strong or weak identification with the host group. Integration is evident where there is strong identification with both groups, alternatively identification with neither group leads to marginality. Assimilation has occurred in cases where identification with the host culture predominates; conversely identification solely with the ethnic group results in separation (Phinney, 1990:502). So far much of the literature reviewed has presented a very static view of ethnic identity, but this does not explain aspects of ethnic identity construction which in actuality is more fluid.

Wessendorf, (2008b:2) argues that any belief that ethnicity per se can explain 'cultural difference' is misplaced. She suggests migrants and the second-generation do not have fixed ethnic identities but instead are continually forming new types of cultural associations. She cites Anthias, (2002) who recommends that a better way of understanding the processual nature of identity is by thinking of identity as accommodating 'multiple positionalities' rather than being fixed (Wessendorf, 2008b:3). This leads her to question whether or not the second-generation can really be described as being between two distinct cultures; aside from the critique that such a stance implicitly focuses on the negative aspects of second-generation experience, there remains a need to acknowledge that there are a multiplicity of influences on the construction of second-generation identities and these encompass both structure and agency.

At a personal level there are indications that individuals may oscillate between identities depending on location and the construal of those around them. Zontini, (2007:1116), reports that a number of participants in her research related that they were ‘seen as English’ by their extended family in Italy, despite having an ‘Italian upbringing’ in the UK. For the second-generation, self-ascription of identity is influenced by several competing features. Other research on the Italian Diaspora cites three key factors that influence second-generation identity formation for Italians living in Switzerland; namely strong familial relations, integration with other second-generation Italians at school and shared interests and pursuits amongst peer groups (Wessendorf, 2008a: 8). The research found that socialising with other second-generation Italians enabled young people to identify with their ethnic background at the same time as it provided a space for questioning some of the traditional Italian values espoused by their parents (Wessendorf, 2008a:13).

Parker & Song, (2006:581) investigated second-generation Chinese in Britain and uncovered examples of what they termed ‘reflexive racialisation’ during the use of internet discussion fora which provided opportunity for discussing facets of ethnic identity namely ‘authenticity, belonging and interethnic relationships’. There was evidence in these discussion threads that second-generation Chinese recognised potential structural impediments to issues such as career progression concomitant with the hybrid identity of ‘British-born Chinese’. Reflexive racialisation for those second-generation whose family come from former colonies can be problematic, especially if inter-ethnic marriage has occurred; Ifekwunigwe, (199:206) refers to a ‘...profound existential

paradox facing individuals whose lineages historically situate them as grandchildren of both the colonisers and the colonised’.

In the case of Hussain & Baguley’s, (2006) study of second-generation Pakistanis in Bradford structural considerations of a ‘universal British culture’ were minimised due to the extent of cultural pluralism prevalent within Britain. As Kumar, (2002) points out such pluralism means that the view that there is any shared national identity in Britain is complicated. Consequently, notions of citizenship tended to be used by this group to assert their belonging and rights; whilst they also contested ‘racialised constructions of Britishness’ (Hussain & Baguley, 2006:415) thereby drawing a clear distinction between citizenship and identity, thus enabling the creation of a hybrid identity of British-Pakistani.

Whilst structural and cultural linkages provide an insight into identity construction it is a somewhat limited analytic framework. Religion and employment sector provide far more explanatory power for the way in which second-generation establish their identities as the following sections demonstrate.

Religion & Ethnic Identity

One feature that often distinguishes the second-generation from the host population is their religion. Religious observance is a vehicle through which ethnic identity may be transmitted and reinforced. Chong, (1998: 259) asserts that it has not received much attention because the ‘assimilation paradigm’ (which in the US is predicated on the pre-

1965 European migration model), indicated that by the second-generation religious adherence would start to wane. Indeed early work in the field predicted that whilst the second-generation would be less observant of religion than their migrant parents, their own offspring, the third-generation, might use religion as a marker to demonstrate difference (Herberg, 1955). This ‘triple melting pot’ theory suggested that religion would eventually provide the basis for interethnic boundaries (Alba & Kessler, 1979).

Identification with a particular religious practice provides migrant groups with what has been termed ‘the Three R’s of refuge, respectability and resources’ (Hirschman, 2004:1228). Membership of a church, synagogue, temple or mosque facilitates and reinforces a sense of belonging within a specific ethnic group. Immigrants and the second-generation participate in religious communities which bolster ethnic networks and provide support, a means of preserving their culture and facilitation of the upward mobility of the second-generation. This is usually achieved through the provision of training, business opportunities, language classes, jobs, welfare advice and support for study (Foner & Alba, 2008; Bankston & Zhou, 2000). King et al, (1989:69) provide an interesting example, describing how the resources of an ethnic religious group were deployed when voluntary Irish labour built two Catholic schools in Coventry.

There is a marked difference in attitude towards migrant religion between the US and Western Europe. A recent review of the literature pertaining to immigrants and the second-generation in America and their religion indicates that early focus in the area was concerned with the social services provided by religious organizations and the role played

vis à vis assimilation and acculturation (Cadge and Ecklund, 2007: 361). A polarity of views exist so that in the US there is a general consensus that participation in religious groups is instrumental in 'facilitating the adaptation process'; whereas Western European attitudes assert that immigrant religion is problematic and at the root of social divisions. Furthermore, there is a view that the differences can be explained by three factors which influence whether or not religion plays a part in assisting migrant integration namely: the religion practiced by immigrant populations, the level of religiosity of the receiving population and historical arrangements between the government and religious organizations (Foner & Alba, 2008: 360). Currently around two thirds of migrants to the United States are Christian, (some forty two percent of whom are Catholic), whilst seventeen percent belong to a religion outside the Judeo-Christian tradition (Jasso et al, 2003:218). In contrast, the majority of migrant groups to Europe are drawn from Muslim, Sikh and Hindu populations emanating from Asia and North Africa (European Commission, 2003). Regarding religiosity in native populations it is generally understood that religious observance is more marked in the US, whilst secular views are held by a significant proportion of Europeans, despite that continents' Judeo-Christian traditions (Foner & Alba, 2008:376).

Empirical studies on immigrant religion have found that places of worship perform a number of functions which are common across denominations and countries. These range from providing social space for young people in a Midwestern mosque (Haddad, 2004) to the 'intergenerational transmission of culture' (Min, 2005:113) in a Korean-Christian church in New York, to support to help Italian migrants adjust provided by a

Catholic church in London (Parolin, 1979). What is clear is that immigrants and their children use religion as a means of identity construction (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007). For the second-generation the opportunity to modify parental religious traditions is apparent – Butler’s study of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Britain uncovered evidence of second-generation women using their religion as ‘a guide to adopt a new role for themselves in British society’ (Butler, 1999:136). Religious organizations enable the ethnic community to pass on their traditions and values to the second and subsequent generations at the same time as providing a safe haven from assimilation – one London Catholic church was described as a ‘bridge’ between the migrant Italian community and the host population that ‘let people remain ethnic’ (Fortier, 2000:111). Malone, (2001) relates how for the migrant generation, Catholicism promulgated a sense of shared values and acted as a visible symbol within the London Irish community. In contrast her research with second-generation Irish women suggests that religion is seen in a far more functional way. For them whilst religious adherence was maintained, the church acted as gatekeeper for access to preferred primary schools as well as being a possible, but not sole, source of help (Malone,2006 :19).

Ethnic labour markets

Persistent and clichéd racial stereotyping frequently makes reference to the jobs and roles that particular ethnic groups perform once settled in a host nation. Like most crude shorthand, such descriptors generally have an element of truth regarding the occupational sectors most likely to employ migrants and the second-generation, although there is some debate surrounding what comprises an ethnic niche in the labour market. The term was

first deployed by Graves and Graves, (1974:136) who proposed a twofold definition that distinguishes between businesses that are owner-run and rely on the intensive use of labour, utilising migrants' skills which are less common in the receiving society – for example Chinese restaurants operating from the family home, and on the other hand, the 'ethnic workforce' which depicts groups of migrants who are predominant in specific industries or occupational groups, often comprising unskilled labourers recruited in large numbers. This has certainly been the case for Irish migrants who, for over two centuries, were recruited in large numbers as unskilled labourers for civil engineering and construction projects in Britain (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002; Cowley, 2001).

Schrover et al, (2007: 530) discuss a number of definitions of 'ethnic niche' which suggest that the term may refer to either the 'concentration' of a particular ethnic group in a specific sector of the labour market (Wang, 2004:482). Or alternatively it can be used to portray the 'over-representation' of an ethnic group in a given area, which can be quantified when the proportion of ethnic minority workers in a particular job role is 'at least one and a half times larger than the percentage of that group in the total labour force' (Model, 1993:164). A view that Waldinger, (1996) concurs with, although he suggests that a salient feature of ethnic niches is that they are closed to outsiders. Wilson, (2003:431), also points out the social construction of ethnic niches, wherein linkages of country of origin facilitate shared information and resources that enable ethnic minorities' uptake of specific work opportunities.

However, migrants' skills do not always easily transfer to the host country and for many workers (both first- and second-generation), institutional factors shape their labour

market experience (Bevelander & Veenman, 2004: 37). The segmentation of the labour market, separating primary and secondary markets is pertinent to ethnic communities' experiences of job opportunities. Generally in Western economies the labour market is split so that the primary segment comprises regulated occupational markets that are usually internal to organisations. Workers in the primary segment are in well paid jobs with good working conditions and have job security because their skills need to be retained by their organisations. Whereas the secondary labour market is made up of external markets where available jobs are insecure, have low status and pay is often at the minimum wage (Beardwell et al, 2004:130). Movement between the two markets is minimal and as Piore, (1979) states most migrants work in the secondary labour market. For more than a hundred years the secondary labour market has absorbed migrant workers (Castles & Miller, 2003), a situation that is perpetuated in the twenty-first century, Rydgren, (2004) suggests that in Sweden 'visible' ethnic minorities are concentrated in the secondary labour market in low paid occupations. Nonetheless, not all ethnic niches are in secondary labour markets, in his study of 216 US metropolitan areas Wilson, (2003:429) identifies that certain ethnic groups dominate niches in professional/managerial and technical occupations.

However it is useful to remember that the division between employment markets can be blurred and this is especially so at the lower end of the labour market, when migrants are often active in the black economy; King and Zontini, (2000:42) suggest that for many migrants the 'underground' economy was 'the first and only chance immigrants had of obtaining any kind of work'. Certain occupational sectors are organised so that casual

workers do not appear on the books and at one time in construction, working ‘on the lump’ paid day labourers in cash. For most of the twentieth century, the majority those working ‘on the lump’ were labourers from the Irish community, generally recruited direct through a network of London pubs (Cowley, 2001: 191).

Labour market division can be partly accounted for by institutional features such as government policies on immigration and the non-recognition of overseas qualifications (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006:203). This often results in ethnic groups being concentrated in specific labour market niches, or being denied access to various occupations. Of interest for this thesis, are Irish women migrants who were concentrated in a narrow range of occupations throughout most of the last century (Owen, 1995). Many were specifically recruited to work in British hospitals (Ryan, 2008b); thereby supporting Hickman’s (1995) assertion that the Irish were used as a source of cheap labour.

In their study of three refugee groups in Australia, Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, (2006) identified ethnic niches in the secondary labour market which accounted for the majority of their cohorts’ occupations, as being in cleaning, taxi driving, security and care of the aged. Whilst Bevelander and Veenman, (2004: 37) contend that lack of transferable skills between countries has a direct affect on migrants employment, they note that changes in the labour market in the Netherlands; affected by moves from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based service economy, has resulted in demand for different skills and has made Dutch language proficiency crucial for long-term employment.

There is also evidence that particular ethnic groups may dominate and then seek to safeguard niches in the labour market for their compatriots. Filipino merchant seamen were employed by ship owners seeking to bypass national labour regulations in the 1980's. As a consequence institutional factors subsequently influenced their continued employment by securing this ethnic niche for Filipino nationals, with numbers employed growing from 2,000 Filipinos in 1960 to more than 255,000 by 2001 (McKay, 2007:622). This dominance occurred due to a number of factors not least the Philippine government's provision of maritime education based on the US model and the seamen's proficiency in English (McKay, 2007:621).

Specific ethnic niches may not be sustainable over time as upward mobility occurs between the generations. Evidence concerning Scandinavian and Irish first- and second-generation females pursuing employment in domestic service in nineteenth century America illustrates that whilst more than 68% of Norwegian and 61% of Irish first-generation women were engaged as servants, this had fallen to between 44% and 50% for Scandinavians and 19% of Irish women respectively by the second-generation (Moya, 2007:572). At other times recruitment campaigns have targeted certain ethnic groups to fill particular vacancies hence Zontini, (2007: 1106) describes a group of Italian migrants to the UK who were recruited as cheap labour direct from Naples to work in brickworks in Bedfordshire during the 1950's. Some of these workers later moved in to Italian ethnic niche occupations within retail and catering; the ethnic niche in catering having been well established in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – an example being

the creation of Bracchi throughout South Wales (BBC, 2008). Historic patterns of recruitment targeted at particular ethnic groups can influence the work force composition in various sectors for a considerable period of time. The British policy of recruiting Irish women into nursing vacancies resulted in there being no war time immigration restrictions on their movement (Yeates, 2004); the outcome of which was that in the immediate post-war period 3,000 Irish women were training as nurses in Britain (Issac, 1954). Once such ethnic niches become established migration chains may then reinforce these occupational positionings (Ryan, 2008a) as in the case of Irish nurses (Daniels, 1993).

Patterns of migration have influenced ethnic niches so that distinct employment patterns can be traced for different ethnic minority groups over time. Although it is only relatively recently that such patterns can be verified by data gathered in large scale surveys which document employment and occupations. Ignaski and Payne, (1999:205) reviewed data from the Policy Studies Institute surveys, Census and Labour Force Survey statistics to reveal that the adverse effect of the decline in manufacturing jobs after 1971 was not uniform. Furthermore, the second-generation appeared to have gained from structural changes with the advent of more jobs in the service sector; as sectoral changes were common across the entire workforce all ethnicities gained as deindustrialisation and economic restructuring reduced the occupational difference between ethnic groups in the workforce (Giddens, 2006:511).

Another aspect of ethnic occupational niches that requires attention is that of the self-employed. There are a number of competing explanations regarding why ethnic

minorities might opt for self-employment; whilst several accounts indicate that there is similarity in decision-making that does not distinguish ethnic groups from the general self-employed population there is also some evidence to suggest that poor labour market positioning influences ethnic business start-ups (Ram, 1997:149). Within ethnic communities, businesses often emerge to meet the requirements of the group for particular goods and services, in many cases leading to the emergence of 'ethnic enclaves' which are facilitated through the employment of co-ethnics, especially where there is limited linguistic ability that precludes working elsewhere in the host society (Wilson, 2000:4).

In Britain the existence of formalised business support through government agencies such as the Ethnic Minority Business Support Initiative have recognised the contribution these businesses were making to the economy, indeed Ram cites the findings of Aziz, (1995) who suggests that Asians dominate retail trade making up more than 50% of small business owners. The establishment of ethnic minority businesses, clustered in certain areas have become attractions in some cities, for example Birmingham's 'Balti Triangle' is actively promoted by Birmingham Council. The contribution businesses in the Balti Triangle make to the local economy are estimated to be in the region of £7m per annum (Birmingham City Council, 2009). However whilst the existence of ethnic businesses are well documented, the role of second-generation entrepreneurs has not generated as much research (Metcalf et al, 1996), although work carried out in the US indicates that self-employment continues in to the second-generation after which it tails off (Hout and Rosen, 1999). The broad spectrum of research on integration and assimilation examined thus far is diverse and spans a number of different ethnic groups. Given this diversity of

experience, extant writing in the two areas of ethnic religion and labour markets appear to be highly relevant to the second-generation Irish in this study.

In this section extant generic literature on the second-generation has been considered in order to provide a framework in which to contextualise further exploration of research and theory concerning the second-generation Irish in Britain. We have seen that writing on the US experience is not always applicable to the European context, nonetheless a number of key features have emerged that are salient to this research. The literature on second-generation Irish is now examined, following which observations regarding common second-generation experiences alongside the specificities of the second-generation Irish dimension are discussed.

PATTERNS OF MIGRATION

Since the seventeenth century there has been evidence of labour migration from Ireland to Britain. Akenson, (1993:191) suggests that early Irish migrants could be categorised as falling in to one of three groups: those who used Britain as a stepping stone to onward migration further afield; itinerant labourers working for a limited period of time prior to returning home and those migrants who stayed permanently in Britain. Cowley, (2001: 19) indicates that in the early 1800's the figure was as high as 100,000 seasonal labourers, mainly from the west of Ireland, journeying to and fro annually. Despite record-keeping at ports being at best partial, Fitzpatrick, (1989) contends that between 1855 and 1915 the main area that provided seasonal agricultural labourers was the west of Ireland; most notably the counties of Mayo, Donegal, Galway, Roscommon, Sligo,

Leitrim and Armagh. This is borne out by Harris, (1994) who provides a pre-Famine account of gangs of Irish labourers specifically assembled for seasonal work in Britain during the harvest, usually returning to Ireland within three months. Indeed, the 1851 census returns for Birmingham indicate a large number of harvesters, who were described by a member of the Birmingham Town Mission as: ‘poor shoeless, shillingless bogtrotters from Connaught’ (Chinn, 1999: 64). The same census indicated that 3% of the population of England and Wales were Irish and when combined with Scottish census returns, reveals that around 700,000 Irish were resident in Britain (Jackson, 1963).

Waves of migration

There have been three distinct waves of migration from Ireland to Britain; the first wave began in the mid 19th century when the Irish were principally unskilled labourers engaged in agriculture, construction and manufacturing. The onset of the Industrial Revolution and its’ major construction projects of canals and railways saw an increase in the demand for labour and the creation of the term Navvy, which became inextricably linked to Irish migrant labourers (Cowley,2001). This pattern of employment continued for the next seven decades providing a virtually continuous supply of labour for UK civil engineering projects; a situation that lasted until the start of the Second World War.

Post-war, second wave migrants arrived in large numbers into a buoyant labour market. Strachan, (1991:22) identifies that there was a subtle change in the kind of work the Irish undertook. He suggests that there was a shift in perception regarding the nature of stereotypical Irish employment with a move away from the notion of the Irish as a

‘labouring underclass’ as they became more readily incorporated in occupational and social configurations. Such moves within the labour market were underpinned by the influx of immigrants from the Commonwealth whose arrival meant that Irish-born workers moved into work that more closely resembled that of the host population. Additionally, Irish migrants were differentiated from other foreign workers as Delaney, (2000:342) notes they had unrestricted access to welfare rights, were able to vote and there were no constraints on the length of time they could stay in Britain.

The third wave took place during the 1980’s and was remarkable because unlike previous patterns, this cohort of migrants contained a large proportion that was highly qualified. Gray, (2000a: 65) suggests that this group known as the ‘Ryan Air generation’ were different to previous groups because it contained greater numbers of professionals and managers. Hickman & Walter, (1997: 40) disaggregated available data on Irish migrants in the British labour market by age. Their research demonstrated that the 18- 29 age group, which was made up of 1980’s emigrants, contained large numbers in occupations that required higher qualifications. Whilst acknowledging that skilled healthcare professionals account for some of the women in the higher occupational profile category it was noted that the increase in professional and managerial occupations in Britain was extensive and had created a ‘brain drain’ in Ireland.

Gendered Migration

One aspect of migration patterns that requires attention is its gendered nature. As Ryan, (2004: 352), notes despite the majority of emigrants from Ireland to Britain being

women; it is only recently that critiques of academic models have highlighted the tendency to represent migration as a male activity, where women migrants are often depicted as simply following their spouses (King & O'Connor, 1996; Walter, 1989; Fortier, 2000). However, the complexities of Irish migratory patterns reveal them to be gendered and largely facilitated by kinship networks (Ryan, 2008a, Boyd, 1989).

Since the end of the nineteenth century more women than men have left Ireland (Lennon et al, 1988) and Walter, (2001:15) suggests that there was a steady increase in the female to male ratios of migrants so that during the period 1946-1951 for every 1,000 male migrants there were 1,365 female counterparts. Indeed the profile of emigrants provided by Redmond, (2008:456) indicates that they were generally young, Catholic females from working class rural backgrounds; she cites Travers, (1997:146) findings that between the 1920's and 1940's two thirds of women migrants were aged between 15 and 24. This gender imbalance can be partially explained by the system of land inheritance adopted post-famine (Diner, 1983:12). Land reform meant that the traditional sub-dividing of farms ceased and one child inherited the land. As this was usually the eldest son, women's chances of inheriting were lessened (Arensberg & Kimball, 1968). When combined with a change in farming methods, which meant women's traditional areas of responsibility for dairy and poultry were diminished this resulted in a reduced role for women on farms, thereby curtailing employment opportunities. One consequence of the changes in inheritance also meant that the practice of providing a dowry became more common and as a result families could not always provide them for all daughters (Lennon et al, 1988: 22).

Societal attitudes curtailed work opportunities for women in Ireland and this was underpinned by the 1936 Conditions of Employment Act which prevented married women from working in the state sector. Women from better off families tended to stay in education for longer periods as parents wished to provide their daughters with skills and qualifications to compensate for the fact that they were unlikely to inherit. Delaney, (2007:31) cites Hannan's (1969) sociological research in Cavan which highlighted the paradoxical situation as improved levels of education and accompanying heightened aspirations led to an increase in female migration. During periods of acute labour shortage, most notably throughout the Second World War, British authorities would offer paid passage to England for workers in 'essential services' (Delaney, 2007). As Redmond, (2008:465) points out, a significant number of applications submitted by women for travel permits between 1948 and 1951 were for women going to work in 'Domestic Service' occupations.

One outcome of such demands for essential labour was that in 1947 a total of 3,000 Irish women were training to be nurses in Britain (Isaac, 1954). In her study of the post-war migration of 26 Irish women who became nurses Ryan, (2008a:459) cites Yeates, (2004) discussion regarding the lack of wartime immigration restraints for Irish nurses. Direct recruitment of Irish women to nursing posts in Britain continued for a significant period after the war so that in 1971 twelve percent of nurses in Britain were Irish (Daniels, 1993).

Chain migration

Another aspect of gendered migration patterns that merits further consideration is that it was often facilitated through chain migration whereby those already established overseas would assist other family members or friends by paying for their passage or providing accommodation and help to find work upon arrival. There are indications that an individual's decision to migrate is shaped by "the existence and participation in social networks, which connect people across space" Boyd, (1989:645). As Jordan & Duvell, (2003:63) assert, migration might not be "an isolated decision... but rather a collective action involving families, kinships and other communal contacts."

Certainly there is evidence that Irish women have used female chain migration and kinship networks extensively; however given the complex border arrangements between Britain and Ireland there are few data sources that enable us to accurately quantify the extent of chain migration into Britain. It was not until as late as 1987 that the Irish government started to publish statistics on migration with details of age, gender and destination (Walter, 2008a: 183). An early US survey conducted in Boston in 1897 revealed that of the 2,945 Irish women arriving that year only 76 were not met by friends or relatives (Fitzpatrick, 1948 cited in Diner, 1983). Later research in the same city found that in a sample of 238 Irish women arrivals in 1907, over fifty percent had their passage paid by relatives of the same generation (WEIU, 1907 cited in Diner, 1983).

However several studies do verify the extent of the influence of kinship chains in Britain, for example King and O'Connor's study of 50 Irish women in Leicester found evidence

of chain migration in two thirds of their cases, almost ninety percent of which involved female chain migration (King & O'Connor, 1986:316). Likewise Ryan's (2004, 2008a) research of two distinct cohorts of women; her 2004 study of twelve women who migrated in the 1930's and her later research on twenty six women who migrated in the post-war period and worked as nurses, both found that alongside an economic need to migrate the existence of family and kinship networks usually facilitated the move overseas. Whilst the 1930's cohort demonstrated a variety of complex rationales for their decision to move to Britain, they also acknowledged that family networks were key in the process and as Ryan points out this perpetuated patterns of migration:

“...they usually had aunts, uncles or older siblings to help them once they arrived. The women then reinforced their familial networks by assisting the migration of other relatives...” (Ryan, 2004:361)

In the later case of the nurses, kinship and friendship networks were significant for twenty one subjects. Not only did the chains assist women in moving abroad but in many cases also influenced subsequent occupational choices; just over half of those in the study had nursing networks in Britain (Ryan, 2008a:463). As the existence of familial and friendship chains assisted in securing work and accommodation they also exerted an influence on parental decision making, being a key factor in allowing young single women to emigrate.

Given the lack of available data on Irish women's entry to Britain we have to rely on US data to illustrate the numbers of young female Irish migrants and details of who paid their passages and to whom they were going on arrival. This data bears further examination, as it is one of few sources of official documentation to substantiate chain migration.

Appendix 1 is part of the ships manifest for the Lusitania which arrived from Ireland in the port of New York on 30th October 1908. This shows that of the 30 people on this page of the manifest 3 were deemed unfit for entry to the US; of the remaining 27 passengers 24 were female with an average age of 22 years (Ellis Island Passenger Records, 1908).

TABLE 5

EVIDENCE OF MIGRANTS' FAMILIAL & KINSHIP NETWORKS

| PASSAGE PAID BY | | GOING TO | |
|-----------------|----|-----------|---|
| SELF | 12 | RETURNING | 1 |
| SISTER | 5 | SISTER | 7 |
| AUNT | 2 | AUNT | 3 |
| COUSIN | 1 | COUSIN | 2 |
| MOTHER | 1 | BROTHER | 6 |
| FATHER | 2 | FATHER | 3 |
| HUSBAND | 1 | HUSBAND | 2 |

Source: Ellis Island Passenger Records, (1908)

A summary of who had paid their passages and to whom they were going is provided above. All but one woman was going to a relative and half had their passage paid by another family member.

Remittances

Throughout the twentieth century migration from Ireland was constant and Republic of Ireland census returns indicate that the population fell continuously from a figure of 3.2 million in 1901 reaching its nadir in 1961 with 2.8 million recorded (CSO, 2008). Clearly

for most of this period the Irish economy was reliant on remittances sent home and Delaney (2007:41) acknowledges that: ‘sending money back home was an integral element of the process of migration’. Central Statistics Office figures for the thirty years between 1939 and 1969 are provided by Cowley, (2001:86) who indicates that around £2.2 billion was sent back to Ireland from Britain through money orders and telegrams during this period. Of course, as Delaney points out the total could be even higher as there is no official figure for the amount of cash handed over in person, he cites official estimates that during the 1960’s remittance money accounted for 3.2% of national income, or £20 million per annum (Delaney, 2007:42). Interestingly, remittances back to Ireland continue to this day, despite Ireland’s relative economic prosperity they still formed 0.2% of GDP in 2006 (Ratha & Xu, 2008).

AN IRISH DIASPORA

The migration of large numbers resulted in a substantial Irish community being established in Britain; however there has been debate as to whether or not this group constitutes an Irish diaspora or is simply a migration. Chaliand & Rageau, (1995) outline four criteria which they propose when taken together or separately, constitute a diaspora. The pertinent issues they identified include: a collective forced dispersion usually occasioned by a disaster. Secondly, a collective memory which conveys the details of the dispersion and a cultural heritage generally intertwined with religious affiliation. Thirdly, that preservation and transmission of heritage in order to safeguard identity is evident. This occurs alongside integration with the host country, and is often manifested through

the continuation of religious observance and allegiance. Finally, whether or not over an extended period of time a particular group is deemed to have survived being uprooted.

They refute the idea that there is an Irish diaspora on the grounds that despite the fact that early migration was through forced dispersion as a result of the Great Famine most Irish migrants went to two or three destinations that were 'linguistically similar' to their place of origin (Chaliand & Rageau, 1995: xv). This analysis is somewhat disingenuous, to utilise the criteria of similarity of language as a means of asserting that the Irish do not constitute a diaspora appears rather odd when linguistic difference is not included by them as a specific marker of a diasporic community.

If we apply Chaliand & Rageau's four criteria to the Irish community in Britain we can see that there have been two key factors that have resulted in large scale migration: in the nineteenth century famine and for the majority of the twentieth century lack of available work in Ireland. Primarily, the Great Famine caused the initial mass exodus, for many it was indeed a *forced dispersion* with 40,000 of the one million emigrants from Ireland between 1846 and 1850 being subsidised to do so by their landlords. An example of this being Maj. Denis Mahon who spent £14,000 on the forced dispersal of 810 of his tenants at Strokestown, after calculating that it was cheaper to make them emigrate than to keep them in Ireland for a year (Toibin & Ferriter, 2004; Woodham-Smith, 1962).

Collective memory has kept the facts about the famine to the fore, often occurring through songs and stories. An interesting example of this being the song 'The Fields of Athenry', (St. John, 1979); which mentions 'Trevelyan's corn', a reference that would

only be understood by those who have a knowledge of the history of the Great Famine. Undoubtedly Irish cultural heritage is clearly identifiable in Britain, manifesting itself through such things as Irish dancing, Irish music, Irish shops, the existence of Irish social clubs and participation in religion – albeit if not regularly then frequently invoked at the key rites of birth, marriage and death. So judged by Chaliand & Rageau’s criteria we can see that the Irish have indeed endured as a transplanted group with collective memory and a readily identifiable cultural heritage that has persisted over time.

Diaspora as a ‘third space’

However we need to turn to other commentators to explore further the concept of diaspora. Walter, (2001) provides an analysis that identifies diaspora as the outcomes of capitalist and imperialist demands for cheap labour. She posits that whilst diaspora is understood as a spatial concept relating to dispersal there is also a need to acknowledge an alternative to the presumed relatively straightforward journey of mere relocation. Besides, definitions of diaspora cannot be fully explained by the adoption of simple dual alternative descriptions such as ‘migrant/settler, insider/outsider, home/away’ (Walter, 2001: 9). Instead Walter argues that there needs to be recognition of a ‘third space’ which encompasses figurative spatiality thereby incorporating both concepts at once. Hence she proposes the use of ‘both/and’ to be more useful where an individual is *both* a migrant *and* a settler. This enables members of the diaspora to remain linked to their place of origin whilst at the same time they establish themselves in a new country. Members of the diaspora therefore inhabit this ‘third space’; not entirely betwixt and between, but

instead inside a space that is specific to each individual migrant and which recognises their unique experiences of migration as both from and to.

Recognising the Irish diaspora

However in the case of the Irish Walter does accept that matters are somewhat problematic with the adoption of a 'both/and' approach due to the legacy of the difficult relationship between the Irish diaspora and the British because of imperialism. She credits the uptake of the term diaspora in relation to Irish migrants to President Mary Robinson's reference in her inaugural speech concerning the 70 million people worldwide who could claim Irish descent. In her later speech to the Houses of the Oireachtas entitled 'Cherishing the Irish Diaspora' the President argued that Irishness was not simply territorial but instead is a concept that 'resisted any fixed or narrow definition' (Robinson, 1995). In 1998, Article 2 of Bunreacht na hÉireann (the Irish constitution) was amended thus:

"Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage."
Bunreacht na hÉireann, (1998)

Gray identified two distinguishing features of President Robinson's discourse namely that Irishness could be diasporic and therefore provided 'an unbounded and 'new' Irishness'; secondly, that a diasporic identity emerges through commemoration of the Famine which remembers 'dispossession, starvation and poverty' through collective memory (Gray, 2000b:167). One outcome of Robinson's speech was that it opened up debate regarding what constitutes the Irish Diaspora. Walker, (2007:276) notes that Irish migrants came

from a variety of backgrounds and any assumptions of a unitary diaspora as Catholic and nationalist are misplaced; he quotes Delaney, (2003) who observed: ‘ the Irish diaspora.....never was and is not now an homogenous unit.’ Current, more inclusive, considerations of the Irish diaspora do admit to its diverse nature and identity.

If distinctions regarding what defines the second-generation are somewhat arbitrary, then perceptions of what constitutes Irishness are equally complex. Contemporary debates concerning Irishness suggest that in the United States towards the end of the twentieth century, there was ‘a mania for all things Irish’ (Eagan, 2006:20). Hibernophilia was evident in America, with large numbers of people identifying with Irishness as an idealised ethnicity, which was explained in part as ‘the white ethnicity of choice, a means of claiming an ethnic identity while maintaining the benefits of whiteness’ (Negra, 2006:4). Irishness became commodified through the arts and media with Irish-themed plays and dance along with music, literature, tourism and genealogy. If the US version of Irishness is predicated on a fantasy of a ‘culture unsullied by consumerism and modernity’ (Negra, 2006:4) then tourists experiences in Ireland add to this myth of homeland. Thus Levitt, (2006:130) details the experience of one Boston lawyer, describing Irish heritage and his reception in the ancestral village in Donegal: ‘It doesn’t at all feel like I’m an American’ thereby validating his feelings of Irishness.

Ideas of what comprises Irishness are more complex in Britain, given the socio-historic power relations between the two countries which results in some commentators suggesting that it cannot be defined – as Gavin, (2001:87) asserts: ‘there is no singular

definition of Irishness'. Hence definitions of Irishness are multifaceted, nuanced and individualised, (Hickman,1998;Walter et al, 2003; McGovern, 2002; Mac an Ghail, 2001) thus defying an all encompassing descriptor. Notions of Irishness are also context dependent, as Wilson & Donnan, (2006:112) suggest, it is an ambivalent concept which is 'shifting and relational'. Similar to the US experience, Irishness in Britain gained popularity in the late 1990's and is also driven by consumerism and what business commodifies as 'typically Irish' via the Riverdance show, sport, Irish theme bars (McGovern, 2002) and St.Patrick's day parades (Nagle, 2005). Neither is it restricted by generational labelling as evidenced by some of the subjects on the BBC's family history programme 'Who Do You Think You Are' claiming to feel 'a strong affinity to Ireland' despite having no evidence at the outset of the programmes to substantiate this (BBC, 2008) If Irishness per se defies national and generational barriers then McWilliams,(2007) definition of it as a tribal rather than land based ethnicity appears most apposite. Clearly, what the debate does highlight is the complexity of operationalising such definitions within social research, if there is neither broad agreement on what constitutes the second-generation or what is Irishness.

ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

How second-generation Irish self-ascribe their ethnicity and racial identity is affected by complex arrangements between Ireland and Britain regarding citizenship. For most of the twentieth century there was freedom of movement between the two countries, incorporating a unique understanding regarding movement within the Common Travel Area.

The Common Travel Area

This refers to movement within a passport-free area comprising Ireland, Britain, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey, recognised by the Treaty of Amsterdam, (1997). The Irish Free State's constitution determined that anyone born in its territory had Free State citizenship. At the same time the Free State was classified as a dominion by Britain so anyone born in the Free State was classed as a 'natural born' British subject (Ryan, 2001). Britain's Alien Order, (1923) meant that persons arriving from the Free State would not require leave to enter, thus facilitating unhindered travel between the islands. Efforts were made to disconnect Free State citizenship from the automatic conferment of the status of a British subject through the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, (1935); after which British statute and common law was repealed. However Britain did not enact reciprocal amendments arguing that the Free State was part of the Commonwealth. One outcome of the Free State's Aliens Act, (1935) was that it accorded British citizens favoured treatment so that they are not covered within Irish immigration law and cannot be deported or excluded from Ireland (Ryan, 2001).

Movement between the nations went unchecked until the Second World War when restrictions were enforced due to Ireland's neutrality. In 1949 Ireland left the Commonwealth and Irish citizens were granted indefinite leave to remain in Britain, they were not subject to entry control and had voting rights. Hickman, (1996:30) posits that the 1949 Ireland Act declared the Republic was 'not a foreign country' in order to ensure a continuous supply of Irish labour and enhance security. The Act states:

2. Republic of Ireland not a foreign country

(1) It is hereby declared that, notwithstanding that the Republic of Ireland is not part of His Majesty's dominions, the Republic of Ireland is not a foreign country

for the purposes of any law in force in any part of the United Kingdom or in any colony, protectorate or United Kingdom trust territory, whether by virtue of a rule of law or of an Act of Parliament or any other enactment or instrument whatsoever, whether passed or made before or after the passing of this Act, and references in any Act of Parliament, other enactment or instrument whatsoever, whether passed or made before or after the passing of this Act, to foreigners, aliens, foreign countries, and foreign or foreign-built ships or aircraft shall be construed accordingly.” (Ireland Act, 1949)

This Act had significant repercussions; it stipulated that Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom, having a direct affect on attitudes to the settlement of Irish citizens in Britain. Notwithstanding the 1945 Labour governments’ espoused policy of favouring a united Ireland, hard-nosed considerations were paramount; Britain needed cheap labour to work in post-war rebuilding and the Irish vote was important (Hickman, 1998:296). From a contemporary European perspective it seems astonishing that the Republic of Ireland can be described as ‘not being a foreign country’. One might assume that hegemonic colonial power is the driving force behind this refusal to recognise the Irish Republic as a separate state; nonetheless the Irish government must have been compliant regarding the movement of people, even if only to ensure continuing access to jobs in the post-war reconstruction of Britain.

In 1980 the existence of an agreement regarding immigration controls was disclosed, when the Foreign Affairs minister admitted in the Dáil:

“Since 1952 there has, by agreement, been no immigration control on the movement of persons between Britain, Northern Ireland and the State. A necessary concomitant is a measure of co-operation between the two immigration services.” (Dáil Eireann, 1980)

Although Irish citizens can be deported from the UK, the British government recently announced that arrangements for their deportation were more lenient than for other Europeans. Liam Byrne, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Nationality stated:

“In reviewing our approach in this area we have taken into account the close historical, community and political ties between the United Kingdom and Ireland, along with the existence of the Common Travel Area.” (Hansard, 2007)

Given the often strained relationship between the two islands Ryan, (2001) questions how co-operation on border controls has managed to be so long-lasting; suggesting that the difficulties in controlling movement along the length of a frontier crossed by 180 roads, makes immigration control problematic. Additionally the UK government sought to avoid the politically sensitive topic of passport control for people whose journeys originated in the six counties. Hence, the two states collaborated in enforcing each others immigration conditions in order to facilitate mutual benefit through shared economic and trade links. Moreover, almost 70% of travel from Ireland is to or through the UK (Ryan, 2001: 871).

Immigration to Ireland has been negligible apart from the last decade of the twentieth century and therefore the Irish government had little impetus to alter immigration controls. Recent increases in numbers of work permit applications and a rise in the number of asylum applications - from 39 in 1992 to 10,398 in 2000 (Ingoldsby, 2001) have necessitated reviews of immigration legislation in relation to the common travel area. As a result from 2009 electronic border controls will require the use of passports when traveling between each nation although there have been assurances that there will be no requirement for the use of passports on the island itself (BBC, 2007).

INCORPORATION & RACIALISATION

Having examined the specific legal peculiarities that governed the status of the Irish in Britain we now turn to the states attempts at incorporation. Given the complex history of arrangements regarding travel and citizenship between the Republic and Britain it is evident that issues of ethnicity and identity for the Irish in Britain are multifaceted. There are two main strands within extant literature which indicate an ongoing uncomfortable relationship between migrants, their descendants and the British government. One thread examines themes which detail the consequences of the British state's attempts to incorporate the Irish. The other thread scrutinizes the outcomes of government endorsed pursuit of a binary paradigm of race relations that has developed over the last half century.

Hibernophobia

Throughout the 19th century the Irish were perceived as a race apart from their colonial masters; it has been proposed that two factors contributed to this: the type of work they were engaged in and their living conditions which combined to portray a poverty stricken group (Hickman, 1996). Popular conceptions of the Irish at that time represented them as preoccupied with excessive drinking and fighting; filthy barbarians who were frequently depicted as feckless troublemakers (Mac an Ghail, 2001; Nagle,2005; Holmes,1991). Hillyard, (1993:3) indicates that the general perception of the Irish was that they were a 'problem population' comprised of migrant labour which required 'regulation, discipline and control'.

In her analysis of anti-Irish racism in the 19th century Hickman, (1995:47) cites Miles, (1993:59) who outlines Victorian theories of scientific racism, which argued that cultural differences between ‘races’ enabled the application of a hierarchical taxonomy and declared that the Irish, close to the bottom of the pile, were not likely to become civilized. Cartoons of the time depict them as idle savages, with lots of sketches attempting to demonstrate a close link with primates; Curtis, (1984) includes an 1869 illustration showing a creature that is part man part monkey labeled ‘Fenianism’. Such vilification led to the Irish becoming ghettoised and segregated (Hickman, 1996).

As a result of virulent anti-Irish racism, the government financed the establishment of separate Catholic schools to cater for the offspring of Irish migrants, the outcome of which, according to Hickman, (1996:28) was that ‘The Irish were integrated into a segregated system’. Clearly the greatest sphere of influence on what was promulgated in these schools was the Catholic Church which sought to diminish allegiance to an Irish national identity and replace it with adherence and identification to Catholicism, whilst turning out ‘useful citizens, loyal subjects, respectable members of the working class and good Catholics’ (Hickman, 1996:29). Furthermore, as Woodhead, (2008:55) asserts the role of organised religion provides ‘a range of services and support to those who would not otherwise have access to them’. Catholic schools were awarded grant aid in 1847, however, in order to maintain control of the religious curriculum in such schools they were voluntary aided, so that up until 1959 Catholics themselves paid 50% of the schools costs. This situation only changed when Catholic schools were facing a bill of £80m, forcing the government to reduce the required contribution to 25%.

A contemporary account also supports the thesis that an English Catholic education counteracts adherence to an Irish identity and suggests that incorporation within the Catholic state education system benefitted some of the ‘clever Irish working class men and women’ Wilkin, (2008). He asserts that the effect of the 1944 Butler Education Act meant that academically bright second-generation Irish children were able to attend university, and he posits that this resulted in ‘a massive embourgeoisement’ of Irish Catholics in England and Wales.

Hibernophobia continued in to the twentieth century with a revival of Victorian theories positing a racial distinction between the Irish and British, precipitated by the secession of the Irish Free State. As Douglas, (2002) points out much of the discourse at this time was centered on debates within Eugenics and ascribing particular, generally inferior, racial characteristics to the Irish. Ripley’s, (1899) earlier tripartite racial classification of Europe had ascribed ‘Mediterranean’ characteristics to the Irish and this was taken up by right wing commentators in particular who noted that without intermarriage with the ‘superior’ Anglo-Saxons:

“The Irish race isa weak, ignorant, lazy, emotional race, quite incapable of loyalty even to its own chiefs or leaders and it has been so for centuries.”
(Morning Post, (1916) cited in Douglas, 2002: 42)

Classification of the Irish as inferior in racial terms continued unchallenged (Cox, 1921; Philips, 1923; Keith, 1919), so that in 1936 Cattell was able to suggest that a growing Irish presence in British cities was the cause of a decrease in the lowering of IQ scores

(Cattell, 1936:15). It was not until the rise of National Socialism and imminent war in Europe that such discourse abated. Douglas, (2002:57) suggests that an upsurge in the racialisation of the Irish occurred in the interwar years in particular, as a result of historical and economic conditions namely the loss of Ireland as a British colony and the depression. Whilst overt Hibernophobia disappeared to a large extent during the second world war and following the subsequent influx of migrants from the New Commonwealth, it did reassert itself during the IRA bombing campaigns of the 1970's and '80's (Mac an Ghaill, 2000; Hickman, 1998).

Forced Inclusion

The shared interests of the Catholic Church and British government ultimately underpinned a social mores that spurned evidence of Irishness as being in some way inferior to that of their British counterparts. Hickman, (2002b) posits that eventually by the late twentieth century the Irish were subject to 'forced inclusion' as popular discourse declined to acknowledge a differentiated Irish community in Britain. Such a position resulted in the Irish community being automatically included as a constituent part of the predominant culture. This was reinforced by an official approach that sought to subsume the Irish which was achieved through an all pervading reluctance to acknowledge any differences between Irish (both Irish-born and second-generation) and the host population. However insistence that the Irish community were completely assimilated and thus no different from members of the host nation had the effect of ensuring that the experiences and concerns of Irish migrants were marginalised and generally ignored (Mac an Ghaill, 2000). So we have the dichotomy of an 'incorporated' ethnic minority

who were for example faced with direct discrimination as evidenced by the existence of ‘no Irish need apply’ signs prevalent throughout a significant period of the twentieth century.

Hickman, (1998:288) talks about the consequences of forced inclusion and says that it afforded no protection against ‘racialisation, problematisation and discrimination’, and notes that the emergence of a ‘myth of homogeneity’ throughout the 1950’s occurred at precisely the time immigration from New Commonwealth countries was increasing. Attempts to control who could enter Great Britain became manifest via the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act. The Act was originally intended to limit immigration as the government was concerned about the ramifications which an influx of migrants was likely to cause; the preamble to the Act states that it is:

“An Act to make temporary provision for controlling the immigration into the United Kingdom of Commonwealth citizens” (Commonwealth Immigration Act, 1962)

Hickman, (2005a:42-43) suggests that one of the reasons behind the Act was an attempt to specifically exclude East African Asians from entering Britain. The Irish were not covered by the Act, which necessitated the possession of a voucher issued by the Minister of Labour before anyone intending to work could enter the country. She argues that the Act was ‘a defining moment in the state’s strategy of re-racialising the boundaries of the nation’. As the Irish were not covered by this legislation it precipitated an almost inverse reaction of ‘forced inclusion’ – henceforth they would be deemed to be truly incorporated ‘within’ the British state, their role as outsiders being assigned to other groups of immigrants – a new and different source of ‘outsiders’.

The supposition behind the inclusion of the Irish was based entirely on skin colour and the attendant belief that whiteness indicated assimilation. The prevailing (mis)conception was that people of the same colour held similar beliefs, attitudes and values, a type of cultural resemblance; hence the Irish become transmogrified into a form of quasi-British ethnic subgroup. Hickman, (2005b:44) proposes that a key element in ascribing assimilation and inclusion to the Irish was to ensure:

‘continued access to their labour power for British employers and served to render them invisible within a reformulated British claim about the cultural homogeneity of the ‘British Isles’ ’

She goes on to caution that some accounts have imagined a seamless incorporation of the Irish and thereby indicate that they had not been subjected to real discrimination and racism – citing Paul’s, (1997) suggestion of the Irish being deemed ‘first cousins’ by the British as one example of this.

Obviously an interpretation such as Paul’s appears to render white on white racism as being somehow less objectionable, and in doing so obscures the subtle means by which the British population were able to sustain their positional power. It would be misleading to suggest that the change in the perception of the position of the Irish relative to other migrants altered indigenous, institutionalized racist attitudes. The Irish remained a vilified group and anti –Irish racism was commonplace; this was exacerbated throughout the 1970’s when violent civil conflict in Northern Ireland was an almost daily occurrence. It was during this time that the Irish became a ‘suspect community’ (Hillyard, 1993) and once IRA bombing campaigns took place in Britain, Nagle, (2005) suggests that the Irish community was subjected to unwarranted levels of scrutiny.

Mac an Ghail, (2000) in his study of the invisibility of ethnicity and anti-Irish racism argues that the dominant black/white dualism of race effectively deracialises the Irish. He contends that focusing on colour as the sole indicator of distinction between the indigenous population and immigrants is both reductionist and also ignores other cultural aspects such as religion. Moreover, any accounts of anti-Irish racism are thus depicted as fake, whilst descriptions of Irish claims that they comprise an ethnic minority are routinely declared inauthentic. His review of extant explanations within British sociology regarding anti-Irish racism provides little evidence of the issue being addressed. Indeed in a number of the seminal works that Mac an Ghail, (2000: 138) cites the Irish are either ignored or mentioned only in the context of an historical experience of racism. He attributes these shortcomings to the social construction of ethnicity and the focus on post-war New Commonwealth immigration whereby the Irish experience is either dismissed as historical, or not comparable to that experienced by New Commonwealth immigrants. Hence the key issues concerning the Irish are structured as either religious or class based and any claims of racism are diminished on the basis of the similarity of their skin colour. The narrow deliberation which enshrines colour as the key element of race relations is a result of the adoption of American models and does not provide adequate explanation of either the European context or the Irish experience. As Bonnett, (1993) argues the term 'White' cannot encompass all the alternative self-definitions of those who are currently lumped together under an umbrella of whiteness. Hickman, (1995) contends that focusing discussion around the issue of skin colour ignores other important historical aspects that led to racialised exclusions. The binary paradigm places strictures on the debate; Garrett,

(2002:478) points out that ‘the ‘misrecognition’ of an Irish dimension is institutionalised’ as long as the preoccupation of theorists is reliant on black/white interpretations of racism. Hickman and Walter, (1997:234) reporting to the Commission for Racial Equality on discrimination and the Irish in Britain conclude that:

‘there is an extremely strong resistance to recognition of the distinctiveness of Irish experience in Britain which results in a lack of acknowledgement of Irish needs and rights, but that at the same time there is a widespread, and almost completely unquestioned, acceptance of anti-Irish racism in society.’

Mac an Ghail, (2001:180) documents the shortcomings of adopting the US model of ethnic relations and argues that the experience of exclusion by the Irish diaspora led to the adoption of the term ‘cultural invisibility’ to describe their position. He examines the absence of theoretical considerations of the processes that enable cultural inclusion and exclusion and the role this absence has in perpetuating the binary ethnic model. He provides an analysis of the frameworks in which Irish difference is presented in sociology and outlines four conceptual approaches that have served to deny Irish difference: ‘the colour paradigm, the colonial paradigm, assimilation and the myth of homogeneity and the question of difference and sameness.’ (Mac an Ghail, 2001:181). As each of these stances fails to adequately acknowledge the Irish position in Britain he proposes that an alternative explanation is required to depict the contemporary situation. He calls for one that is fit for post-colonial, post-industrial decline whence there is a need to move away from former categorisations and the terminology of the black/white paradigm and suggests there is a need for academic authors to recognise ‘decentred forms of cultural racism and new ethnicities – exemplified by the Irish diaspora in Britain’ (Mac an Ghail, 2001:194).

The dangers of the dualistic interpretation are also outlined by Modood, (1996) when he suggests that they do not exemplify the reality of an ethnic pluralism that is the current scenario in Britain. He also posits that one of the indicators of historical racialised exclusion was that for certain groups (he cites the Irish and the Jews in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) if ethnic origin could be kept out of the public arena 'peace and prosperity came easier the less public one made ones minority practices or identity' Modood, (1996: 10). So at an individual level, life was easier if the 'outsider' kept their origins hidden and thus ensured inclusion and incorporation.

ASSIMILATION

One of the major shortcomings of the black/white dualistic theory of British ethnic relations is the widely held assumption that all the Irish are white and therefore automatically assimilate into the British population. Theoretical descriptions regarding assimilation adopt a number of competing positions, either the melting pot metaphor (Park, 1914) is utilised to explain how amalgamation occurs through contact and accommodation or a distinction is drawn concerning cultural pluralism and ethnicity. Alternatively, a contrast is shown between cultural assimilation and structural assimilation, where cultural assimilation is evidenced through the adoption of the lifestyle, manners and values of the host country and structural assimilation indicates entry in to civic and institutional activities; another view is that integration is strengthened through economic participation (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988:520; NES, 1991)

Hornsby-Smith & Dale, (1988) employ a processual analysis in which they state that there is a progressive reduction in cultural and structural differences over a lengthy period of time between the host population and the immigrant group. They suggest that the immigrant group retains its 'cultural characteristics' at the same time as there is a 'partial adoption of the cultural and structural attributes of the host society' (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988:520). Although they do note that some attention must be given to contingent factors such as the shared history of the country of origin and the place migrated to. Their quantitative study using data from General Household Survey (GHS), 1979 and 1980, investigated the levels of educational qualifications attained by the second-generation Irish in England and whether or not the occupational groupings of the Irish became similar to that of the English. They argue that educational parity is obtained by the second-generation as both genders equalled or exceeded the qualifications held by their English peers. As far as occupational groups were concerned they found similar results to qualifications – positions had exceeded those of the English (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988: 532).

One facet of the research that is of particular interest is the results for second-generation offspring whose parents originated from Northern Ireland which show that they did not realise the same levels of attainment as the second-generation children of Republic-born parents. Hornsby-Smith and Dale say this is in contrast to the different backgrounds of the migrant generation when men from the Republic had lower levels of qualifications and were more likely to have backgrounds in farming than those from Northern Ireland who were generally better qualified and from more diverse backgrounds. Based on

educational attainment, occupational status and out-marriage data, they concluded that there is 'a substantial measure of assimilation' by the second-generation (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988: 519).

Another quantitative study also used GHS data and combined the results for a 17 year period, using figures from between 1973 and 1989 (McMahon, 1993). Her results are broadly similar to Hornsby-Smith & Dale's as they indicate occupational attainments amongst second-generation females are better than British-born women. The analysis indicates wholesale adoption of the black/white binary model when she argues that the Irish have not had problems akin to those of the West Indian or Asian communities because they are white (McMahon, 1993:11). However, statistics cannot tell us the whole story it is too simplistic to suppose progression within the labour market in terms of occupational group is indicative of assimilation with the indigenous population.

Waning identity?

Both of the quantitative studies reviewed assumed assimilation via statistical analyses of data from the GHS so similar findings are inevitable. Walker, (2007:275) proposes that there has been a waning in Irish identity as the second and subsequent generations are integrated in to British society and Ryan, (1990:4) suggests that assimilation of the Irish in Britain is 'complete within a generation'. A somewhat different view is obtained elsewhere; Lennon et al, (1988:10) document Irish resistance to assimilation in the early 1980's and suggest this was partly as a result of seeing the way activists within the Black community dealt with racism and resisted assimilation. Certainly Garrett, (2002:481)

could not find any evidence to sustain the 'ethnic fade' thesis which presupposes assimilation on the basis of skin colour.

An interesting comparative study carried out with Irish people in Birmingham and Dublin sought to determine levels of cultural integration through a study of attitudes and beliefs. Whilst there was no perceptible difference uncovered in each groups' attitudes to religious practise and education; the Birmingham cohort displayed evidence of resistance to cultural assimilation (O'Donovan, (1984) cited in NESC, (1991)). Furthermore, this group demonstrated a 'more conservative Catholicism and a higher ethnic identity than did the Dublin Irish' which they reinforced and maintained through cultural activities such as participation in events run by Comhaltas Ceolteoiri Eireann and a knowledge of Irish history that highlighted the importance of maintaining their Irish culture and identity (O'Donovan, 1984:255). Thus high levels of 'cultural persistence' (Diner, 1983: xiv) were evident amongst the second-generation in the Birmingham group.

An implicit assumption within the assimilation literature is the idea of cultural passivity – the notion that the host culture affects the immigrant group; yet as Campbell, (1999: 273) points out little consideration has been given to the proposal that the reverse may also occur. The NESC, (1991:177) research examined types of acculturation and found evidence of four models that were common amongst Irish migrants: these range across a continuum where at one end 'Passing' is adopted when there is a wholesale adoption of host country values and characteristics including accent at the expense of Irish identity. At the other end of the spectrum there was evidence that some migrants became

ghettoised and made no attempts at integration preferring instead to replicate Ireland, adhering to an Irish lifestyle. In between these extremes they found evidence of partial adaptation, calling them ‘temporary exiles’ - these people remain entrenched in Irish culture but do interact with members of the host country. They are the people who perceive emigration to Britain as being a temporary measure and have intentions of returning to Ireland at some unspecified point in the future. Finally an adaptation strategy termed ‘Self confident Irish’, where the migrant can find pockets of British culture that enables identification – frequently through creative or participative organisations; NESC, (1991:179) indicate that this latter strategy is most applicable to ‘well educated middle class emigrants; or perhaps for active trade unionists’. The NESC report concludes that in contrast to the US ‘melting pot’ polyethnic model, in Britain a mono-ethnic predisposition is in existence which means that for some Irish migrants’, cultural assimilation is a prerequisite to success in the host country. There is only patchy and limited statistical evidence from past surveys to support the notion of assimilation by the Irish, the general perspective in the literature is that assimilation is at best partial.

It can be concluded then, that whilst the complexities of assimilation for this research area are magnified through the lens of the historical legacy between Britain and Ireland, current levels of in-migration to Britain, from Eastern Europe in particular, are likely to influence the polemic regarding the binary dichotomy and the black/white dualistic model. This may provide new and alternative perspectives on assimilation and perhaps enable the Irish diasporic experience to gain greater recognition through an acceptance

that skin colour alone cannot be used as the marker for difference or indeed be assumed to guarantee assimilation.

The Second- Generation: self-ascribed identity and attained identity

The preceding evaluations of incorporation, racialisation and assimilation demonstrate that Identity is often a multifaceted concept for the Irish in Britain. It is appropriate at this juncture to review and explore the concepts of Self-ascribed and attained identity in the second-generation in order to determine their opinions. As Campbell, (1999) notes the main accounts for interpreting the second-generation experience have been dominated by assimilation theory.

Much of the academic literature on second-generation Irish has been concentrated around a narrow range of issues which as Campbell, (1999:272) points out tend to be problem-centered. He argues that the impact of highlighting issues such as mental health problems and levels of morbidity has the capacity to obfuscate our appreciation of salient second-generation issues and results in the second-generation becoming 'textually constructed as a problem-centred presence'. Constructs of second-generation Irish inevitably include the derogatory label 'Plastic Paddy' ascribed them by Irish-born who believe that birth in Britain renders the second-generation in some way faux Irish and lacking the necessary credentials to claim genuine Irish ethnicity. Arrowsmith, (2000:35) discusses how awkward the position of the second-generation is as they are trapped between parental heritage yet at the same time fail to attain complete identification within Britain and are thus 'rendered invisible and inaudible from the point of view of recognition'. As Walter

et al, (2003:212) note, in Britain there is a widespread lack of recognition of a distinctive 'Irish cultural background'. The vagaries of a contested acknowledgement of second-generation identity ensure that this generation have to endure a forced awareness of a multiplicity of identities - not least the pejorative, dismissive term Plastic Paddy (although there has in recent years been a campaign to reclaim the term and badges and stickers declaring 'Plastic and Proud' produced in the colours of the Irish tricolour and the design of the Union Jack have been produced). To summarise, Campbell asserts that what is needed is a move away from 'quasi-Celtic binary divisions' of the second-generation as either totally assimilated or hanging on to outmoded ideas of Irishness. Instead he proposes that identities are more complex and that a hybrid 'Irish-Englishness' be utilised as it straddles both dimensions (Campbell, 1999:281).

Evidence of multiple identities that seek to encompass aspects of both Britishness and Irishness were uncovered by McCarvill, (2002) in his study of ethnic identity of second-generation Irish in Birmingham. Despite more than half his respondents declaring that they had experienced racism because of their Irish inheritance, many still opted to self-ascribe a hybrid identity. Modood, (1993:7) indicates that it is difficult to predict which identity an individual may assert as identities are not stable; indeed his more recent work suggests that individuals can also have group identities which:

' may be the ground of existing and long-standing inequalities such as racism, for example, and the ways that some people have conceived and treated others as inferior, less rational and culturally backward' (Modood, 2008:48).

The way that identity evolves is also generational and Harding and Balarajan, (2001:466) posit that influencing factors involve interaction with the host community at 'economic,

social and political' levels. This is also affirmed by Hickman et al, (2005:171) who note that the second-generations' identity changed as they aged and gained greater self-assurance. Modood, (1996:11) uncovered evidence that when young people feel subjected to racist exclusion they resort to 'symbolic assertion' of their ethnicity even where they described themselves as 'culturally British' which indicates a level of fluidity regarding their ethnic identities.

In earlier research exploring the identity and ethnicity of second-generation youths in Birmingham and London, Ullah, (1985) discovered that there was no single impartial factor that determined identity. In a later article (Ullah, 1990) he describes the importance of social context in influencing the choice of identity; of significance as his research was carried out during a period of negative stereotypical depictions of the Irish due to the violent conflict in Northern Ireland.

If self-ascribed ethnicity and identity is so problematic for the second-generation it is perhaps surprising that few alternatives have emerged to assist in developing an acceptable lexicon to describe this group. For many the commodification of Irishness that has occurred in recent years through the mechanism of Irish theme pubs and the Riverdance show has had the effect of perpetuating an idealised view of Irishness that emphasises stereotypes and does little to portray modern realities (McGovern, 2002). One alternative descriptor has been proposed by McWilliams, (2007) who indicates that Irishness is not a land based ethnicity but a tribal ethnicity and suggests using 'Hiberno-Brits' as a suitable term to describe the second- and third-generation. The lack of a

hyphenated hybrid name is perhaps indicative of the unique position the second-generation are in – as Walter, (2004:187) points out the Irish have been in Britain far longer than any other ethnic group yet have not developed a hyphenated descriptor for second and subsequent generations.

SUMMARY

This chapter sought to examine extant literature regarding the concept of second-generation immigrants in general and the second-generation Irish in particular. A diverse body of literature has been examined to inform our understanding of the key issues concerning the second-generation Irish. This has revealed that whilst some issues are common across second-generation groups wherever they reside, there are a number of issues which are specific to the second-generation Irish in Britain.

As already outlined, the process of integration is complex and influenced by national context (Crul & Vermuelen, 2003b) and in the case of second-generation Irish is made more contentious because of their former colonial past. Even semantic differences that reflect the legacy of colonialism are evident in the literature, Zontini, (2007) refers to second-generation Italians in the United Kingdom, however any writing regarding the Irish refers instead to Britain (Mac an Ghail, 2000; Hickman et al, 2005). Whilst the conferment of citizenship is deemed a powerful tool in assisting the second-generations' integration and inclusion, (Castles & Miller, 2003; Crul & Vermuelen, 2003b) this does not apply to second-generation Irish because of the Common Travel Area and the

complex longstanding arrangements in place to facilitate ease of movement, especially labour, between the two countries.

Concern has been expressed regarding segmented assimilation and the possibility of ‘downward’ assimilation occurring amongst the second-generation (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Until the end of the Second World War many Irish migrants were in menial jobs which meant there was scant possibility for their offspring to assimilate downwards (Strachan, 1991). Following the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act there was a subtle shift in perception regarding the Irish community so that they came to be regarded as part of white mainstream society in contrast to immigrants from the New Commonwealth (Hickman, 2005). Second-generation career success has also been explained as a consequence of attaining educational parity and for some, the embourgeoisement that resulted when adherence to an Irish identity was counteracted by attendance at Grammar schools and university (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988; Wilkin, 2008).

Findings regarding hybrid identities indicate that in many cases a common hyphenated term for new identities is adopted by ethnic groups (Hussain & Baguley, 2005). The second-generation Irish draw on two contrasting and conflicting cultural traditions, yet no definitive hyphenated descriptor has emerged, either to counter the derogatory epithet ‘Plastic Paddy’ or as a shorthand to acknowledge ethnic background (Campbell, 1999). Moreover, evidence of ‘multiple positionalities’ (Wessendorf, 2008a:8) was evident amongst second-generation Irish when asked to describe their identity (McCarvill, 2002). Notions of acceptance both within the host community and the country of origin are

multifaceted for the second-generation. They appear to be common across nationalities as Wessendorf, (2008a) uncovered examples with her Swiss-Italian subjects who felt excluded when in Italy, likewise Zontini, (2007) found evidence that second-generation Italians were viewed as 'English' by their Italian relatives and 'Italian' by their British peers.

The important role that religion plays in reinforcing ethnic identity (Cadge & Ecklund, 2007) manifests itself through the various uses places of worship are put to by ethnic communities (Haddad, 2004; Min, 2005) along with the welfare services they provide (Fortier, 2000). As these experiences are common across countries and denominations, evidence for second-generation Irish confirmed that the church played an important role regarding education (Hickman, 1996) concomitant social mobility (Wilkin, 2008) and welfare services (Woodhead, 2008).

The complexities of the ethnicity and identity debate emphasise the problematic nature of the position of the second-generation Irish in Britain. This review of the literature also covered generic aspects of ethnic labour markets; issues regarding the second-generation Irish labour market will be addressed in detail in the following chapter. The topic merits separate considerations as this thesis investigates whether there have been any changes in Irish occupational niches for the second-generation.

CHAPTER THREE

LOCATING THE SECOND-GENERATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

This chapter examines data on the location of the second-generation Irish in the labour market. The focus of this thesis seeks to build on O'Connor & Goodwin's, (2002) study of first-generation Irish migrant workers which indicated the clustering of employment over an extended period of time within gendered and stereotyped occupations for this ethnic group. In order to ascertain the position of second-generation Irish and whether or not they remain in Irish ethnic occupational niches two areas need to be addressed: a brief examination of the employment of Irish-born workers in Britain to establish in what areas they are economically active followed by an analysis of occupations that indicate significant numbers of second-generation Irish.

IRISH-BORN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

In order to contextualise second-generation labour market positioning it is useful to first review available data on the migrant generation and explore whether or not such statistical data confirms their employment in particular ethnic niches. UK Census returns indicate that there are currently 751,304 people who claim an Irish ethnicity (National Statistics, 2008).

There are several data sources which enable us to locate Irish-born workers in the UK labour market. Notable large data sets include the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS), British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and the European Community Household Panel

(ECHP). LFS is conducted by the Office for National Statistics and samples 60,000 households living at private addresses in Great Britain to collect information on the UK labour market, in order to provide information when formulating labour market policies - significantly it is not in line with the 2001 census. BHPS has been running for sixteen years and is also a household sample, uniquely it has been following the same sample of individuals over a number of years. It started with 5,500 households and has since grown so that by the end of its first decade it covered 10,500 households. ECHP provides harmonised data for Europe with a sample size of 5,000 households the most recent (and final) collection of data took place in 2001. It collects data as part of the BHPS and then manipulates it into a common European format.

Whilst large-scale longitudinal datasets allow secondary analysis of data that would be difficult for the individual researcher to acquire, they are not without drawbacks. There is a degree of variability in the quality of such data which can make it difficult to determine its suitability for secondary analysis. Taking the LFS as an example, it provides good coverage of a wide range of relevant labour market topics, examining a number of pertinent variables such as qualifications and training and is longitudinal. Despite this it is not entirely suitable for use by all labour market researchers because it cannot assist when comparing changes over time because it does not sample the same respondents continuously, hence individuals or specific cohorts and how they might progress cannot be tracked. Furthermore, it is not able to depict any subtle differences in individuals' labour market experiences. For the purposes of this study the LFS systematic random sample design, drawing on the British Postcode Addresses File and key Census variables

(National Statistics, 2009) results in a sample that is stratified geographically but is unable to demonstrate its coverage of second-generation Irish due to its use of the census 'Ethnic Group' categories, which relies on self-ascribed ethnicity, precludes a 'non-White Irish' response and has only allowed a 'White Irish' response since the 2001 Census.

Halpin's (1997) exploratory examination used all three data sources in his study of the Irish in Britain. His survey provides useful analysis of the sectors of the labour market in which the Irish-born are over or under-represented. He finds occupations in construction predominates over-representation for males, although they are also over-represented as psychologists and social workers. Whilst over-representation for females was in the fields of nursing and health workers, specialist managers, engineers, architects and IT professionals. Owen, (1995) draws on the 1991 Census to report on occupations of Irish-born in the workforce and his conclusions broadly reflect Halpin's. In the main, the four principal sectors of construction, distribution, engineering and transport & communication account for most male employment whilst women are to be found in health, education and the service sector. Indeed Walter (1997:61) suggests that the Irish have become identified with certain sectors of the labour market to such an extent that construction is seen as an ethnic niche.

A more detailed study is provided by O'Connor & Goodwin, (2002) who used LFS data a decade apart (1987 and 1997) along with the Irish LFS 1987 data to locate more than 1,000 Irish-born workers in the UK (1,247 in the 1997 data and 1,482 in the 1987 data). O'Connor & Goodwin's paper offers a different perspective to the principally statistical examinations already outlined; instead they provide a sociological analysis that focuses

on the pertinent areas of race and gender. This viewpoint also enables them to examine the long term social processes that influence the labour market experiences of Irish-born workers.

Their examination of work related debates and literature relating to Irish-born migrants indicated the gendered nature of labour migration with men and women employed in the British labour market in traditionally gender specific occupations. Furthermore, this pattern appears to have remained consistent over time, so that a narrow range of sectors and occupations have absorbed repeated waves of Irish migrants. Typically Irish-born men are employed in construction, manufacturing and dock-work whilst Irish-born women can be found in domestic labour, clerical and caring work. Data from the 1997 LFS for both Irish-born men and women compared to UK-born employment by industry demonstrates clear patterns:

TABLE 6**Industry of Employees & Self Employed for Irish-born & UK-born by Gender**

| 1997 LFS | IRISH-BORN | | | UK-BORN | | |
|----------------------|------------|------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| | All | Male | Female | All | Male | Female |
| Agriculture | 0.7 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 1.9 | 2.7 | 0.9 |
| Fishing | * | * | * | 0.1 | 0.1 | * |
| Mining & Q'rrying | 0.4 | 0.7 | * | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| Manufacturing | 12.0 | 15.5 | 8.2 | 19.0 | 25.4 | 11.5 |
| Elec, gas & Water | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.3 |
| Construction | 14.1 | 26.4 | 1.8 | 7.0 | 11.9 | 1.4 |
| Wholesale & retail | 12.5 | 13.0 | 11.8 | 15.7 | 14.3 | 17.3 |
| Hotels & restaurants | 3.6 | 1.8 | 5.4 | 4.4 | 2.8 | 6.3 |
| Transport & Storage | 7.1 | 9.2 | 5.0 | 6.5 | 9.0 | 3.5 |
| Financial | 2.9 | 3.5 | 2.2 | 4.4 | 3.7 | 5.2 |
| Real estate & busn | 11.1 | 11.3 | 10.8 | 9.5 | 10.0 | 8.9 |
| Public Admin | 4.6 | 3.5 | 5.7 | 6.1 | 6.1 | 6.1 |
| Education | 6.1 | 4.2 | 7.9 | 7.5 | 3.9 | 11.6 |
| Health & Social wk | 17.9 | 3.2 | 33.3 | 11.2 | 3.5 | 20.2 |
| Other community | 6.5 | 6.0 | 6.7 | 5.5 | 4.7 | 5.7 |
| N | 560 | 284 | 276 | 60,288 | 32,256 | 28,032 |

Source: O'Connor & Goodwin, (2002:44)

Closer examination of the health and social work category reveals that 33.3% of Irish-born women are employed in this category and that 26.4% of Irish-born men are employed in construction, more than double the figure for UK-born men. Whilst this data provides general information regarding occupational sectors such details are generic. For example, the exact roles that women are performing within the Health & Social Work category are not delineated; there is a marked difference in labour market experience between a surgeon and a nursing auxiliary yet the LFS data cannot illustrate such distinctions. This is also significant when attempting to compare Irish-born and UK-born – so that the Health and Social Work category is equally noteworthy as being the largest

category for UK-born females. Taking the combined male and female figures for each occupation and then comparing these totals by place of birth indicate that in some sectors the differences between the ethnic groups are only a few percentage points (e.g. 11.1% of Irish-born work in Real Estate & Business compared to 9.5% of UK-born); although there does appear to be a significant difference in the case of Construction with twice as many Irish-born occupied in this sector.

They also explore the argument that the Irish have long been a source of cheap labour which was a key constituent in the development of industrial Britain yet also led to their ultimate subordination :

“By virtue of being part of this reserve army [of labour] Irish migrants, both skilled and unskilled, are subordinated at the level of class and as members of a migrant minority group” (O’Connor & Goodwin, 2002:33)

However, their study suggests that there have been some small changes over time for Irish-born workers as indicated by social class data, with a degree of upward mobility which was most evident in the ‘Intermediate’ category.

O’Connor & Goodwin, (2002:49) conclude however that the relative lack of change between 1987 and 1997 is most noteworthy; there remain significant numbers of Irish-born in the lower social class classification. Finally, levels of over-representation for both genders endure with men over-represented in construction and women in nursing which has been the case for more than a century.

LOCATING THE SECOND-GENERATION

Whilst it is relatively straightforward to locate Irish-born in the labour market it is much more problematic to identify their offspring. As Akenson, (1993: 190) points out, there has been no systematic collection of data for the Irish as a multi-generational ethnic group. As a result the second- and third-generation are ignored and unlike their Black or Asian counterparts do not figure anywhere in official data.

Walter, (1999) calculated that more than 11% i.e. approximately 6 million people in Britain are first-, second- or third-generation Irish. She argued that the inclusion of an 'Irish' category in the 2001 census would therefore incorporate second-generation Irish into the data and predicted that the size of the Irish community could increase threefold. Hickman et al, (2001) analysed three official datasets, GHS, LFS and BCS70 in an attempt to quantify the number of second-generation Irish in Britain. They acknowledge that second- and third-generation children have been overlooked by most datasets because there is an implicit assumption, based entirely on their skin colour that they have been assimilated in to the indigenous population. Walls & Williams, (2003) comment on the apparent invisibility of the Irish as a distinct ethnic group because of their whiteness. They suggest that this has resulted in the Irish community being under researched, with few accounts of their experiences, as their whiteness has rendered them invisible.

Early work in the area utilised data from the 1979 and 1980 GHS to investigate how far the occupational distribution of second-generation Irish mirrored that of the English

(Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988: 527). Their findings indicate that second-generation Irish women had:

‘...considerably lower proportions in semi- and unskilled manual work compared with both first-generation Irish women and the English control group.’ (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988:532)

Similar profiles between second-generation Irish and British men were identified; with a marked difference in terms of gender, second-generation Irish women being found in greater numbers in higher socio-economic groups.

Hickman et al’s (2001) pioneering study sought to extrapolate data from existing large datasets in order to establish a valid baseline that portrayed the second-generation. They indicate that the inclusion of the Irish ‘Ethnic Group’ category in the 2001 census is a step towards acknowledging the multi-generational make up of the Irish community. However, given the dearth of existing official statistics they have to resort to calculating a figure for the size of the second-generation population. They estimate that this is two times greater than Irish-born and therefore propose that if a multiplier is used the combined population of Irish-born and second-generation would equate to 1.7 million, compared to an Irish-born total of 845,057 (Hickman et al, 2001: 43) Taking in to account regional variances, in areas where there is a high concentration of second-generation then the multiplier should be 2.5. There are inherent difficulties when attempting to extrapolate data. Hickman et al’s attempts to predict the total size of the second-generation based entirely on statistics from three different datasets none of which set out to show second-generation Irish as a separate category is fraught with difficulty. They present some data on second-generation employment patterns which makes use of a

three part classification developed by the Irish Republic's National Economic & Social Council (NESC), which when combined with data based on the General Household Survey (GHS) figures provides evidence of gendered socio-economic groups as illustrated below:

TABLE 7

Socio-economic group of British, Irish-born and Second-Generation Irish by gender

MALES

| SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP | BRITISH | IRISH-BORN | SECOND-GEN IRISH |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Service | 29 | 17 | 27 |
| Intermediate | 23 | 22 | 23 |
| Working | 48 | 61 | 50 |
| TOTALS | 19,065 | 361 | 420 |

FEMALES

| SOCIO ECONOMIC GROUP | BRITISH | IRISH-BORN | SECOND-GEN IRISH |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | % | % | % |
| Service | 19 | 19 | 22 |
| Intermediate | 39 | 24 | 44 |
| Working | 42 | 57 | 34 |
| TOTALS | 20,927 | 383 | 478 |

Source: Hickman et al, (2001:31) based on GHS 1980-88, NESC 1991

This data indicates that employment for second-generation males is much more closely aligned to their British counterparts than those of second-generation females and also confirms Hornsby-Smith and Dale's (1988) findings that second-generation women have a significant presence in higher socio-economic groups and this is most marked within the intermediate category. If we look at occupational categories by gender and place of

birth in the following two tables, what is evident is that many of the second-generation are engaged in occupations in between their Irish-born parents and the other UK-born white population sampled.

TABLE 8

Occupational categories by birthplace/ethnic group, 1983 (%)

WOMEN

| | Irish-born (Republic of Ireland) | UK-born with Irish parents | Other UK-born (white) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| II Prof. ed. Welfare, health | 21 | 13 | 13 |
| v Managerial | 3 | 7 | 5 |
| vi Clerical & related | 22 | 37 | 40 |
| vii Selling | 6 | 12 | 8 |
| ix Catering, cleaning, personal | 39 | 21 | 17 |
| Xii Printing, assembling | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 51,455 | 43,172 | 906,280 |

Source: Walter, (1988)

As Hickman et al, (2001:31) note second-generation females are found in greater numbers in clerical work than the migrant generation, there are fewer second-generation women working in domestic and personal services. There is a degree of similarity regarding second-generation men and their intermediate position in the categories of

construction and professional occupations. Again they are positioned between their Irish-born parents and the other UK-born white population sampled, indicating that whilst some men move away from the ethnic niche of construction work there are still twice as many second-generation Irish engaged in this type of work than their UK-born counterparts.

TABLE 9

Occupational categories by birthplace/ethnic group, 1983 (%)

MEN

| | Irish-born (Republic of Ireland) | UK-born with Irish parents | Other UK-born (white) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| iProf. manage/admin | 1 | 6 | 10 |
| v Managerial | 8 | 12 | 12 |
| vi Clerical & related | 7 | 12 | 12 |
| ix Catering, cleaning, personal | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| xi Processing, non metal | 11 | 3 | 4 |
| xii Processing, metal | 11 | 13 | 14 |
| xiii Printing, assembling | 7 | 5 | 3 |
| xiv Construction | 26 | 10 | 5 |
| xv Transport | 11 | 13 | 10 |
| Total | 55,574 | 55,548 | 1,257,701 |

Source: Walter, (1988)

What is evident from the preceding analysis is that there is a shortage of statistical data for this ethnic group which results in researchers only ever being able to provide a partial account of second-generation labour market positioning. The problems concomitant with

such sparse data as well as the outcomes attributable to this situation merit examination in greater detail.

Lack of multigenerational ethnic data

The FIS, (2007b) report for England shows that figures relating to employment by sector mirror the findings of O'Connor & Goodwin, (2002) in terms of gendered occupations. In England 20.2% of Irish men work in construction compared to 11.8% of the White British population and 26.7% of Irish women work in health and social work compared to 18.6% of White British women. However these results are somewhat predictable given the very small numbers of second- and third-generation who self-ascribed an Irish identity in their census return, the data indicates that 149,586 people who were born in Britain ticked the Irish ethnic group box (2001 Census, Table S102 cited in O'Keeffe, 2006:179). Hence we must conclude that as the majority of figures in the FIS data, which draws on the 2001 Census, are more likely to refer to Irish-born.

Locating second-generation in the British labour market is extremely problematic and in answer to the question of why there is insufficient data on the second-generation, four main issues emerge that demonstrate the underlying causes. Firstly we are faced with government imposed conceptions of ethnicity that do not encompass any variants aside from five predetermined 2001 Census options: White, Mixed, Asian, Black and Chinese. The White category has a choice of three subsets: British, Irish or Other White and as this is the only reference to the Irish as an ethnic group on the census form, it presupposes that the Irish are exclusively white.

Secondly, as FIS, (2007b) have noted subsequent analysis of the 2001 census has failed to disaggregate data for the White group hence the Irish are overlooked as a discrete ethnic group. A review of commentaries on the 2001 census indicate that the varying approaches to dealing with data on White Irish indicate a lack of consistency and call in to question the usefulness of collecting such data if it is then either ignored or subsumed into an overarching and more general 'White' category (Blackwell & Guinea, 2005; Bosveld et al, 2006; Simpson et al, 2006).

This issue also relates to a third point which has been raised by Akenson, (1993) regarding the lack of multi-generational statistics. This shortfall indicates that assimilation is assumed to have taken place by the second-generation. In the introduction to their study Connolly & White, (2006:1) refer to the various groups of migrants who arrived in Britain during the 1950's and 1960's as arriving from the 'New Commonwealth countries' , there is no mention of the Irish at all at this point. However they do provide a brief analysis of White Irish later in the article when there is an implicit suggestion of assimilation as they state: 'Those who came shared a common language and Christian background with the White British population' (Connolly & White, 2006:3). Even if the majority of second-generation have assimilated to some degree, this does not provide an adequate explanation of the continuation of ethnic occupational niches in construction and nursing as outlined by both Hickman et al, (2001) and FIS, (2007b).

Finally, official analyses of the 2001 census do not disaggregate the Irish as a distinct Ethnic group despite the British government's espoused policy of multiculturalism. Heath & Cheung, (2006) make passing reference to the White Irish population using them as an example of a group that can be overlooked when what they describe as 'lay writers confusion' conflates ethnicity with colour difference.

As official datasets do not present adequate statistical information on the position of the second-generation in the labour market, analysis of the literature on ethnic labour markets and its applicability to the second-generation Irish in Britain may assist in providing a more holistic account

SUMMARY

The literature regarding ethnic labour markets indicates that conceptions of ethnic niches refer to two situations. Either the ethnic community has specialist skills not present in the host society or members of a particular ethnic group are concentrated to such a significant extent that they outnumber other workers in specialised sectors (Graves and Graves, 1974; Wang, 2004). Examination of labour force statistics indicates that second-generation men outnumber their British born peers in the construction sector (Walter, 1988) so that there are twice as many employed in building and allied trades as British men. Second-generation women's employment falls in to the intermediate socio-economic group category having moved away from work in domestic and personal services (Walter, 1988) being more likely to be engaged in health, welfare and clerical occupations (Hickman et al, 2001).

The social construction of ethnic niches facilitates take up of jobs in specific industries as information and resources are shared within an ethnic group thereby perpetuating ethnic employment spheres (Wilson, 2003). Clearly institutional factors influence labour markets and there is evidence that Irish migrants were absorbed in to the secondary labour market for almost two centuries where they were used as a source of cheap labour (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002). Following the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act and the subsequent assumption that the Irish community were in some way incorporated into British society, their occupations began to more closely mirror those in white mainstream occupations (Hickman et al, 2005). Whilst there was no linguistic penalty for Irish migrants, the nature of employment within the construction sector in particular, perpetuates primary and secondary labour markets. Many small subcontractors being engaged throughout the operation of a construction contract rely on directly recruited day labourers (Cowley, 2001:230). Construction endured as an ethnic niche as it was sustainable over time and allowed social mobility. This is because it enabled successful self-employed subcontractors to build businesses, for example the Kennedy brothers who began as labourers in Manchester in the 1940's later moving into subcontracting for a public utility and then splitting the business to cover different areas of the public sector. By 2001 the Kennedy brothers were on the Sunday Times Rich List with an estimated worth of £70 million (Cowley, 2001:247).

Patterns of migration, most notably chain migration, also aided in the continuation of ethnic niche occupations for women. According to Ryan, (2008a) family and kinship

networks influenced occupational choices to such an extent so that over half the women in her study had nursing networks prior to coming to Britain. Nursing was deemed a respectable job for a girl, with live-in accommodation provided thus allaying parental fears. Direct recruitment of Irish women to nursing posts went on for a significant time in the post-war period, with the result that 12% of nurses in 1971 were Irish (Daniels, 1993).

It is clear that statistical evidence concerning second-generation Irish in the UK labour market is piecemeal. Neither does extant qualitative research on the second-generation provide a comprehensive picture of their occupations. Analysis is thwarted when attempting to combine data from a diverse range of sources and furthermore a variety of interpretations of the 2001 Census data has failed to disaggregate the Irish as a separate ethnic group. It can be concluded that whilst there is very limited detailed labour market statistical evidence the traditional Irish ethnic niches in construction and nursing do appear to continue to recruit the second-generation albeit in smaller numbers than the migrant generation (Hickman et al, 2001).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the methodological approach adopted for this research together with a justification of the selected approach and methods. It describes the sample selected for the research and the way in which it was obtained along with details of how access to the research population of second-generation Irish was negotiated. Data collection methods are then outlined including a discussion of the biographical methods that were deemed particularly suitable for this study. A consideration of ethics and issues of informed consent is provided that highlights the suitability of the interview approach adopted alongside the use of photo-elicitation. Limitations of the interview method are explored. Finally, debates around issues of generalisability within qualitative research are considered.

THE SAMPLE

This thesis sets out to explore the British labour market experiences of second-generation Irish. A number of contributions to extant literature on second-generation Irish have utilised levels of assimilation as a mechanism through which to investigate the second-generation's experiences (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988; McMahon, 1993, Ullah, 1985). Such studies indicate that the 'dominant conception' of second-generation Irish is that they are the:

'English-born children of Irish Catholic migrants from the Republic of Ireland'
(Campbell, 1999: 281)

As these parameters are easily understood and widely accepted within academic circles as a credible construction of the second-generation (Ullah, 1990; Mc Carvill, 2002; Hickman et al, 2005) it was decided that they would be used as the criteria for inclusion in this study. Thus in order to take part in this research all participants would have parent(s) who were born in the Republic of Ireland (or Irish Free State), with a Catholic background and they themselves must have been born in England. Furthermore, another reason for imposing such parameters is that evidence suggests that by the second-generation there are differences between the attainment levels of those with a Republic of Ireland background and those whose parents are from the six counties. Moreover, extant research indicates that the children of Northern Irish-born parents have qualifications and occupation patterns that closely resemble their English counterparts (Walters, 2001; Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988,)

It was also decided that for practical reasons participants would be recruited from the second-generation Irish who lived or worked in Coventry. The reasons for this were twofold; firstly as outlined in the introduction, Coventry has historically had a large Irish community so it would be relatively straightforward to make contact with people who fell within the research parameters. Coventry, the 11th largest city in Britain, is a suitable site in which to conduct research on second-generation Irish as it attracted large numbers of Irish-born migrants in the post war years and currently some 3.5% of its' population are Irish according to the 2001 Census data. Taking these Census statistics and then applying the multiplier as suggested by Hickman and Walter (2001) and previously discussed in the review of the literature, would indicate that closer to 8.75% of the population was a

more realistic assessment of first- and second-generation Irish in the city. However, a note of caution is necessary here as the only official figures we have to work with are derived from the Census categories, which means that it automatically excludes any self-ascribed Irish who are not 'White'.

Secondly and more pragmatically, I am a part time doctoral researcher who is working full time and also has domestic commitments, hence my opportunity to undertake fieldwork was extremely limited and I felt that restricting participation to those living or working in Coventry would aid data collection and would be the most efficient use of my time.

Such an approach meant that the sampling was both non-probability (Blaxter et al, 2001:163) and purposive. Non-probability sampling was deemed suitable because there was no obvious sampling frame for the population in question, therefore a multiplicity of approaches had to be employed to advertise in a variety of different arenas for the need for participants to take part in the study. Purposive sampling ensured that those interviewed were 'relevant to the research question' (Bryman, 2004:334). However, once it became apparent that sufficient numbers of participants were becoming difficult to attract within the timescale available for conducting the interviews, snowball sampling was also used if interviewees suggested (without prompting) that they had contacts who might be interested in taking part.

Whilst it might initially appear that the research design to obtain a relevant sample lacked coherence, the combined approaches constituted 'Opportunistic sampling' and enabled

the identification of appropriate individuals. Adopting an opportunistic approach enabled a variety of methods to secure participants to be employed and also ensured any unexpected opportunities that presented themselves were pursued (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 78). As Rossman & Rallis, (1998:94) observe qualitative researchers need to ‘develop a repertoire of strategies to gain access’. The research plan also follows Wengraf’s, (2001:96) recommendation that haphazard sampling is rejected in favour of ‘a deliberate or purposeful selection’. However, it is well documented that inviting participants to self-select has inherent problems, (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005) not least because bias may ensue. Robson, (1993:140) argues that although non-probability samples are satisfactory where there is no desire to generalise statistical data, the researcher must rely on her judgement to ensure the sample chosen reflects the research population in question. Whilst acknowledging that any academic study involves a degree of selectivity it is worth noting that in their discussion of qualitative research approaches, Mays & Pope (1995: 110) point out that:

‘All research is selective – there is no way that the researcher can in any sense capture the literal truth of events. All research depends on collecting particular sorts of evidence through the prism of particular methods’

Nevertheless, by asking participants to self-select, the research design seeks to minimise the exclusion of subpopulations, for example women who change their surname on marriage, who may be excluded if participants are selected on the basis of an Irish name analysis (Walls & Williams, 2003).

Sample size

When determining the size of the sample to be interviewed I was aware that it would not be possible to claim that self-selected participants were truly 'representative' of the second-generation Irish in Coventry in terms of quantifiable variables such as social class, gender or age. Rather, composition of the opportunistic sample sought to ensure sufficient respondents with as far as possible a balanced mix of age and gender being achieved, in order to give the research face validity within an academic milieu.

There is some debate as to the appropriate size of a sample within qualitative research; Gerson & Horowitz, (2002:223) indicate that researchers should aim to conduct between 60 and 150 qualitative interviews, as they believe this is the ideal size which allows for ease of analysis of material whilst also supporting credible results. In contrast Warren, (2002:99) suggests that she could find few reasons which outlined the ideal number of respondents that were necessary for qualitative studies; but she did propose there 'appeared to be norms' in published qualitative research of between 20 and 30 interviews. Clearly there is no universal ideal sample size and researchers must be cognisant, inter alia, of the limitations of their resources, not least that of available time. For that reason I decided to aim to interview 30 people in the three month period January to March 2008, with the proviso that I would then review the data that had been collected and determine whether I had enough material at that stage and if not then further respondents could be interviewed.

GAINING ACCESS

A variety of organisations were contacted to negotiate and/or facilitate access to potential participants with a relevant background; these included Coventry Irish Society (CIS), Coventry Mayo Association, Catholic churches in Coventry, the Coventry branch of the Irish Professionals Network (IPN), Gaffney's Irish shop and BBC Coventry and Warwickshire local radio. At the outset in my initial research proposal I had planned to use the 2001 Census data to identify ethnicity by council ward (see Table 10 overleaf). Firstly, an initial analysis of ethnicity was constructed and then it was proposed to map this against the Catholic parishes in the city as the two different areas of classification do not entirely correspond geographically. To further complicate matters the nomenclature used for wards by Coventry City Council does not always give an indication as to which part of the city they are situated in, ward names do not entirely correspond with names of local areas.

TABLE 10
2001 CENSUS: IRISH ETHNICITY BY WARD, COVENTRY

| WARD | NUMBER | % IRISH |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| BABLAKE | 521 | 2.3% |
| BINLEY& WILLENHALL | 594 | 3.2% |
| CHEYLESMORE | 379 | 2.7% |
| EARLSDON | 515 | 3.1% |
| FOLESHILL | 415 | 2.3% |
| HENLEY | 546 | 3.2% |
| HOLBROOKS | 649 | 3.5% |
| LONGFORD | 574 | 3.3% |
| LOWER STOKE | 624 | 4.0% |
| RADFORD | 769 | 4.6% |
| ST MICHAELS | 578 | 3.8% |
| SHERBOURNE | 1064 | 6.4% |
| UPPER STOKE | 589 | 3.5% |
| WAINBODY | 255 | 1.6% |
| WESTWOOD | 482 | 3.2% |
| WHOBBERLEY | 739 | 4.5% |
| WOODLANDS | 530 | 2.9% |
| WYKEN | 579 | 3.2% |
| TOTAL | 10,401 | 3.5% |

Source: Coventry City Council, (2007)

The five wards with the highest concentration of first generation Irish were identified and it was planned to configure these in to their respective parishes, where the research would be publicised via parish newsletters distributed weekly in Catholic churches. Whilst there is no guarantee that second-generation Irish are still living in the same parishes as first-generation Irish-born migrants, or even attend Catholic services, such an approach does enable the research project to be promoted within the Irish community. Moreover, a small

proportion of those self-ascribing a ‘White Irish’ identity in the 2001 Census would have been second-generation. According to King et al, (1989) the expansion of Catholic churches in Coventry - from two in 1913 to seventeen in 1983 - indicated a growing suburbanisation of the Irish population, thus a mix of inner city and suburban parishes were expected to emerge from the preliminary analysis and would be included in the five parishes selected. See Table 11 below for a list of all Catholic churches in Coventry, presented in order of their establishment and the areas of the city which the parishes cover.

TABLE 11 CATHOLIC CHURCHES AND THEIR LOCATION IN COVENTRY

| CHURCH | AREA OF CITY |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ST OSBURG | INNER CITY/BOUNDON |
| SS MARY & BENEDICT | HILLFIELDS |
| ST ELIZABETH | FOLESHILL |
| ALL SOULS | CHAPELFIELDS/EARLSDON/WHOBBERLEY |
| SACRED HEART | STOKE/BINLEY |
| CHRIST THE KING | BOUNDON |
| ST THOMAS MORE | STYVECHALE/CHEYLESMORE/FINHAM |
| ST PATRICK | WOOD END/BELL GREEN |
| OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION | TILE HILL/BANNER BROOK |
| HOLY FAMILY | RADFORD/HOLBROOKS |
| CORPUS CHRISTI | ERNSFORD GRANGE |
| ST JOHN VIANNEY | EASTERN GREEN/MOUNT NOD |
| ST JOSEPH THE WORKER | CANLEY/CANNON PARK |
| ST JOHN FISHER | WYKEN/WALSGRAVE |
| ST ANNE | WILLENHALL |

It was planned to then contact each of the five parishes with high Irish ethnicity, as identified by the Census and provide information concerning the research and the need for participants to be interviewed, with a request that it be placed on church notice boards and/or in their respective parish newsletters. To expedite this, on 5th August 2007, a letter was sent to the Boundaries Commission of the Archdiocese of Birmingham explaining the research and requesting details of all Coventry parish boundaries (see Appendix 2). It was necessary to obtain information for all parishes because as previously discussed the council wards and parish boundaries do not overlap; with parishes sometimes having parts of two or three separate council wards within their boundaries. This request was followed up on a monthly basis, over a period of four months, with telephone calls to ask if the information was available and if it would be forthcoming. On each occasion a message had to be left on an answering machine and no contact was ever received from the person in charge of the Boundaries Commission. As no verbal contact had been established by December 2007 I then telephoned the curial offices of the Vicar General for the Archdiocese; staff in this office referred me to the Diocesan archivist. In a telephone conversation with the archivist I established that there was no official set of maps of parishes in existence and also learnt that he could only grant me access to the original minutes of the Boundaries Commission committee meetings from over thirty years ago; furthermore access to the archives was restricted and was only available by prior appointment during a set time of day and then only on three half days per week. As I was looking for maps that could be quickly plotted against council ward boundaries this did not seem like a viable proposition.

Subsequently at the beginning of January 2008 I wrote to each Coventry parish priest individually and requested a copy of their parish boundaries and asked them to send me a copy of any map they might have. Included with the letter was a stamped addressed envelope to facilitate return of this information (Appendix 3). The letter was sent to 15 parishes in Coventry. One month later seven replies had been received which indicated that the existence of parish maps was random and that many could only produce a rather dated narrative that indicated where boundaries existed. At this juncture and mindful that the time available to conduct the fieldwork was diminishing a letter was sent to fifteen parishes on 5th February 2008 enclosing a flyer asking for volunteers to take part in the research and requesting that the flyer be displayed on church notice boards (appendix 4). Two parishes, St. Vladimir the Great and St. Stanislaus Kostka, were deliberately omitted from the research because they serve the Ukrainian and Polish communities.

‘Gatekeepers’ within the community, most notably Coventry Irish Society (CIS) were also contacted. An initial meeting was held with CIS in October 2007 when the research question and means of contacting potential respondents was discussed.

The manager of CIS made a number of suggestions regarding useful contacts and she subsequently ensured that I was invited to various community events. CIS also published a request for volunteers to take part in the research in the December 2007 edition of *Fáilte*, their magazine distributed throughout Coventry.

I attended the annual dinner dance of the Coventry Mayo Association in November 2007 and CIS arranged for me to have a slot to speak about the research during the after dinner

speeches. Throughout the evening I also distributed seventy five flyers advertising the research project and spoke informally to potential participants about the scope of the research.

The Coventry branch of the Irish Professionals Network was inaugurated in late 2007 and I attended its second meeting in November 2007, during which CIS arranged for me to speak about the research. My employer subsequently hosted the December IPN meeting at my request. At this meeting I was able to follow up those people who had expressed an interest in taking part and obtain mutually convenient dates for interviews.

Gaffney's Irish Shop is based in Stoke Green, a suburb of Coventry and sells Irish newspapers, Irish foods (i.e. brands that are unobtainable elsewhere for example Galtee cheese & Barry's tea), Irish music and DVD's, Belleek china and a selection of Catholic religious artefacts. I was allowed to leave flyers about the research on their counter next to the Irish newspapers. I outlined my research focus with the proprietor and she offered to discuss and promote the need for participants with relevant customers whom she believed met the research parameters.

CIS arranged for me to take part in a mid week afternoon show on BBC Coventry and Warwickshire radio, in February 2008. I was on the show alongside one of the CIS staff who was appearing to discuss IPN activity. I was given a brief opportunity to talk about my research and ask for any interested participants to contact me via CIS.

A degree of snowball sampling (Bryman, 2004) occurred when participants suggested contacts who might be interested in taking part in the fieldwork. Of those who were interviewed four offered to publicise the need for participants to second-generation Irish known to them. This approach generated four additional participants. Once names of the additional ‘snowball’ respondents were suggested I asked the existing participant to mention the research to their contact prior to my first communication with the person whose details they had provided. I also requested that they inform their contact that I would be telephoning to discuss participation. However, on three occasions I had to ‘cold call’ contacts I had been given, and was mindful that I only had a few seconds to gain their interest and needed to avoid putting the recipient on their guard (Rossman & Rallis, 1998:102). Fortunately all three ‘cold calls’ resulted in research interviews.

Finally, during the early stages of the research when it was proving problematic to obtain parish boundaries details I asked personal contacts who were second-generation Irish to take part in the research. I deliberately excluded very close personal friends on the grounds that I would not be able to establish and maintain a professional persona with them. I approached contacts I knew through my previous employment, business contacts and my current employment. The table overleaf summarises where the participants were recruited from:

TABLE 12**SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

| SOURCE | NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| MAYO ASSOCIATION | 1 |
| IRISH PROFESSIONALS NETWORK | 8 |
| PARISH CHURCHES | 11 |
| PERSONAL CONTACT | 6 |
| SNOWBALL SAMPLE | 4 |
| RADIO APPEARANCE | 0 |
| GAFFNEY'S IRISH SHOP | 0 |
| FÁILTE MAGAZINE | 0 |

n = 30

Thirty people took part in one to one or joint in-depth interviews which took place over a three month period between January and March 2008. Of these, fourteen were female and sixteen were male. Respondents ages ranged from 27 to 76 years with just over half of participants aged between 40 and 60.

DATA COLLECTION

Arrangements for interview were made by telephone or during face to face meetings. Participants were invited to choose a time and day to suit their schedules, with evening and weekend appointments offered, they were also asked to decide on a convenient venue – their workplaces, homes or my workplace were all suggested as suitable places . Of the thirty interviews conducted twenty six were one-to-one and **two** were joint. In the joint

interviews a husband and wife were interviewed together after the husband had requested to take part once he knew what the research was about. In the other, two brothers opted to take part together to minimise time away from their business. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. Two other people did volunteer to take part in the research and interviews were arranged but they then withdrew at very short notice prior to their interviews taking place. In both cases I did not wish respondents to feel pressurised to take part in the research, so I discussed with them suitable alternative dates and asked them to contact me to confirm new arrangements - neither did so.

Just over half of the interviews were conducted in the participants' place of work or their home. Some participants opted to attend my office (a university building located in the centre of Coventry) or my home when it was more convenient – for example two people called in on their way home from work. Three participants chose to meet in a local café. The interview venues were generally satisfactory, although one interview was interrupted by building noise emanating from an adjacent property and we had to move to the utility room to get away from the sound of drilling; in another case the interview took place in a stockroom because of noise from the participant's workplace, a café bar.

At the start of each interview permission to record was obtained and participants were informed that they could stop the recording at any time if they wished; also they could decline to discuss any question they did not want to answer. Whyte, (1991) advocates the need to establish good rapport with interviewees in order for them to accept the presence of a tape recorder and remain unaffected. Interviews were recorded using an Olympus

DS30 digital voice recorder. Recording each interview was straightforward and the technology used allowed pauses when the interview was interrupted for example by telephone calls. Individual recordings were downloaded on to computer and then sent to a third party for transcription in full. Participants were offered the opportunity to have copies of their interview transcript and two people did request this. One of whom then returned his transcript having revised some of his responses, claiming that as he had a hangover when the interview took place he needed to clarify some of his answers. His original transcript was used for data analysis.

Fieldwork notes were made immediately after each encounter and these served to summarise each meeting and facilitated reflection on data obtained in the field. Details noted included location, date, approximate length of interview and the researchers' impressions of how the interview had gone, including details such as participants' body language. Bryman, (2004:306) advocates the use of field notes based on observation as a supplement 'because of the frailties of human memory'. Certainly, field notes served as a useful aide memoiré when later reviewing the interview transcripts in their entirety; their valuable role in data analysis was highlighted by Pole and Lampard, (2002:190) who indicate that field notes assist in 'ongoing interpretation of data as they are collected'.

A research diary was also kept throughout the study period. I started it in May 2005 when the first ideas for the research were formulated and it was used for the whole time to jot down ideas, reflect on first impressions as data was captured, note new references to follow up, make fieldwork notes, record observations about the various participants

and interview venues, sketch tentative thoughts on theory, itemise books ordered and create 'to do' lists. Blaxter et al, (2001:51) argue that the systematic keeping of records enables the researcher to test out ideas and also reflect on how their ideas have developed over time. This use is similar to those outlined by Schatzman & Strauss, (1973:146) who suggest that a research diary can be utilised for four different aspects: observational notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes and analytic memos.

Newberry, (2001:2) contends that research diaries are an often overlooked source of data but one that is of great importance within qualitative research. He suggests that unlike traditional forms of academic writing which seeks to present the research process as a neat and logical linear progression, research diaries are for the sole use of the researcher and therefore can incorporate messy jottings and musings which might include intuitive observations and questions in a more random format and may therefore facilitate reflective thinking. Newberry observed that Hastrup, (1992:117) believed: 'fieldwork is situated between autobiography and anthropology'; indeed my own research diary was also used as a vehicle for recording subjective observations about the relationships I formed with participants. However as Burgess, (1981) posits whilst many researchers refer to the keeping of research diaries few provide details of how they were created and sustained during the research process, with scant examples provided in extant methodology literature. However this did not preclude my use of a research journal and I found that it provided invaluable documentation of the development of the research question, its subsequent focus and conduct of the fieldwork.

BIOGRAPHICAL METHODS

Biographical research is an ideal method through which to explore an individuals' social construction of reality. It seeks to reveal and understand individuals' lives in terms of both their distinctiveness and also within their social context (Roberts, 2002) and for that reason was deemed particularly suitable for this research. It is an established and recognised approach which according to Lieblich et al, (1998:9) encompasses 'life experience and identity as connected to social groupings, situations and events.' Utilising this method enables academics to fuse together life and work histories because as Dex, (1991) asserts, work and life histories coincide in the workplace. Furthermore, when discussing the narrative of their lives the individual constructs personal meaning during the telling (Bruner, 1986). Thus narration provides stories at different levels and Atkinson, (1998:20) cites Chase, (1995) who suggests that narratives contain submerged stories which:

'tells us more about the individual; specific themes or issues that relate to the larger issues of gender, class and culture and whether there are any patterns that emerge; or gender, class and culture underpinnings in the narrative.'

Narrative is also recognised as a universal mechanism that provides a means of recalling and deciphering the past whilst at the same time connecting our understanding of the world and our attempts to make sense of it (Reissman, 1987).

One way that the researcher can get individual participants to reveal their experience is through the use of life story interviews. As Atkinson, (1998) notes this method has been used for many years in anthropological research. It is particularly apposite for use with the second-generation Irish participants in this study because capturing the life stories of

under-researched groups adds to existing knowledge of the social world. It is generally acknowledged that much of the life story data within extant academic literature tends to relate to dominant groups and gathering personal narratives through life story interviews helps facilitate inclusion for marginalised or overlooked groups (Bertaux, 1981; Bornat, 1994; Atkinson, 1998; Bloor, 2002; Chamberlayne et al, 2000).

More recently there has been an increase in interest in life history interviewing and this is explained in terms of ‘a growth of interest in the role and significance of agency in social life’ (Bryman, 2004:322). The potential of personal narratives is alluded to by Miles & Crush, (1993:84) who believe that they are beneficial in ‘contesting academic androcentrism and reinstating the marginalized and dispossessed as makers of their own past’. As Josselson, (1995) argues, how individuals recount their life stories is told through the filter of our society and customs, hence under-represented ethnic groups are likely to have experienced a different social reality from the indigenous population. Indeed, with its emphasis on the individual experience, life stories facilitate the comprehension of different cultural situations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This is particularly relevant for this group as they have been categorised as an under researched group who have been rendered ‘invisible and inaudible’ due, inter alia, to their similarity in colour to the indigenous English population (Arrowsmith, 2000; Walls & Williams, 2003). Moreover, portions of the work history uncovered would be likely to: ‘Illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of systemic and structural constraints within which life-courses evolve’ (Miles & Crush, 1993:85).

However care needs to be exercised regarding terminology as Miller, (2000:19) points out the terms 'Life history' and 'Life story' are often used interchangeably and he argues a distinction between the two where life history supplements the account of a life story with documentary evidence from other sources. Three different types of life story have been identified by Plummer, (2001) who notes that they vary between 'naturalistic', 'researched' and 'reflexive and recursive'. For the purposes of this study I wished to obtain researched life stories, which needed to have a particular focus towards participant's work histories. A pragmatic strategy was adopted whereby I sought to obtain 'in-depth portions' of a life story rather than a 'superficial overview of an entire life' (Miles & Crush, 1993:90). I felt that the use of life story method focusing on work history was an especially suitable means of obtaining pertinent data; in her discussion of qualitative methodologies Musson, (1998:10) reflects on the life history approach:

'The method prioritizes individual explanations and interpretations of actions and events, viewing them as lenses through which to access the meaning which human beings attribute their experience.'

Key to this approach is an individuals' reflexivity and their ability to rationalise and describe past events, present situations and future plans. I did not anticipate that it would be difficult to get people to talk about their working lives during the interviews, as King, (1994:33) suggests 'most people like talking about their work', furthermore, the qualitative research interview was an ideal vehicle for uncovering layers of meaning within the topic as it provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on past and current careers. By concentrating the majority of time in the interview on aspects of participants work history I was able to adopt an approach advocated by Robson, (1993:382) whereby a chronological presentation is eschewed in favour of the 'principle turnings' of an individual's life.

Following each interview participants were formally thanked either by an individualised hand written thank you note or in the few instances where postal addresses were not known a text or email was sent.

Ethics and informed consent

When designing the research three key considerations were storage of data, gaining informed consent from participants and community considerations. As the data that I was collecting would be regarded as 'sensitive' personal information I had to ensure compliance with the 1998 Data Protection Act. This meant that data was stored on a password protected computer, there was no access for third parties and the completed thesis presents data in such a way that does not allow individuals to be identified. Consideration also had to be given to the disposal of information once the fieldwork interviews were completed. To ensure informed consent participants were advised of the scope of the research, the interview process and what agreeing to take part would involve. As participants were drawn from an identifiable ethnic group in one city, it was important to remain mindful of how the study could affect the community from which they had been drawn. Finally, personal safety for the researcher had to be taken in to account so that when interviews were being conducted in participants offices or homes a friend or colleague was informed of the interview venue and likely time of my return.

It was imperative that data collection was carried out in an ethical manner and that all participants fully understood the purpose and scope of the research prior to consenting to

take part. Mason, (2002a: 80) cautions that a number of ‘persuasive influences’ may result in likely respondents agreeing to take part without being fully informed regarding the study. In my own study, I was aware that advertising through parish churches legitimised the research to such an extent for some respondents, so that a few people attempted to agree to take part before I was able to fully brief them about exactly what was involved.

Prior to interview whilst negotiating a time to meet, each participant was briefed regarding the need for the interview to be recorded and the requirement to bring a photograph of their parent(s). It was during these pre-interview conversations that confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. I also explained that I would assign codes to each interviewee to preserve their anonymity when quoted in the text, that all data would be stored on password protected computers and that the transcription service used was based in Yorkshire. Furthermore, the transcription service would not be able to identify any individual from their recording as each recording was assigned a code before being sent for transcription. Once transcription had taken place the data would be stored on computer and the digital recordings destroyed. The anonymity of participants was ensured by the use of a coding system whereby each quote in the text is attributed to an interview number. Alongside the interview number the gender of the participant is recorded (M for Male or F for female) and a number is given to indicate their age group by decade. Thus the third interviewee was a female in her 40’s and is described as ‘I3F40’.

Pole and Lampard, (2002:85) discuss the need for a researcher to be ‘open and honest about his/her role and to what use the research would be put’. Explaining the potential use of interview data in the thesis was straightforward, however seeking permission to use data in a variety of scholarly media such as conference presentations, posters and journal articles assumed a level of understanding of the minutiae of academe that the general public does not possess. In these cases, the need for informed consent had to be followed and explanations of how the data might be utilised were provided.

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Biographical approaches regarding life/work history were operationalised through the use of semi-structured depth interviews. Throughout the semi-structured interviews I used an interview schedule with thematic questions grouped around three key areas: background, identity & ethnicity, and career (appendix 5). The use of a schedule aided the smooth progress of the interview, whilst at the same time allowing more questions to be asked when it was necessary to probe participants for detailed explanations (Bryman, 2004:321). Qualitative research interviews have been described as ‘a conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1988:102); which was deemed a suitable strategy to adopt here when discussing elements of life and work history as it meant that neither interviewer nor participant had to rigidly adhere to a list of predetermined questions and that participants were given sufficient time and space to elucidate. Mason, (2002b:232) advises that life history interviewers attempt to:

‘ Facilitate the telling of the story more than to direct it. This approach is based on the logic that the significance of social experience will be revealed through contextual data and that the way to achieve this is to ask interviewees to structure

their own life story narrative, sometimes according to specified principles (for example family biography, work biography).’

Two pilot interviews were held in December 2007 each taking approximately one hour and were used to test the thematic interview guide, after which adjustments were made regarding themes concerning parental background and experiences at work. Changes were incorporated to draw out instances where parents had attained qualifications in Ireland but did not pursue a similar career in England. However the most striking topic to emerge from both pilot interviews was the disclosure of ‘whistle blowing’ or what one respondent termed ‘speaking up when something’s wrong’ at work. As both pilot interviewees referred to instances in their careers when they had lost jobs because of such activity I decided to include it as part of the work history theme.

Whilst the semi-structured depth interview allows flexibility Wengraf (2001:5) posits that the biographic–narratives thus generated are ‘high-preparation, high-risk, high-gain and high-analysis operations’. Clearly depth interviews were most suited to this research because a questionnaire based format would not have been appropriate for a relatively small number of participants who were being questioned about their individual experiences in the labour market. (Ticehurst & Veal, 2000).

The challenges and complexity inherent in conducting research interviews is captured by Gerson & Horowitz (2002:209) who describe them as ‘discrete but demanding forays into the lives of strangers’. Even so such encounters are not devoid of power relations as King, (1994:15) points out there can never be such a thing as a ‘relationship-free’

interview. Attention must therefore be paid to the association between interviewer and interviewee; Roberts, (2002:87) reports that recently the customary idea of an impartial non-judgemental data collector has begun to be replaced by an acknowledgement that the 'role of the researchers life in the research process is increasingly part of the methodological discussion'. This approach is sometimes referred to as 'radical empiricism' when the researchers 'experiences and interaction' with interviewees are deemed an essential part of what is being studied (Jackson, 1989).

However, Oakley, (2003) is critical of the traditional paradigm of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. She advocates that a non-hierarchical approach should be adopted whereby 'the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship'; she goes on to point out that when interviewer and interviewee are both members of a minority group then the interviewer will be acutely aware of the need to ensure equality in the relationship (Oakley, 2003: 252).

In writing about her experience of in-depth interviewing of British Asian women Ramji, (2008) identifies that when researcher and interviewees share the same cultural identity then both commonality and difference were claimed by her interviewees. Despite Brah's (1996:207) assertion that similar cultural backgrounds between interviewer and participants does not automatically ensure a 'vantage point of privileged insight', Ramji's experience points to the complexity of a situation where, on the one hand the researchers ethnicity assisted in gaining access, yet at the same time also 'failed to create common understandings' between her and her interviewees (Ramji, 2008:103). I was aware that as

I shared an Irish heritage with my participants it would be easy for those who had not met me before to identify commonality which could be ascertained from my first name alone – all initial contacts and interviews were arranged using my married (English) surname. During the interview process, many participants did allude to a shared experience or identity, asking whereabouts in Ireland my family were from, or which parish I was from; perhaps the most extreme example being the participant who asked:

'Where are your parents from as a matter of interest - you've got a Mayo look about you? '

There was an implicit assumption by many participants that there was no need for full explanations of various cultural phenomena to be articulated, so for example they might refer to someone as being a 'Catenian' or a 'Pioneer' without further explanation. I was also party to confidential family information; on a number of occasions during fieldwork as soon as recording had stopped participants discussed the well documented health problems of the Irish community, namely alcohol dependency and mental health issues and alluded to instances in their own families.

Ramji's (2008) respondents acknowledged similarities yet also drew attention to the perceived 'differences' between themselves and the personal characteristics of the researcher; generally making comments regarding her young age and lack of experience, as a single female. I did experience a couple of jocular references to my 'difference' although this was usually ascribed to the fact that I was not a native Coventrian rather than my position as a researcher.

Photo-elicitation

When an appointment for interview was arranged each participant was asked to bring with them a photograph of their parent(s). Each interview started with the participant showing the researcher their chosen photographs and talking about who was in the picture and when and where it was taken. Strangleman, (2004: 183) indicates that the rise in visual aspects of contemporary culture has not been matched by an increased use of photographs within academic journals in the social sciences. Nevertheless, photo-elicitation is a useful method to employ, as Harper, (2002:21) asserts that it ‘bridges the gap’ between subject and researcher thereby yielding ‘richer data’ as it ensures that the depth interview is grounded by the image presented in the photograph. More importantly, he advocates that the use of photo-elicitation ‘breaks the frame of normal views’ and in doing so may provide a new perspective of their ‘social existence’ for participants; additionally it is a particularly useful approach when the ‘invisibility of ethnic difference to outsiders makes photo elicitation a natural method’. Dempsey and Tucker, (1991:164) also argue that photo-elicitation ‘yields richer data’ because it requires participants to react to memories or recall when viewing specific images. They believe that this method has the potential to be more than a data source because it can also be used for ‘grounding contexts and illustrating concepts’ (Dempsey & Tucker, 1991: 184). Certainly Rose, (2008:151) agrees that the use of photographs in research projects can be much more than ‘descriptive illustrations’. However as Clark-Ibáñez, (2004:1512) posits the photographs in themselves do not have to be particularly remarkable, they generate more than the sum of their parts:

‘Yet there is nothing inherently interesting about photographs; instead, photographs act as a medium of communication between researcher and

participant. The photographs do not necessarily represent empirical truths or “reality”. In this sense, photographs used in the photo-elicitation interview have a dual purpose. Researchers can use photographs as a tool to expand on questions and simultaneously, participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives.’

A large number of the photographs presented by participants were formal pictures – either wedding or studio portraits, whilst others represented significant rites such as First Holy Communion or St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. Sontag, (1977:8) describes how each family ‘constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself – a portable kit of images’ through photographs. Such ‘portrait-chronicles’ were presented by participants; this was particularly marked where families had broken up and three participants were keen to explain that no photographs with both parents together remained in existence, many had either been destroyed or the absent parent literally cut out of the picture.

However a number of ethical issues arise when using photographs as Mason, (2002a:118) points out:

‘Visual images can produce quite profound responses and reactions. Those who use visual methods as a way of eliciting talk, for example, in the discussion of ‘family photographs’ in interviews will need to consider the range of responses, including sometimes highly emotional ones that a trawl through a personal set of photographs can evoke. Part of the point of using photographs in this way may be precisely that they encourage multi-dimensional, highly detailed and sensitive recollections in interviewees and thus produce very rich data.’

Clearly the use of photo-elicitation had to be carefully monitored to ensure that participants maintained their equilibrium when answering questions and that use of photographs did not trigger reminiscences that were outside the scope of the thesis. In two instances when participants became emotional or tearful whilst discussing the photograph I stopped the interview and waited until they had regained their composure.

Both these episodes were very brief and occurred when participants were reflecting on how hard migration must have been for their parents who were relatively young when they first left Ireland.

Limitations of the interview method

The interview method does have its limitations as it is principally dependent on participants' memory; throughout the interviews participants had to rely on accurate recollections which sometimes meant that narratives became circuitous as participants' looped back and forth when discussing work histories. Additionally the thematic arrangement used relied on participants' having some knowledge of their parent's life before migration. This was awkward where family rifts had occurred and there was little or no contact with relations left in Ireland – in the most extreme case one participant's mother had simply refused to ever talk to her children about Ireland and her upbringing. There were instances when the narrative interview format obviously became tiring and emotionally draining for participants; this was most apparent when reflecting on and discussing the privations that parents had endured on migration.

Grele, (1998) discusses the problems inherent in narrative interview, mainly the likelihood of bias due to poor memory. This is also touched on by Plummer, (2001:235) who describes what he terms 'narrative memory' when selective recall occurs and some events take on greater significance than others as they become distorted through time. There is also the possibility that participants self-censor when they know that their responses are being recorded. Likewise, post-hoc rationalisation may come in to play

whereby participants may seek to promote their previous behaviour in a more favourable way. Despite it being impossible for the interviewer to know with any accuracy if this is happening, chatting at the end of the interview after the recorder is switched off did at times generate more data, although as mentioned earlier much of this related to family experiences of alcoholism and depression.

DATA ANALYSIS AND GENERALISABILITY

The interview recordings were transcribed in full and were initially analysed by employing Mason's (2002a: 149) tripartite approach whereby the data is read in three different ways: literally, interpretively and reflexively. A first literal reading of the transcripts reviewed issues such as form and content of the data as well as looking at the choice of language and words that were used, thus enabling analysis of sociolect and idiolect. This was followed by an interpretive reading which enhanced familiarity with the data, classified themes and established dimensions within each theme which were later coded. Thirdly, a reflexive reading of the transcripts took place which acknowledged the researchers own role in the procurement and analysis of the data. Finally, Mason's (2002) suggested three level approach was supplemented by a further thematic analysis which sought to catalogue and refine codes ascribed to the main topics in the data and identify appropriate quotations to support the analysis. Throughout this aspect of data coding I bore in mind Goodwin's (1999) suggestion regarding Christian's, (1994) approach of letting the interviewees 'speak for themselves'.

There are, of course concerns regarding whether or not qualitative narrative data can ever be truly generalisable, how can thirty narrative interviews regarding the labour market experiences of second-generation Irish in the English midlands be representative of all cases? Indeed we cannot expect these interviews to be totally representative, but Bryman, (2004:285) assures us that: ‘It is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalisation’. Certainly elements of researched lives obtained through auto-ethnographic methods are generalisable (Ellis & Bochner, 2003) and many contain what Stake, (1994:229) describes as ‘naturalistic generalisation’ whereby they convey ‘felt’ news from one world to another’. One aspect of generalisability that merits consideration is Williams, (2000:15) notion that qualitative researchers generate moderatum generalisations which demonstrate that facets of the research are ‘instances of a broader set of recognisable features’. However, later development of his argument does acknowledge that whilst ‘generalisation is desirable and unavoidable in interpretive research, there are limits to its generalising possibilities’ (Williams, 2000: 209). Silverman’s (2006) discussion of the issues of generalisability directs us to Flyvbjerg, (2004:430) who deconstructs what he says typify five misunderstandings about qualitative research. Of most interest is the idea that:

‘Good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life. Accordingly, such narratives may be difficult or impossible to summarise into neat scientific formulae, general propositions and theories....To the case study researcher, however, a particularly ‘thick’ and hard to summarise narrative is not a problem. Rather it is often a sign that the study has uncovered a particularly rich problem.’

Silverman, (2006:306) believes that positivist critiques regarding the lack of generalisability of qualitative studies can be counteracted by savvy research design. He recommends the adoption of purposive sampling because it forces researchers to think

about the 'parameters of the population'. Purposive sampling was the approach adopted in this study, where a strategic choice was made to interview participants who met the research parameters regarding Irish parentage.

Therefore, to summarise the research strategy, a qualitative approach was adopted, the epistemological stance being interpretivist and the data collected through biographical methods facilitated a constructionist ontological position.

CHAPTER FIVE

SECOND-GENERATION IDENTITY & ETHNICITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores participants' views regarding their identity and ethnicity. Identity and ethnicity is an important topic because as Freeman, (2004:946) asserts there are several issues that influence the second-generation and their integration with the host society which takes place in a 'patchwork of multidimensional frameworks'. Identity and ethnicity are components that merit investigation because they are pertinent to the second-generation Irish experience and their levels of integration in British society and subsequent employment experiences. In the following analysis such frameworks have been classified as either external formal manifestations of ethnicity or internal individualised mechanisms of identity. Whilst there are a number of factors that determine how a second-generation individual will derive their identity and describe their ethnicity, such positions are not static and can lead to the adoption of 'multiple positionalities' (Anthias, 2002:502).

Specific aspects of self-ascribed ethnicity and identity of second-generation Irish in Britain are the focus of a substantial proportion of extant research and theorising in the area (Arrowsmith, (2000); Hickman et al,(2005); Mac an Ghail, (2000), (2001); McCarvill, (2002); O'Keeffe, (2006)). Key debates within the literature concentrate on the incorporation and racialisation of both Irish-born and the second-generation. Foremost is the discourse surrounding the Irish community, historically seen as outsiders

or a 'problem population' (Hillyard, 1993) resulting in the establishment of separate Catholic schools to cater for their progeny. The consequence of which, according to Hickman, (1996:28) is that they were 'integrated into a segregated system'.

However, the idea that the Irish community were differentiated in any way had changed by the late twentieth century when other migrant groups replaced them in British collective consciousness as outsiders (Hickman, 2002a; Mac an Ghail, 2000). As a result of this volte face, the Irish community were subject to 'forced inclusion' (Hickman, 2002). This was underpinned by a dominant conception of ethnicity based on skin colour which has led to there being no multigenerational ethnic data for the Irish, thus rendering them 'inaudible and invisible' (Akenson, 1993; Arrowsmith, 2000).

Whilst assimilation is assumed to have taken place due to skin colour and rates of intermarriage (Akenson, 1993); later research has not found significant evidence to support an 'ethnic fade' view (Garrett, 2002). Indeed this thesis found no evidence to sustain either of the propositions posited by Walker, (2007) and Ryan, (1990) which suggest that Irish identity wanes as the second-generation becomes integrated into the host society. However, it is noted that Hickman et al, (2005) relate that the identities of the second-generation in their study changed as they got older and became more confident in asserting their Irish origins.

This chapter is structured around the themes discussed in the depth interviews, each interview sought to establish how participants' described their identity and racial

background by discussing a variety of topics that contribute to the social construction of self-ascribed identity and ethnicity. These dimensions are categorised in the following analysis as either external formal manifestations such as schooling and the type of passport held or internal individualised mechanisms like childhood holidays in Ireland and how ‘cultural persistence’ (Diner, 1983: xvi) of Irishness manifested itself at home.

Factors in the shaping of an ethnic identity include both an interface with the host population and its’ political, economic and social environments (Harding & Balarajan, 2001) hence the analysis begins with an examination of the external markers of religion and schooling. This is followed by an assessment of participants’ self-ascribed ethnicity including the type of passport they hold and their response on the 2001 census. Self-ascribed identity is examined after which socialisation within the Irish community and the ways in which Irishness manifested itself at home and visits to Ireland are discussed. Finally, any pressures they may have experienced due to their ethnicity are explored.

It should be noted that the results presented in this chapter are indicative findings, reflecting the views of this group of participants who are located in Coventry. A caveat is necessary here - whilst it is likely that the experiences of second-generation Irish based in other cities in Britain may well be similar, there is no certainty that this would automatically be the case; hence the findings are to an extent constrained by the locus in which the research was carried out.

EXTERNAL MARKERS OF ETHNICITY

Within the host country certain factors will identify second-generation ethnic groups as differing from the majority population. For second-generation Irish in particular, most of whom are not differentiated by the obvious marker of colour, the decision to disclose or conceal ones ethnic background is therefore often a matter of personal choice. Nevertheless there are some things that will signal an individuals' particular ethnicity to outsiders; for example religion, schooling, type of passport held and self-ascribed ethnicity on official forms are all indicators of ethnic background. These external indicators were discussed during the depth interviews and are now considered in more detail.

Religion

A significant external marker for this sample is that of religion, as Cadge & Ecklund, (2007) note religion provides the second-generation with a mechanism for identity construction. The role that religious organizations play in providing a space for the transmission of ethnic culture has been well documented (Fortier, 2000; Min, 2005) as has the multiplicity of services that they provide (Haddad, 2004; Foner & Alba, 2008). Membership of a religious group can reinforce a sense of belonging within a particular ethnic community and Hirschman, (2004:1228) describes the benefits to the second-generation as embodied in the 'refuge, respectability and resources' available to them through the ethnic networks operating in a religious setting.

Although questions regarding current religious adherence per se were not asked, references to Catholicism occurred spontaneously in responses throughout the interviews and are explored here. All participants are from a Catholic background although not all continue to practise their religion; a number voluntarily identifying as ‘lapsed’. Many participants had vivid recollections of religion in the context of their upbringing:

“We all had to kneel down on the floor and we had to say the Rosary every night, and if we were in the car we always had to say the Rosary.” (I24F60)

The majority indicated that key rites such as baptism, marriage and funerals are celebrated within the Catholic Church and most of the sample who were parents (including the ‘lapsed’) had opted to send their own children to Catholic schools:

“ I was raised to go to church, I stopped going when I was in my mid 20’s for ten or fifteen years but then started to go again. I do try and go now and we got married in church so I’ll raise my son in that background as well.” (I6M40)

There appears to be some overlap regarding ethnicity and religion as the literal reading of the data revealed a number of instances when ‘Catholic’ was conflated with ‘Irish’ by participants:

“ There was a big Irish community all around Coundon and Earlsdon everyone was Catholic. So you’ve got the Irish food, the Irish music and the interest in having the Irish Sunday paper and keeping an eye on what’s going on so you’re at home with your community everyone is Catholic. It’s not until you get a bit older that you start to reflect on the fact that Catholics aren’t the most dominant people” (I10F40)

For many the church played a pivotal role in their lives; attendance at church, school and socialising at parish centres was the norm:

“There was a local church hall and my father and mother would go for dances there and we would tag along. So from a religious point of view we went to

church and were encouraged to do so, we went to a Roman Catholic school.... more than 50% of the children there were from similar Irish Roman Catholic backgrounds, all our fathers and mothers knew each other and they socialised together.” (I14M40)

Aside from Catholicism being an integral part of socialisation and the formation of second-generation ethnic identity, examples were also cited of the church providing help and welfare advice to their parents during times of ill health and financial hardship. According to Butler, (2008:256) the important role played by ‘religious networks of support’ is assessed by Woodhead, (2008:56) who draws attention to the fact that for those who lack privilege ‘...it [religion] also forms the cords of a network of mutual support for vulnerable people’. It was evident that in some cases families had been assisted by the church in very pragmatic ways, in one case where there were four young children and both parents were in hospital and unable to work for over a year:

“There was no money, a lot of people helped. The parish priest at Christ the King helped.” (I16F30)

The welfare, support and advice functions provided through the church, is a factor in explaining why this group focus on religion as a way of maintaining ethnic cohesion and identity. The literal reading of the data also indicated that two priests who had high profiles in the city in the 1960’s and ‘70’s were mentioned by several participants who assumed no introduction or contextualisation was needed, such was their reputation.

Whilst acknowledging that religion played an important part in the development of ethnic identity for participants in this sample, religious background is generally manifest and reinforced through experiences at Catholic schools which are explored in the following section.

Schooling

An examination of participants' schooling is useful as it is seen as an acculturation mechanism which influences integration (Gans, 1992). Furthermore, educational attainment will affect not only the timing of an individuals' transition to the labour market but also their position in the labour market. As Wilkin, (2008) pointed out for some second-generation Irish, embourgeoisement occurred as a consequence of their educational achievements.

Hickman, (1995; 1996) has written extensively about the history and establishment of Catholic schools in Britain; the result of which she argued was the segregation on religious grounds of second-generation Irish children. Certainly this resulted in all participants in this study being educated in Catholic primary schools and all but two of the sample attended Catholic senior schools. Clearly the provision of Catholic education was paramount to the Irish-born living in Coventry, to such an extent that King et al, (1989: 69) highlight the fact that voluntary Irish labour built two Catholic schools in the city during the 1950's.

Schools attended

This section examines the type of school attended by participants; it is not intended to present a detailed exploration of participants' education per se, it simply serves to analyse patterns of education at primary and secondary levels in this sample.

In Coventry there are eighteen Catholic primary schools and three Catholic secondary schools (Archdiocese of Birmingham, 2008). Currently all of the primary and secondary

schools are mixed sex. Historically, up until the 1970's Catholic state secondary schools in Coventry were segregated by gender. So in some cases one school site would accommodate separate schools (Burgess, 1986:307); for example in the mid 1960's the Bishop Ullathorne school site had three different schools: a boys Grammar School, a boys Secondary Modern School and a Girls Secondary Modern (Hammersley, 2008).

All of the participants attended Catholic primary schools. Only two respondents attended non-Catholic secondary schools, both of these were females who had English non-Catholic fathers. One was sent to a non-denominational all girls secondary school and the other attended a mixed comprehensive. As one woman explained:

“My father was a complete atheist..... My mother did initially start with good Catholic behaviour and sent my sister and brother to Catholic Church and I started in a Catholic school. But I think really she felt a bit of stigma about that and my father said: ‘I think the state school’s good enough’ ” (I3F40)

In the other case religious expectations regarding a child's education were overridden by more functional considerations, as the participant suggested attending a non-Catholic secondary school was entirely due to its proximity to home.

Parents were reminded of their obligations as Catholics at parish level, where there were regular collections to support local schools:

“At Christ the King I remember Sunday masses and Father McTiernan, a bit of a fire brand..... he used to get up in the pulpit and say: ‘I need money for my church and I need money for my school and, by the way, if you want a place for your children in my school you come to mass every Sunday with your children or you don't get a place at my school.’ ” (I15F50)

Four respondents were educated at independent Catholic senior schools. Two girls attended convent school, both of whom were placed in private education after failing their eleven plus:

“You had to have the best education. And they paid for me all my life and it didn’t work.....because they were trying to get me to do better. Sinéad went to Ullathorne and she did quite well, and my brother went to Ullathorne, but I think they thought I was a bit impressionable I’d better go to.....a better school - but I don’t think that works really, doesn’t make you any brainier does it?” (I24F60)

Both of the independent schools attended by the male participants were run by religious orders. One of these schools was a secondary boarding school which also served students as the Birmingham diocesan junior seminary. In this case the respondent attended the school as a ‘church student’. The other boy attended an independent school which was set up with the express intention of educating children of local Irish Catholic businessmen after canvassing by a religious order:

“I think what happened was the priests came over from Ireland; the Sacred Heart priests and they went round the local businessmen and said ‘oh look we’re setting up a school in Leamington which will be for the second-generation Irish.’” (I30M60)

Parental attitudes towards schooling

Whilst parents were keen to ensure their children received a Catholic education many seem quite diffident regarding their children’s educational success which does not appear to be paramount for a significant number of the Irish-born parents of this sample. Initially this is somewhat surprising as the classic upward social mobility model of immigrants is only evident in a small number of cases. Parental attitudes towards education fell in to three broad approaches: a few who believed education was vitally important; the majority

of parents who took a more relaxed view and a small number who took no interest at all. It is useful to note here that, as will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, a significant number of the Irish-born parents of this sample had fragmented experiences of education themselves, with their time at school curtailed and few held formal qualifications.

Those parents who viewed education as vital emphasised the need to work hard at school:

“To them education was key really and dad was always going on about it. Whenever someone went past in a flashy car dad would say ‘I would have got that if I’d have worked hard at school’ especially in the summer when you see people in soft tops and he says ‘if you want them nice sports cars you’ve got to work hard at school, you don’t have to believe me but it’s true, you’ll find out soon enough yourself’.” (I4M30)

Children in some families were pushed to achieve their academic potential, with significantly more mothers than fathers cited as the driving force regarding educational attainment:

“They were very supportive of it. They realised it was an escape route and they pushed us hard to make sure that we did do A levels or go to university and they were very supportive of anything the education people said to us, they backed them 100% - certainly my mum was the driver, my dad didn’t fully understand it.... or he chose to disengage, because my mum drove it on.” (I10M40)

One participant from a family of four children who were all taught to read and write at home by their parents before starting primary school recalled:

“We could all read and write before we went to school, all of us. I can’t even remember them teaching us but I remember in school for the first three or four years of my life I just put my hand up at every question.” (I8M30)

A female participant revealed that her parents’ attitude towards education was gendered, with extensive support provided for her brother who studied medicine, whilst a more lenient approach was adopted regarding her own academic achievements:

“It was very important for boys they had to get a good job and, as parents often are, they wanted him to do better than they’d done and were very, very supportive. My brother actually ended up getting a scholarship to a private school in Coventry..... he went on to medical school. I know they did without a lot of things financially so that he could do that. I’m not saying they weren’t supportive of me.... but the assumption was I would get married. So when I didn’t try very hard at school that wasn’t pursued and it was assumed “well you just get your education because that’s the system, but you’ll get married” and what’s more important is that you learn the skills for that if you like.” (I12F40)

Those parents who adopted a more relaxed approach demonstrated a great deal of faith in teachers and were likely to support them without question:

“The teachers would always be right, they were that type, they wouldn’t interfere with anything.” (I23F30)

Only three participants reported that their parents showed no interest in their education, these were from large families:

“No interest at all, none whatsoever, just “go to school” and that was it. My sister’s a school teacher now but, you know, there was no interest at all, just take the report home and sign it and send it. As long as you were OK, no pushing you, no incentive, nothing.” (I21M50)

It is not possible to explain parental attitudes to education in much greater detail as the interview data for this aspect of schooling was based on participants recall and not on interviews with their parents. However there are several interesting features that emerge. The interviews uncovered evidence to support Hickman’s (1996:28) assertion, that the children of Irish immigrants were ‘integrated into a segregated system’. All but two participants attended Catholic schools throughout their entire education. There is evidence of gendered assumptions regarding careers and in one woman’s case this is clearly articulated: her brother trains as a doctor, her education is less important because she is expected to marry. Parents coming from rural backgrounds with fragmented

experiences of school may not have possessed the confidence to engage with teachers, their expectations being met by the work opportunities available to the second-generation.

Whilst religion and schooling provide formative experiences regarding socialisation and ethnic identity for the second-generation, self-ascribed ethnicity only becomes evident when the second-generation are older and have to adopt a descriptor on official documents such as passports and census returns. These issues bear further examination as they give some indication of participants' level of integration within the host society.

Self-ascribed ethnicity

There is substantial extant literature on second-generation self-ascription of ethnicity, yet this is not a fixed concept; as Wessendorf, (2008b) argues the second-generation are continually forming new types of cultural associations. This point is germane because individuals may describe their ethnicity in several competing ways, depending on what purpose they are defining themselves for, according to Castles and Miller (2003:248) such an approach accommodates 'multiple cultural identities'. Two external markers of ethnicity that encapsulate the dilemma of self-ascription are now discussed: what category, if any, participants had ticked in the 2001 Census form and which type of passport is held. These are especially interesting variables because they facilitated discussion on the practicalities of adopting and/or rejecting one ethnicity in favour of the other and gave participants an opportunity to declare and rationalise reasons for their choices.

When questioned about their 2001 Census return and which category they ticked not all participants could recall which ethnicity they had self-ascribed. This was unsurprising given the length of time that had elapsed since the Census was taken; also the responses to this question need to be treated with caution; as the figure for the whole of England and Wales included only 149,586 British-born people who ticked the ‘White Irish’ ethnic group box (O’Keeffe, 2006:179). The sample was split as outlined in table 13 below:

TABLE 13
2001 CENSUS RESPONSES

| CATEGORY | NUMBER |
|----------------------|---------------|
| WHITE IRISH | 14 |
| WHITE BRITISH | 12 |
| DON’T KNOW | 4 |

n=30

A recurring view expressed by those who did not classify themselves as Irish on the Census return was that the form did not make the distinction between ethnicity and nationality sufficiently clear:

“Surely I had to put White British? Because you can’t say you’re Irish unless you were born in Ireland.” (I30M60)

Thus evidence obtained from this sample supports O’Keeffe’s, (2006) findings regarding the lack of familiarity of seeing an Irish ethnicity option, which when combined with failure to read the explanatory note possibly explains why less than half identified themselves as ‘White Irish’ in an official census. This is in contrast to the 83% of participants in this study who, when asked during the research interviews, self-ascribed Irish ethnicity or a variant thereof.

Despite all participants in this study having an Irish background, this assertion was not supported by the type of passport held, although three people reported their intentions of replacing their British passports with an Irish one when they renewed them.

TABLE 14
TYPE OF PASSPORT HELD

| PASSPORT | NUMBER |
|-----------------|---------------|
| IRISH | 3 |
| BRITISH | 25 |
| BOTH | 2 |

n=30

Frequent mention was made of the difficulties some had seen their parents experience when attempting to enter the USA on an Irish passport:

“My passport is the English one, only because it is just so awkward to get in to America. When mum and dad went to America they had such trouble getting an American visa on their Irish passport, but with a British passport you can just get in, that was my only motivation. But if people at work ask me where I’m from I’ll always say I’m Irish because my family are Irish” (I2F30)

The participant who works as cabin crew expressed concerns that an Irish passport: ‘might get questioned more’. This belief was echoed elsewhere with another respondent suggesting that holding an Irish passport would result in being stopped more frequently at airports.

What is evident is that seamless switching of ethnicity to suit different purposes occurs; hence it is possible for a participant to have ticked the ‘White British’ option on the census form whilst holding an Irish passport or vice versa. Furthermore participants’ responses can appear contradictory as they shift between ethnicities for pragmatic

reasons. There is evidence that the second-generation seek to adapt and move back and forth between their parental heritage and the host country and for many, this results in the embracing of a hybrid identity in order to accommodate dual cultures. The problems commensurate with the concept of hybrid identity for second-generation Irish in Britain were articulated by a significant proportion of the participants and this will be considered in the following section.

INTERNAL MECHANISMS OF IDENTITY

In contrast to the external markers of ethnicity discussed above, the following analysis involves characteristics which are individualised conceptions of participants' identity that are not easily classifiable. In contrast to the external markers, it is a matter of personal choice as to whether or not these characteristics are revealed in the public domain. This section presents participants' comments on the problematic nature of the second-generation's attempts to articulate an identity that acknowledges their Irish backgrounds. Cultural persistence and the ways in which Irishness manifested itself during their upbringing are then considered.

Hybrid Identity

The second-generation are in a unique position as they are placed to absorb aspects of both cultures (Phinney & Flores, 2002); this has been described by Butler, (1999) as facilitating a practical means of navigating between cultures. However, as there is no hyphenated descriptor in common usage to name the second-generation Irish in Britain, this reinforces assertions that they are an overlooked group (Hickman, 1998; Walls, 2001). Furthermore the situation where individuals find themselves as part of the country

that colonised their forebears can lead to the illogicality that finds them between two cultures and disparaged in both. Yet this situation is not unique to ethnic groups affected by a colonial past as Zontini, (2007) discovered in her study of British-Italians. One coping mechanism that the second-generation utilise is that of ‘multiple cultural identities’ (Castles & Miller, 2003:248) which allows them to alternate between the two identities when necessary. We have already seen the inherent ambiguity when choosing a self-ascribed ethnicity for Census returns and passports; more interestingly when given an opportunity to pick their own words to describe their ethnicity during the depth interviews nine separate permutations emerged, thus suggesting that a single hybrid description might not be able to capture the complexities here. The following table indicates the ethnic categories suggested by participants; evidently there is no single descriptor that encapsulates how individuals identify themselves, with twenty five acknowledging some type of Irish background. There is no evidence within this sample to support the ethnic fade thesis (Garrett, 2002) which asserts that Irish identity diminishes as the second-generation integrates within the host society.

TABLE 15

SELF-ASCRIBED IDENTITY

| SELF-ASCRPTION | NUMBER |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| IRISH | 15 |
| HALF IRISH | 1 |
| IRISH DESCENT | 5 |
| IRISH-ENGLISH | 2 |
| ANGLO-IRISH | 1 |
| HALF & HALF | 1 |
| ENGLISH | 2 |
| BRITISH | 2 |
| NO FIXED ETHNICITY | 1 |

n=30

Evidence was found to support earlier research (Hickman, et al 2005) regarding higher instances of self-ascribed Irish ethnicity as confidence grows with maturity:

“I would have said up until probably 10 years ago “I’m English” but increasingly I’m interested in my Irish roots and would acknowledge myself as being Irish-English. (I15F50)

However a couple of participants struggled to describe themselves, with one woman mentioning three possible permutations in a single response:

“Well I always say I’m English but I’m very proud to be half Irish. And I like anything to do with Ireland it’s....I mean.... yeah I’m just very proud of the fact that I’m Irish.”(I24F60)

For some respondents the ambiguity of their identity, being classed as ‘Irish’ in England and ‘English’ when in Ireland caused confusion and several respondents referred to instances where their Irish ethnicity was ignored by the host population:

“I’ve always considered myself second generation Irish. I’d never say that I was English because culturally I was brought up Irish. I know people call us Plastic Paddies, but they wouldn’t say that if it was a French family or an Indian family because I suppose they’re more orally and visually....they perceive them as different cultural identities, because we’re the invisible minority they don’t credit us with that.” (I7M40)

Just as memorable are the comments made when participants have been subject to anti-British sentiment when visiting Ireland:

“ I was really confused about it for years, whether I was English or Irish... I’ve been called an Irish bastard over here and an English bastard over in Ireland. I was walking down the street in Dublin talking to my cousin and some lads come the other way and one of them just ...bang... come out of nowhere, smacked me and called me an English bastard. One of the lads recognised me then and said No he’s a cousin” (I4M30)

The consequences of adopting a hybrid identity prompted one woman to reflect on the struggle to reconcile her Irish background with her ability to pass as English:

“ When I was a young adult I would say there were times when I didn’t make it obvious that I was from an Irish background, usually when I was in the company of English people. I look back on that and think I’m not proud of myself but it’s about having self-esteem you know. If you were in a group and people were making an Irish joke I never said ‘that’s offensive to my parents’ or anything like that. Obviously things would be different now, but it took me in to my 30’s to feel more confident to do that. Yeah I think I did hide behind my white English accent and my whiteness really.” (I11F40)

A key influence on an individuals’ notion of self-ascribed identity is their experience of a bi-cultural upbringing where elements of their Irish background are incorporated into growing up in Britain. Further consideration of aspects of this are now examined in the context of cultural persistence and how Irishness manifested itself at home. These are important topics for consideration because they give an indication of the extent to which future interaction within the host society is influenced by early socialisation when the second-generation first learn that they are in some way distinctive and outside mainstream British society.

Cultural persistence – manifestations of Irishness

Individualised mechanisms of identity were captured when participants were asked to describe the ways in which their Irish heritage had manifested itself both at home and in the wider community. The key topics mentioned by participants centred on hospitality, food and music in the home whilst church attendance, socialising, St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, sporting allegiance and holidays in Ireland were manifest outside the home, all of which are tangible proxies of cultural persistence.

Participants described hospitality at home, which was not dependent on income but rather an expected behaviour within the community, where guests and even casual visitors were usually persuaded to eat and drink, however brief their visit.

“ My mum and dad were always hospitable and kind and welcoming and priests were often in the house...because the Irish, the ones that came over they were young. Even though we didn't have much mum and dad were always kind.” (I25M50)

Many participants recalled expectations that all food and drink in the house was shared with visitors:

“You know if there was anything nice in the cupboard and anyone came in – ‘oh we've got biscuits’ ... and you'd have nothing left for the rest of the week because it would be shared out with everybody. So hospitality was a big thing.” (I16F30)

This sense of hospitality as differing from the indigenous norm was reinforced when contrasted with that of English neighbours:

“Everybody was welcome. If the dinner was being made an extra plate would be put out. My dad used to stand at the top of the stairs and say “have I got a bed tonight?” because there were five girls and we'd all bring home friends. So it was an open house..... You'd go round to [English] people's houses and they'd say “we're just having dinner so do you want to stand outside while we have dinner?” I thought “how bizarre is that” because my mum would just get another plate out.” (I26F30)

When domestic circumstances prevented much entertaining in the home, participants were able to recall hospitality offered within their extended family:

“It was less so than at my auntie's house just because of the situation at home [disabled mother]. But from the bigger family picture it was very much about socializing, my uncle and aunt had a big social life, there were always people in the house that way which involved a lot of what's now called Karaoke, where they'd get up and sing. (I12F40)

Expectations regarding hospitable behaviour were reinforced from a young age:

“I remember mum getting cross with me. I'd brought a friend home from school, I asked her if she wanted anything to eat and she said no so I left it. Then mum asked her and she said no again, so mum put out a sandwich and crisps and

chocolate and my friend ate it all. I got told off for not offering more than once.” (I18F30)

Childhood memories of specific Irish foods such as boxty, soda bread and a staple diet of potatoes were repeatedly recalled by the sample:

“My father’s diet is fairly traditional Irish, meat and veg type of thing and my mother catered for that. But it’s fair to say that she prided herself on baking soda bread and making boxty, so we were aware of particular Irish dishes.” (I13M40)

There is some similarity here with the findings recorded by Kneafsey and Cox, (2002). In their study of Irish women in Coventry when they noted that certain brands of food were utilised to ‘create a sense of Irishness’ (Kneafsey & Cox, 2002:11). Irish music was regularly listened to in all but one of the participant’s homes and the reflexive reading of the data uncovered jocular references to well known Irish songs. Outside the domestic sphere, regular church attendance reinforced cultural differences:

“We went to church every Sunday and none of my friends living around me did, they all thought I was a bit strange.... that we got up on Sunday morning and went to church.” (I 27M30)

Socialising with relatives and within the wider Irish community was the norm with events focused around family participation with parish or Irish social club venues predominating:

“We’d go the Kerryman’s or charity dances in the community like Christ the King ...benefit dances.” (I16F30)

Children, particularly girls, went to Irish dancing lessons. Distinct evidence of Irishness was visible on St. Patrick’s Day when participants would be sent to school wearing green ribbon and shamrock. Sporting allegiance for the second-generation largely remains centred on Irish teams:

“We always support Ireland in any sporting occasion, be it rugby, athletics, football” (I10M40)

A common method of ensuring children developed an understanding of their Irish heritage and culture was by spending school holidays in Ireland. It was not unusual for the whole of the summer holiday to be spent with grandparents in Ireland, although finances and work meant that parents could not always stay for the entire time:

“We used to go almost the day we broke up, to Kilkenny. Dad used to bring us and he’d come back to England because he had to work.” (I26F30)

In retrospect participants were able to reflect on the benefits of this experience:

“By virtue of my father’s positive attempt to allow us to meet as many of our relatives as possible I was in Ireland for five or six weeks during the summer holidays...and so I had the opportunity to spend a lot of my free time in Ireland and meet a lot of my relatives.” (I13M40)

Such trips strengthened family ties as frequent mention was made of meeting cousins of a similar age and maintaining contact with extended family. These visits also impacted on perceptions of ethnicity:

“She [mother] had always taken me home, by the time I was 10 I’d been to Ireland every year. So really I was always going home with her and you see it’s ‘I’m going home with her’ and it’s home, it is so bizarre it’s the only other place I can ever imagine living and feeling completely at home there.”(I3F40)

However not all families could afford to go back to Ireland, this was found to be particularly common for participants from large families, when the cost was prohibitive:

“Because there were seven of us we never went to Ireland when we were kids unlike a lot of people my age who would be sent to Ireland for the summer. We didn’t do that because the money wasn’t there.” (I20M30)

Within the home it was relatively straightforward to reinforce Irish culture and the second-generation could choose to adopt or reject parental values. However, outside the

family when mixing in the host society matters were not so straightforward. How participants dealt with vilification outside their ethnic community merits further consideration, not least because for most people in the sample the first time they experienced anti-Irish remarks was in the workplace.

PRESSURES REGARDING AN IRISH IDENTITY

The sample was asked if they had ever experienced any type of pressure because of their ethnicity. The question sought to uncover any incidents where participants believed their ethnicity had been the cause of the way they were spoken to or treated. The samples' responses can be categorised in to two main areas; incidents they had experienced themselves and recollections of their parents experiences.

It was expected that those participants who were older teenagers or adults during the IRA bombing campaigns of the 1970's would have different experiences from younger members of the sample. In particular it was anticipated that the death of James McDade, who blew himself up in November 1974 whilst planting an IRA bomb at the Greyfriars Lane sorting office in Coventry would be a significant event in influencing local attitudes towards the Irish community. For that reason participants who were in the appropriate age bracket were asked if they could recall the incident.

In total, seventeen participants across the age spectrum had direct experience of negative remarks being made about their ethnic background. Additionally, eighteen participants were aware of incidents when their parents had been recipients of anti-Irish comments.

As Hillyard, (1993) points out the Irish were a ‘suspect community’ due to IRA activity in Britain and therefore the most closely observed ethnic group (Nagle, 2005).

Direct experience of anti-Irish remarks

The experience of those who reported being subjected to anti-Irish remarks can be categorised as either occurring at work, with friends (often as the butt of ‘jokes’) or in the aftermath of IRA activity. It is appropriate at this juncture to concentrate on participants’ recollections, they are a crucial component of the biographical approach adopted which sought to reveal and understand individuals’ lives in terms of their distinctiveness within their social context. As we are looking at individualised incidents and perceptions, extensive use of quotations from the interviews is utilised in this section of the analysis.

The most commonly cited incidents were in the workplace and spanned all job levels and industry sectors. The usual focus of these remarks concerned the Irish being “thick” or “violent” :

“Working in the Library Service.... I heard the Manager and the Librarian say “oh that’s a bit Irish” equating it with being stupid and wrong ...there were other comments from the manager in the branch libraries saying “oh the Irish are miserable and stupid” (I7M40)

Whilst no participant was directly told they were ‘thick’ many experienced implicit references to their intellectual ability:

“People would just assume you were slower than most people. In my circle of colleagues everyone had at least one degree, if not a Masters, so it was a high level of education, yet people still thought you were a bit thick and then they would treat you as being slightly thick as well ” (I29M30)

A perception that the Irish were violent was alluded to by the HR director in one company:

“We had a problem with an employee and the HR director turned round to me and basically said because my parents are Irish I’m sure that I could get my family to sort him out. So the implication.....well he didn’t come out and say it, but I felt he was implying that basically all Irish people are thugs.” (I23F30)

Another participant found that stereotyping and hostility resulted in oblique references to IRA activity being used when his questioned his manager’s decision making:

“Well he would make nasty comments about me. I was expected to move around and cover different jobs if people were absent.... I always felt that they took advantage of me because I could do those jobs. When I complained to him one day he said to me “well it’s an awful lot better in here than carrying an Armalite rifle around the streets of Belfast” ” (I10M40)

Despite Race Relations legislation being enacted over 30 years ago one participant recalled being discriminated against simply on the basis of his Irish surname:

“I was working in Cheltenham and I was looking for digs and as soon as she asked me my name she said ‘oh we don’t take Irish people here’.” (I30M60)

Employers are aware of their obligations regarding ensuring equality and preventing discrimination in the workplace, yet for one man the likely outcomes of a management initiated research project were unwelcome:

“They [Multinational Automotive Manufacturer] did a minority ethnic research project which I got invited to....they sat me down and went through a list of questions which I found insulting and embarrassing. They asked me if I preferred to be called Patrick, Pat, Paddy and I said “I prefer Patrick.” They said “well write to all your staff and tell them then” and I said “don’t bother telling them because the day you tell them not to call me Paddy is the day they’ll call me Paddy for ever”.....they said “well we have to”. I couldn’t do it because if you tell 3,000 blokes on the shop floor, that the manager who runs the line doesn’t like being called Paddy that’s it, they’ll all call you Paddy. You think “Christ, I’m fine on my own, do not interfere” (I29M30)

As anticipated, the aftermath of the IRA bomb in November 1974 had an impact on local perceptions of the Irish community. Three participants recalled incidents at work following the explosion and the difficulties they encountered:

“I worked at British Leyland then. I did actually say something and it got a bit out of hand because I said to somebodyshe was a bit of a gossip.... I said to her “oh they might do something about it now, you know, the troubles in Northern Ireland” so she put it out to one or two that I was an IRA supporter.” (I2F50)

The suggestion of the possibility of anti-Irish discrimination led to a changed career choice and at the same time reinforced an Irish identity for one participant:

“When I was at university there was a suggestion, because I speak a number of languages; that I should look at the Diplomatic Service, maybe the English Diplomatic Service. And at that point I was told my career would not be successful because of who I was. I think that really acted as a triggering point to really make me more anxious to just say ‘OK well screw you, I’m Irish, I don’t care’.”(I1F40)

Outside of the workplace the younger members of the sample categorised any comments from friends that made reference to their Irish backgrounds as either ‘banter’ or ‘jokes’. It was evident that for the younger people in the sample such references were deemed inoffensive. Nevertheless there was awareness that what is acceptable from a friend would not be accepted in the regulated world of employment:

“If they know you’re second-generation Irish in jest they might say “you thick Paddy” but its banter, it’s not....there’s no nastiness behind it, it’s more friendliness in fact.

[GO’M: Would you ever pick someone up for making that comment?]

Friends no, but in a professional situation I would, yeah, definitely” (I9M20)

Reactions to negative comments about their ethnic background resulted in some participants hiding their ethnic origin when possible. This was most prevalent during the 1970’s IRA campaigns:

“It was quite useful in the 70s when we had the Birmingham bombs to be known by an English sounding surname rather than an Irish name that stood out.....so therefore I never used to really tell people I had an Irish background at that time, I didn’t tell them at all because they didn’t need to know and it was something I kept a bit private because I was able to because of my name.” (I2F50)

In the working environment when subjected to anti-Irish remarks, participants faced a choice of either keeping silent or contesting such comments. A recurrent theme expressed by participants was regret at not challenging remarks that were made. In retrospect, a number in the sample realised that at the start of their working lives they did not have the confidence to admonish colleagues who made offensive remarks, particularly in the political climate of the time. The participant who was upbraided by his manager with thinly veiled references to IRA membership reflected on how he had handled the situation when he was in his late teens in a junior position and contrasted it with how he would handle it now as a successful company director in his 40’s:

“I didn’t ask him what he meant, I just left it and I wish today that I had challenged him on that and asked him was he suggesting I was an IRA member or may consider being an IRA member? He was probably one of the worst characters and I shouldn’t have let that go but I didn’t have the experience to know how to handle it..... he was the worst of the lot.
[GO’M: Would you challenge anybody now?]
Oh yeah. I would know how to deal with it you see, to make them realise the error of their ways and I could apply pressure, I would use external sources to manage it, whereas at the time I didn’t know how to deal with that.” (I10M40)

The data suggests that in the majority of cases experience of racist comments did not start until participants entered the labour market. Clearly this was unlikely to have happened earlier as participants were attending schools with large numbers of co-ethnics and socialising within the ethnic community.

Parents experiences of anti-Irish remarks

Within the sample eighteen participants volunteered (without prompting) examples of when their parents had been subjected to anti-Irish remarks and the impact this had on parental behaviour. All of these recollections were framed around the aftermath of IRA bombings, the Birmingham bombs of 1974 being particularly resonant due to their locality and recency. However one participant was aware that the 1939 IRA bicycle bomb in Coventry also had repercussions for the Irish community:

“My auntie got thrown out of her digs. She arrived home from work and all her belongings were packed into a bag and out on the doorstep and she was told to....she was just thrown out because of her Irish background” (I22F60)

There is evidence of some congruence with their children’s later experiences as many parental experiences of anti-Irish sentiments occurred in the workplace. It is important to note that unlike their children, parents would have been immediately identifiable as Irish due to their accents and for some this caused considerable difficulties:

“My mother was subjected to a huge amount of racism especially in the 1970s working in Coventry answering the phone at the Council. She suffered dreadfully; for the first time in her life she would say to me ‘don’t tell people I’m Irish’..... she used to get lots and lots of verbal abuse, I’ve known her be in tears and that upset me, although I was only 12 at the time.....the feeling in Coventry then was very anti-Irish.so at work she would avoid answering the phone and she would ask somebody else to answer it.” (I3F40)

Where parents had jobs dealing with the general public there were frequent examples of instances of anti-Irish comments. In the case of the mother who ran a local post office, she was subjected to adverse comments from one customer which were reiterated when she complained to the perpetrators parent:

“A lad who was in the army, when he was back on leave came in to the Post Office and threatened her and gave her foul and abusive language and called her

an Irish bitch, Irish cunt. Then when my mother spoke to his mum who came in the Post Office two or three days later, to tell her that her son's behaviour was outrageous the mother said "if I'd a gun I'd shoot you too".(I10M40)

For those participants who had fathers working in car factories the most common memories of the time refer to animosity and name calling on the track. This appears to have been widespread with examples from Jaguar, Standard Triumph and Morris Engines:

"Somebody in the factory where my dad was working turned round to him and said "I see you lot have been at it again" and my dad put him up against a machine with a wrench and said to him "Don't associate me with them, just because we're from the same country it doesn't mean I'm the same as them" Dad was fuming, he was absolutely livid." (I13M40)

The sample also referred to instances when their parents had been subjected to close scrutiny by the police, invoking their powers under the Prevention of Terrorism Act; examples ranged from one father being stopped by Special Branch at Holyhead and invited to take part in an identity parade, to the police calling at one house to question a parent about who he mixed with. Clearly there was widespread public anxiety about the Irish during the 1970's which often manifested itself when their accents were heard in public places:

"Dad said when he mixed with his friend who had a Northern Irish accent, people would be suspicious and on occasions they were stopped by plain clothes detectives around that time; in cafes and places where they heard his accent and they were searched and questioned. So obviously that was a particularly hard time for the community" (I 7M40)

Authenticity of anti-Irish experience

Despite having experienced adverse comments themselves due to their Irish backgrounds participants rarely believed that any complaints they may have had about such incidents would be taken seriously:

“If I went into a police station and wanted to report something as being racist against the Irish would I be taken seriously? I strongly suspect I wouldn’t.”
(I3F40)

Evidence from this sample suggests that the prevailing attitude of assumed assimilation due to similarity of skin colour with the host population, led them to question the authenticity of their experiences when compared to other minority ethnic groups. Younger participants had not experienced the need to hide their origins in the way that older members of the sample had. Watching a television detective programme set during the 1970’s deal with an IRA bomb storyline sparked a debate in one family:

“We watched the ‘Life on Mars’ episode about the IRA. My sons couldn’t believe the way the Irish were referred to was authentic. I told them it was actually much worse in reality than portrayed on the programme. I was glad they covered it though.” (I3F40)

Personal experience of anti-Irish remarks or witnessing parents coping with hostile comments and the stigma associated with being Irish indicates that this is a critical juncture as far as identity and ethnicity are concerned. During the time of IRA activity in Britain second-generation identity was shaped by the hostility participants saw their parents experience. Moreover, stereotypes around ‘Irish’ attributes such as levels of intelligence have long existed but the stereotyping around capacity for violence started to be used again (Mac an Ghaill, 2001; Nagle,2005; Holmes,1991) – having waned from

the Victorian taxonomies of race (Miles, 1993) and the eugenics arguments of the 1930's (Catell, 1936). Hence the host population switch away from incorporating the Irish as part of the white mainstream population (Hickman, 1998) and are quick to return to previous negative stereotypes during times of IRA activity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined participants' responses regarding their identity and ethnicity in order to inform our understanding of the second-generation Irish experience in British society. It adds to our understanding of British labour market experiences of the second-generation because aspects of ethnicity and identity determine levels of integration within the host community which ultimately affect labour market positioning.

The Catholic Church played a pivotal role and offered a pragmatic network of support for migrants and their families, as outlined by Woodhead, (2008). Alongside welfare provision, parishes provided venues for collective events which meant that socialisation within the context of an extended ethnic community preserved ethnic culture and networks for the second-generation.

Data presented here supports previous research regarding second-generation Irish schooling, with all participants in the sample attending Catholic primary schools and all but two continuing in Catholic schools throughout their secondary education. Participants were indeed 'integrated into a segregated system' (Hickman, 1996:28) and this arrangement perpetuated the Irish Catholic milieu at the same time as it imposed the

British class system. The interviews did uncover some evidence that an Irish-born parent was less likely to observe custom & practice regarding Catholic secondary education if they had married outside their religion, although this needs to be treated with caution as we are only dealing with a small sample here. Parental attitudes to education do not support the classic migrant upward social mobility model where advancement is attained by the second-generation gaining qualifications to propel them in to the professions; the majority of participants categorised their parents approach to schooling as relaxed.

The analysis delineated findings from the interviews in terms of either external manifestations of ethnicity or internal markers of identity. In terms of self-ascribed ethnicity it is evident that the results obtained, with twenty five participants describing some form of Irish background, indicate that this sample do not conform to previous findings which suggest that 'ethnic fade' occurs over time (Garrett, 2002). Likewise, there is no evidence to support Walker, (2007) or Ryan, (1990) who proposed that second-generation identity wanes as the second-generation becomes integrated into the host society. The response of one participant regarding possible career restrictions due to her background engendered a 'symbolic assertion' of her ethnicity as a result of feelings of potential racist exclusion thereby reflecting Modood's, (1996) findings.

However, the high levels of self-ascribed Irish ethnicity do not correlate with official external markers of nationality for this sample. When questioned about the type of passport held, just five people had Irish passports. Additionally, on the 2001 Census only fourteen participants could recall ticking the 'White Irish' option, indicating support for

O’Keefe’s (2006) view that an Irish ethnic option on an official British form was unfamiliar and therefore caused suspicion. Furthermore the data indicates that participants appear to switch between ethnicities to suit their needs, with passports in particular chosen on this basis. This finding supports both the notion of ‘multiple cultural identities’ (Castles and Miller, 2003 :248) and lack of a fixed identity in the second-generation (Wessendorf, 2008b). There is evidence from the sample to sustain Hickman et al’s, (2005) argument that individuals become more confident in asserting their identities as they mature. However, what emerges from the responses regarding self-ascribed identity, with nine different permutations, is evidence that determining a suitable descriptor for hybrid identities that acknowledges the dual aspects of Irish ethnicity and British birth is both complex and individualised.

Threats to ethnic identity were uncovered through descriptions of anti-Irish racism, either experienced directly or by participants’ parents and denote a marked difference in the way such matters were treated during the 1970’s and 1980’s compared to current early twenty first century attitudes. It could be argued that the effect of the Race Relations Act, (1976) changed social mores to such an extent that overt expressions of a racist nature became unacceptable in society. Indeed these findings indicate that older participants provided far more examples of being subjected to anti-Irish remarks. However levels of anti-Irish racism did continue after the legislation was enacted and this implies that the dominant conception of ethnicity based on the binary paradigm meant that the Irish community’s experience was overlooked. This reflects Mac an Ghail’s (2000) findings regarding the invisibility of anti-Irish racism and also the need for the Commission for

Racial Equality, (1997) to commission a report on discrimination and the Irish community in Britain.

Certainly throughout the 1970's the Irish were a 'suspect community' (Hillyard, 1993) and the findings here show that some second-generation Irish kept their heads down and tried to be inconspicuous and hide their background during that era. Most participants' first direct encounter with anti-Irish sentiments occurred in the workplace. There was a widespread belief in the sample that many anti-Irish comments were provoked because of the IRA bombing campaigns during the 1970's. In contrast, the youngest participants had not been subjected to the same sort of anti-Irish comments and had also grown up at a time when the commodification of Irishness (McGovern, 2002) has deemed it a fashionable ethnic background.

CHAPTER SIX

LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines participants' labour market experiences. As the interviews sought to uncover individual second-generation Irish narrative accounts of family background, views on identity & ethnicity and work history, an exclusive focus on career was eschewed in favour of a more holistic approach. The reason being that emphasis on work histories alone would be likely to generate data on chronological career progression rather than facilitating reflection on other aspects such as life events and individual development, which have influenced individuals' choice of work and career path.

It begins by exploring parental origins and their labour market position once resident in Britain, in order to determine whether or not the parents of this sample worked in the Irish ethnic niche occupations of construction and nursing (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002; Walter, 1997). It is important to establish whether or not parents worked as 'navvies and nurses' in order to contextualise the research – only by ascertaining parental occupations post-migration, can we determine if their career patterns are replicated by the second-generation. The labour market positioning of ethnic groups is well documented and indicates that they are usually employed in occupations that require either specialist skills or the intensive use of labour (Graves & Graves, 1974; Schrover et al, 2007). The idea that ethnic niches occur when a particular group is concentrated in a sector of the labour market (Wang, 2004) is supported by evidence that the Irish were recruited to work in

specific sectors in Britain (Cowley, 2001; Ryan, 2008b). Whilst the Irish had a linguistic advantage over other migrant workers, their occupational patterns appear to have been limited so that for more than two centuries Irish-born workers have been principally engaged in construction and nursing. Although evidence does suggest that the perpetuation of ethnic occupational enclaves become sustained when information and resources regarding work opportunities are shared within ethnic groups (Wilson, 2003).

The chapter outlines salient issues surrounding a paucity of multigenerational data for the second-generation Irish in Britain (Akenson, 1993; Holmes, 1991) and census returns known to be at variance with the real numbers of second-generation Irish in the labour market (Hickman et al, 2001; O’Keeffe, 2006). It then goes on to explore participants’ experiences in four areas: pre-labour market entry, transition to the labour market, work histories and behaviour in the workplace. Experiences prior to entering the labour market are encapsulated in discussions regarding qualifications, careers advice and part-time work. Transitions to the labour market are explored, before analysing work histories and current occupations to determine if they mirror the migrant generations’ propensity to work in nursing and construction. Finally, a review of a recurring work-related theme regarding behaviour in the workplace related to ‘speaking out’ is examined. As noted in the preceding chapter these findings are derived from research carried out with a sample of second-generation Irish based in one location, Coventry. Again a caveat is necessary; the findings reflect the experiences of this group in this location, although it is likely that second-generation Irish elsewhere in Britain may report similar experiences.

PARENTAL ORIGINS AND LABOUR MARKET POSITIONINGS

The theme of parental origins and their post-migration occupations was examined during each interview as a means of grounding and contextualising individual participants' later accounts of their own education and work histories. The existence of ethnic employment niches is well documented (Rydgren, 2004; Zontini, 2007; McKay, 2007); and throughout the literature Irish-born workers are strongly identified with roles in construction and nursing (Cowley, 2001; Walter, 1989). This situation is perpetuated by the effects of chain migration whereby gendered careers in ethnic niche occupations are replicated by successive waves of migrants (Ryan, 2008a). Furthermore, in the case of nurses in particular, there is evidence that the British government targeted recruitment campaigns at Irish labour (Yeates, 2004).

O'Connor & Goodwin, (2002) provide the most comprehensive study of the work undertaken by the Irish-born within the British labour market; drawing upon three large scale data sets that cover more than 1,000 workers. They identified a narrow range of sectors and occupations that have absorbed repeated waves of Irish migrants. For over one hundred and fifty years labour migration has been gendered as successive generations of Irish-born migrants have been employed in construction and nursing. This thesis shows that parental occupational patterns within this sample not only replicate historical patterns regarding both male and female occupations but exceed expectations when they joined the British labour market, with just over half of fathers working in construction at some point and some forty percent of mothers working in nursing and allied caring roles.

Parental Origins

Popular conceptions of Irish migration frequently assume that the majority of migrants to Britain originate from rural areas in the West of Ireland, thus mirroring the nineteenth century migration patterns of seasonal agricultural labourers identified by Cowley, (2001); Fitzpatrick, (1989) and Akenson, (1993). Not only is area of origin assumed to be confined to a handful of counties in the West of Ireland but likewise, migrants' occupations are described as being constrained within a small number of industries or occupational niches where for example, 64% of immigrant men working in the construction industry are Irish (Walter, 1997:61).

When combining data for all Irish-born parents by province it is evident that there is a fairly uniform distribution from regions throughout the Republic:

TABLE 16
PARENTAL ORIGIN BY PROVINCE

| PROVINCE | NUMBER |
|-----------------|---------------|
| CONNACHT | 12 |
| LEINSTER | 11 |
| MUNSTER | 13 |
| ULSTER | 12 |

n = 48

Forty eight parents were from the Republic of Ireland and all were white. Eighteen respondents came from families where both parents were born in the Republic; the remaining twelve in the sample had one Irish-born parent.

A summary of parental origins is provided below. As two of the participants were brothers their parents are counted twice i.e. counted separately for each individual respondent.

TABLE 17
SUMMARY OF PARENTS ORIGINS

| | IRISH | N. IRISH | ENGLISH | WELSH |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| MOTHER | 25 | 2 | 3 | - |
| FATHER | 23 | 2 | 4 | 1 |

n = 60

Fathers job in Britain

A significant number of fathers had their education cut short by economic necessity and the impetus to generate income meant that their tenure in jobs in Ireland was limited as they moved to Britain in pursuit of higher wages. Throughout the twentieth century Ireland still relied on remittances (Cowley, 2001; Delaney, 2007) and as recently as the 1960's the main reason for one fathers move to England was to support other members of a large family:

“He came to England because he was the third child and his sister had gone to Birmingham and his brother had gone to London. He was 19, he went with the sole purpose of sending back money because there was nine younger than him.”
(I16F30)

A summary of fathers' occupations post-migration is provided below:

**TABLE 18
FATHERS OCCUPATION IN BRITAIN**

| |
|--|
| Construction worker |
| Cabinet maker/ Shop floor Car factory |
| Teacher |
| Construction worker |
| Construction worker/Shop floor Tractor factory |
| Shop floor Car factory/Co. Director Care Agency |
| Shop floor Engineering Factory/ Tunnel worker, Construction |
| Shop floor Factory/Own Tarmac Co. |
| Construction worker |
| Construction worker/Foreman, Chain factory |
| Foreman Car factory |
| Shop floor Car factory & Own Social Club |
| Shop floor Car factory/Shop floor Tractor factory |
| Own Construction Co. |
| Construction worker/Shop floor Tractor factory |
| Shop floor Car factory |
| Press Tool Setter Car factory |
| Chief Engineer Automotive Co. |
| Own chain of Barbers & Printing Co. |
| Own Building Co. |
| Nurse |
| Army/Dustman/Construction worker |
| Construction worker/ Shop floor Tractor factory |

n=23

Lack of any formal qualifications or failure to complete secondary education did not deter migrant workers from securing jobs in Britain, although these were generally unskilled positions. It might be argued that Coventry was an atypical place to work; with a significantly higher proportion of jobs in manufacturing and engineering than similar sized cities in Britain. However, concomitant with buoyant manufacturing were massive post-war reconstruction projects and a period that saw the population of the city growing

at an average of 3,500 per annum for the decade following the Second World War (Thoms & Donnelly, 1986:37), hence opportunities for migrant labour were plentiful.

An examination of fathers' work histories in England sees the emergence of four distinct groups: construction workers, factory workers, the self-employed and two who possessed specific vocational training or qualifications. Limited movement between the sectors occurred in the pursuit of higher pay or conversely to avoid unemployment during an economic downturn. Given the vagaries of the Coventry labour market with short time working and lay offs a common feature of factory life throughout the 1970's and 1980's, (Tolliday, 1986:238), it was not uncommon for fathers to have part time work or second jobs to supplement the family income.

Men working in construction were employed across the whole spectrum of construction from big civil engineering projects to labouring on building sites. In total 52% of the fathers had worked in construction at some point. The existence of large car plants and other factories was a decisive factor for many in making Coventry their destination. However factory work did not guarantee prosperity; during periods of short-time working and lay offs income was erratic.

An over-reliance on the automotive industry and the collapse of Coventry's manufacturing base in the early 1980's meant that huge numbers of jobs were lost. Throughout 1982 jobs were being declared redundant at the rate of 520 each month with 1,520 jobs lost in December alone. (Thoms & Donnelly, 1986:48). As a result of being made redundant some fathers utilised their contacts within the Irish community when

conducting job searches. The outcome of which was that they found employment in stereotypical ethnic niches:

“He worked at Standard Triumph, he was made redundant there in 1980 and then went out on to the construction.....he literally got his redundancy cheque and walked into a job on the Monday because he knew all the Irish fellows, and that’s where he stayed for the next 20 years.....he would have been nearly 40. I had a new baby brother, so he couldn’t be out of work. Unfortunately he wasn’t a builder, he was a labourer then for the rest of his working days, hard graft you know, I remember him coming in freezing cold, he was doing the roads, the kerbs, digging the holes.” (I17F30)

In summary, within this sample twenty three Irish-born fathers arrived in England in the three decades up to the end of the 1960’s. Of these twelve were involved in construction at some time during their working lives. Those who were better qualified on arrival tended to fare better financially either through establishing their own companies or obtaining secure jobs. The interviews uncovered evidence of a migrant group prepared to work hard to provide for their families, often working in more than one job at a time. When the economic climate was difficult they displayed a pragmatism that saw men move from factory work out on to construction sites, such jobs gained through their contacts in the Irish community.

Mothers job in Britain

Many mothers also came from impoverished rural backgrounds and had limited schooling; the traditional role of women remaining in the home as housewives impacting on girls’ education. Within the sample five mothers came from middle class backgrounds, despite their relative prosperity there was still an impetus to leave Ireland for work:

“Mum was very middle class, my grandfather was a teacher, there were a number of priests within the family...she was the eldest of 10...there were family connections with the US dating back from the time of the Famine...when it came to 16 my very forward looking and progressive grandfather encouraged her to go to the US.

I still feel..... a little bit moved...because it was something ahead of its time and speaks about my grandfather and speaks about my mother, that she had the wit and the drive to do that. She got a job as a model in a Jewish owned clothing warehouse, in New York and so when buyers would come in she would model the clothes for them.” (I15F50)

A summary of mothers’ occupations post-migration is provided below:

TABLE 19
MOTHERS OCCUPATION IN BRITAIN

| |
|--|
| Mothers help/waitress/ buses/cleaning |
| Teacher/ Housewife |
| Civil servant, Ministry of Defence |
| Shop floor Factory/Auxiliary Nurse/ Civil Servant, Customs & Excise |
| Hotel work/Shop work/Care Assistant |
| Care work/Co. Director Own Care Agency |
| Shop floor Textiles factory |
| Hotel manager/ p-t Cleaner |
| Buses/p-t cleaner/Cleaning Supervisor |
| Nurse/Waitress |
| Shop assistant/Planning Dept Local Authority |
| Nurse/shop floor munitions factory/own Boarding house/own Social Club |
| Seamstress/hotel work/p-t cleaner |
| Housekeeper/p-t cleaner |
| Shop floor Car factory/café/ shop floor car factory |
| Nanny/shop work /school dinner lady |
| Nurse |
| Shop floor Electronics Factory/School dinner lady/childminder |
| Own Sub-Post Office |
| Nurse/Housewife |
| Nurse/family business |
| Shop floor Electronics factory/shop assistant /Auxiliary Nurse |
| Waitress/shop assistant/cleaner |
| Nanny/Nurse |
| Office/p-t bar work/ p- t Social Club work |

n = 25

Factors pushing mothers to migrate included lack of jobs in Ireland, large families needing financial assistance in the forms of remittances and an expectation that able bodied young people would move elsewhere for work. Statistics reveal that a third of women who were living in Ireland in 1946 had migrated by 1971 (Kelly & Nic Giolla Choille, 1990).

The most striking feature of the mothers' jobs in Britain is the fragmented nature of their work histories. Twenty four mothers organised their working lives around their childcare requirements. In the one case where the mother did not alter her work patterns to accommodate childcare, most remarkably for the era her employer financed her childcare arrangements to facilitate her return to work after pregnancy. It could be argued that these findings are indicative of women's career patterns during the 1950's and 1960's where many women either ceased to be active in the labour market altogether or took on very limited (usually part time) work once they had dependent children. However by 1975 almost half of married women in Britain were in some form of paid employment and 47% of women with children were working outside the home, although only a quarter of working mothers had pre-school children (Hakim, 1993; The Guardian, 2006).

The tendency for Irish-born mothers to take jobs that enabled them to look after their children themselves might be explained by the influence of Irish perceptions of the role of the mother. The Irish constitution promulgates the role of women as homemakers, enacted in 1937, Article 41.2 states:

“Subsection 1: In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

Subsection 2: The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.” (Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937)

Hence these Irish-born mothers were raised in a culture where remaining at home to look after children was customary, therefore on migration they would have to strike a balance between the economic necessity to work and received Irish wisdom regarding the maternal place in the home.

As can be seen in table 19, in many cases women pursued a variety of occupations to fit round specific family needs at different times throughout their working lives. Several participants remarked that their parents juggled childcare between them with their mother sometimes working two part time jobs or both parents working split shifts to accommodate it.

Mothers’ jobs can be grouped into five key areas: nursing and allied ‘caring’ jobs; hospitality, catering and domestic posts; factory work; roles requiring vocational qualifications and self employment. Eight mothers trained as nurses which supports O’Connor & Goodwin’s, (2002) findings which indicate that a third of Irish-born women are involved in nursing. If we also include those women employed in allied roles as care assistants then closer to 40% of the mothers worked in nursing and caring roles

Given the fragmented and complex nature of maternal work histories it is evident that many women adopted a pragmatic approach to their jobs. Hotel work, waitressing and cleaning jobs were frequently undertaken on a part time basis; the hours and nature of the work making it suitable for those without formal qualifications. Catering work in schools and childminding during holidays also fitted round family needs. Historically, the main employers of female labour in Coventry were factories operated by Courtaulds and GEC, manufacturing textiles and wireless sets & telephones respectively (Castle, 1986:133). Of the six mothers who worked in factories half had worked for these employers. The two mothers who possessed vocational qualifications prior to migrating both gave up work when they started families. The type of jobs mothers were doing did not easily facilitate starting their own businesses in the way that men's work in construction did. The mother who trained as a care assistant displayed entrepreneurial flair, becoming director of her own care agency supplying workers to her previous employer. The other self employed parent, a Sub-postmistress, was in the unusual position of being given a business:

“She'd been working at Orchard Way Post Office for 3 years, the sub-postmaster wanted to retire and he just handed it over to her. So we saw a big difference because she went from getting a basic salary to owning it and the salary jumped massively. He just walked away from it and gave it to her.” (I10M40)

To summarise, within this sample twenty five Irish-born mothers arrived between the 1920's and 1960's. Of these a third were involved in nursing at some time in their working lives. Those who were better qualified moved in to the same occupations that they had in Ireland but tenure was curtailed when they had children. The interviews uncovered evidence of the fragmented nature of women's careers; all but one woman organised work around childcare needs. Low paid part time work predominated.

Data presented here supports previous research regarding the career patterns, namely that a high proportion of Irish-born immigrants work in construction and nursing. O'Connor & Goodwin (2002:44) refer to the 1997 LFS study which indicated that 26.4% of Irish-born men working in the UK are engaged in jobs in construction, in contrast to UK-born men, only 11.9% of whom work in this sector. In this thesis, 52% of fathers worked in construction at some point in their careers, which is somewhat higher than previous studies and is interesting because these men were working in the industrial heartland of the West Midlands where manufacturing and engineering opportunities were numerous. Those fathers who had obtained qualifications in Ireland prospered through self-employment or secure jobs; however, for the majority work in manufacturing was, by the early 1980's, insecure and the thesis found examples of fathers moving out of the automotive industry and in to ethnic niche jobs in construction.

A third of Irish-born mothers in the sample had worked as nurses, which is similar to O'Connor & Goodwin's findings. They found 33.3% of Irish-born women involved in Health and Social work whereas only 20.2% of their UK-born counterparts are in this segment of the labour market (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002: 44). In this thesis nurses and care assistants account for 40% of the sample. Women's work histories were complex as a result of moving in and out of the labour market, giving up paid work entirely for periods and then needing to obtain work to facilitate childcare arrangements. As a result the majority worked in low paid part time positions. Similar to their male counterparts, vocationally qualified women obtained equivalent positions in Britain. Unlike their male

counterparts, opportunities for self-employment during this period appear limited for women and a tiny proportion had their own businesses.

Having established that the Irish-born parents of this sample were employed in ethnic niches we must now address where the second-generation are located in the labour market.

SECOND-GENERATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

As outlined in the review of the literature, the second-generation Irish in Britain are difficult to locate in the labour market as no multigenerational ethnic data exists for this group (Akenson, 1993:90) hence whilst we are able to identify Irish-born parents in the workplace, we struggle to pinpoint their children. Such problems are compounded by the fact that this apparent invisibility means that they are an under researched group (Walls & Williams, 2003). The sparse data that does exist is presented in various formats which make longitudinal comparative analysis difficult. There has been one attempt to integrate existing analyses and Hickman et al, (2001:31) combined data from three official UK datasets the GHS, LFS and BCS70 with information from the Irish NESC survey. Their section on 'Employment' outlines that, based on figures from GHS 1980-8, second-generation Irish were in slightly higher status socio-economic groups than their British-born counterparts, with women more successful than men, as outlined in table 6. They quote the NESC, (1991:206) survey results, which suggested that by attaining British qualifications and losing 'perceptible Irish characteristics' the second-generation are less likely to be affected by discrimination in employment. Although such an assertion is contested elsewhere by Hickman, (1995: 209) who argues that there is insufficient extant

research to determine if discrimination in employment has affected labour market positioning of the second-generation. Nonetheless, the evidence from these data sets points to the second-generation Irish as having attained higher educational levels than their British peers, with more staying on at school post 16 and significant numbers partaking in tertiary education.

Current employment patterns indicate that more self-ascribed Irish women are in managerial, professional and technical occupations than the White British population (FIS, 2007b). However these figures need to be treated with caution as the FIS data is based on the 2001 Census and therefore coverage of the second-generation is at best partial. Nevertheless, we can ascertain typical occupational groupings which indicate that the FIS data reflects O'Connor & Goodwin's (2002) results regarding gendered occupations for this ethnic group; hence nationally there are higher numbers of men who self-ascribe an Irish ethnicity working in construction, 20.2%, compared to 11.8% of the White British workforce. Whilst 26.7% of women identifying an Irish ethnicity are engaged in health and social work in contrast to 18.6% of White British women. Over time the second-generation have established work profiles similar to 'White British' (Hickman, 1995); according to the 2001 Census 15% of self-ascribed 'White Irish' men working in England are recorded as being in professional occupations compared to 12% of 'White British' men and 13% of 'White Irish' women are in professional occupations, which is 2% higher than their English counterparts (FIS, 2007b: 5).

Having failed to uncover sufficient multigenerational ethnic data that can substantiate employment patterns for second-generation Irish in Britain it is appropriate to now consider individual accounts of participants' labour market experiences. The following analysis considers three distinct phases: pre-labour market entry issues, transition to first job and work histories; after which issues surrounding behaviour in the workplace are examined.

PRE-LABOUR MARKET ENTRY

The interviews discussed pertinent pre-labour market entry experiences that were likely to have influenced participants' career choice and subsequent work histories; namely qualifications, careers advice and part time work experience. Although there is sparse extant research on second-generation Irish in Britain, Hornsby-Smith & Dale, (1988: 520) established that levels of educational qualifications gained by second-generation of both genders equals or exceeds that of qualifications held by their English counterparts.

Qualifications/Training

The entire sample holds some type of qualification. Participants were asked what their highest level of qualifications were to ascertain whether or not these reflected early career decisions or provided evidence of changes in career direction and continuous professional development once in the labour market. A summary of participants' highest qualifications is provided in table 20 overleaf.

A small number did not progress their education beyond GCSE/O levels and of the five participants in this category, three currently run their own businesses. Vocational qualifications are held by eight participants and were most common in those over the age of 45. This largely reflects conditions prevalent at the time of their entry in to a buoyant labour market with full employment, when young people’s expectations were set by their background and education, (Roberts, 2004) and places on degree courses were limited (Shipman & Shipman, 2006:5).

TABLE 20 HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION OBTAINED

| QUALIFICATION | NUMBER |
|---|---------------|
| GCSE/O LEVELS | 5 |
| A LEVELS | 1 |
| VOCATIONAL | 8 |
| HNC/HND | 3 |
| BA/BSc | 3 |
| POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE/DIPLOMA | 4 |
| MA/MSc/MBA/MEng | 5 |
| Ph.D | 1 |

n=30

Given the age range of this sample, from 27 to 76 years, they are a highly qualified cohort. However, most did not follow a traditional route straight from school to university – only four participants went direct from secondary education on to a first degree course. For the majority who entered higher education, qualifications were frequently attained

alongside holding down employment; hence day release or part-time BA and MA courses were the most common modes of study for this group. In instances when participants had given up permanent jobs to become full time students the need to generate income also kept them in the labour market in part time roles:

“I went to college to do my HND.... because I was a mature student I had to pay for a lot of it myself; so I’d go out driving 7½ ton trucks to Southern Germany and back to just get some money and come home at 4 in the morning, then get up at 7 or 8 and get the train over to Birmingham for my lectures.” (I4M30)

For those with family connections in the ethnic niche of the construction industry, part time work to assist in financing education was readily available:

“I always worked every summer, Christmas and Easter on the buildings..... since I was 12 years of ageI paid my way through college, when I was a student in Dublin I paid my air fares and my books and clothes, so they [parents] never paid a penny towards that. When I did the jobs it was to get money to go to college, so I got good work in the summer. We were all in the same boat, working for a subbie who might have been giving us a tenner a day, but getting £20 for himself.” (I25M50)

Of the thirteen participants who hold higher level qualifications only four went to university straight from school the other nine undertaking part time study or returning to education later in their careers. The reasons for return to education once in the labour market are explored in more detail later in this chapter during the discussion on work histories. It is useful at this juncture to examine careers advice given to participants in order to ascertain whether or not this influenced subsequent career choices.

Careers advice

Only five participants could recall the role that schools and careers advisers played in determining their future employment. Of these five, three recounted negative experiences,

whilst two younger participants were positive about the help that they had received. It is evident that stereotyping regarding ethnic employment niches (Schrover et al, 2007) impacted on the guidance received in some instances and may have been a factor in perpetuating employment in ethnic enclaves (Wilson, 2003). In one case, the advice given a participant's brother and later himself was quoted as evidence that the careers adviser was influenced by his Irish background and therefore suggested stereotypical ethnic job opportunities:

“When my brother went [to careers meeting] my mum was there and he said he wanted to work in architecture and they said ‘have you considered demolition?’ My mum said ‘I think he wants to build things not knock them down’I’m cynical enough to think ...because he was a really good student... if he hadn’t have been from the background he was, maybe they would have took that more seriously when he said ‘I want to do something to do with architecture.’ All you got when you went to the Careers was: ‘its buildings, its roads’. ” (I4M30)

The more positive experiences recalled from two younger participants were regarding receiving help in applying for a nursing course and another instance where pre-interviews and practice tests were provided for a potential engineering apprentice. One aspect that was apparent from the data was that those participants who entered the labour market during the recession of the 1970's, when jobs for school leavers were scarce, found themselves directed to YTS schemes and here again elements of gendered and ethnic jobs are apparent:

“Well at the time there was 16% unemployment in Coventry, it was all the Fun Boy Three.....the Ska era. There was a lot of unemployment ... it was quite a hostile time to be a young person. People accepted that it wasn't going to be easy to get work so the government used to run YTS .. you'd be placed at work....and the scheme I got on was in social care.” (I11F40)

In total six of the sample entered the labour market via YTS schemes, three of whom are now running their own businesses. The first encounter of working life for two thirds of

this sample was through part-time work whilst still in full time education and these experiences are now examined.

Part-time work experience

The interview theme on work history asked about part-time work or Saturday work whilst at school. This topic was included as a means of ascertaining initial experiences of the labour market. What emerges is a highly developed work ethic within this group, twenty three of whom had part time jobs whilst still at school. Of interest here is the influence of ethnic community contacts which in some cases facilitated the sharing of information on job opportunities (Wilson, 2003). Jobs included paper rounds, babysitting, waitressing and retail work. For participants whose parents or siblings ran their own businesses, work opportunities were plentiful from a young age:

“Well I worked for my father since I was 7. We were doing playing fields at that time. Usually I was driving the tractor and we were stone picking.” (I30M60)

In one instance part time work assisted another family within the Irish community, providing support for a single mother:

“In our road, a nurse whose husband left her, she was a night nurse at A & E in Coventry and Warwickshire hospital; I slept at her house three nights a week, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from the age of 15. While she went to work on the night shift I looked after her children.” (I16F30)

Often financial circumstances impelled participants from large families to look for work and once jobs were obtained they would be expected to become self sufficient:

“Yeah, paper round, milk round, all sorts. I think it was the ethic of Irish families, you had to work. We all worked. At 14 you had a paper round or a milk round and bought your own stuff then; clothes, shoes and whatever. (I6M50)

However such efforts were not appreciated by schools and viewed as distractions from studying, as one teacher pointed out to a group of 15 year olds:

“I did a Saturday job at Woolworths, I think most of our class worked there, and it was very much frowned on by Sister Theresa at our school.....because I can remember her storming into the class in the 4th form. She came in and....she was very snooty, “It’s come to my attention that some of you are working on Saturdays” and she said “stand up” and I think 95% of the class stood up and she was horrified. “You girls should be at home doing your homework” and it’s like she didn’t have any understanding that we needed that money. You know I worked....I think I did quarter to nine until quarter to six and I got a pound.” (I22F60)

Reviewing pre-labour market entry experiences reveals that participants’ ethnic origin was a factor which contributed to the careers advice they received and also the type of part-time work they engaged in whilst at school. Having considered early experiences it is now useful to examine how participants made the transition from education to work in order to determine whether or not they were directed in to stereotypical ethnic niche jobs thereby replicating parental career patterns.

TRANSITION TO THE LABOUR MARKET

Transition from school to the labour market can be problematic for young people and is influenced by a multiplicity of contextual factors such as education level, location, class, ethnic background and gender (Unwin & Wellington, 2001). Alongside such issues, prevailing economic conditions at the time they join the labour market influence available opportunities. However there are other considerations, as Plummer, (2000: 205) notes ‘social class is the greatest influence on educational attainment’; which of course ultimately determines exactly how much choice a young person has within the labour market.

Ashton, (1973) suggested that the school to work transition should be viewed within its social context rather than as a series of individual choices. Hence a key issue here is whether or not participants in this study were directed to stereotypical ethnic niche occupations (Schrover et al, 2007) via schools and careers advisors or if shared information regarding available work emanated from within the Irish community and thus perpetuated ethnic occupational enclaves (Wilson, 2003). Also ascribed attributes including racial origin, may account for ‘a set of advantages or disadvantages which affect...transitional outcomes’ (Evans & Furlong, 1997:27) so that ethnicity influences labour market positioning. Moreover a further factor merits consideration – that of the timing of a young persons transition to work. Goodwin & O’Connor, (2005:202) caution that assumptions that transitions to the labour market have been unproblematic during periods of full employment are misleading and that the complexity of the process indicates it was neither linear nor clear-cut.

The participants in this study joined the workforce over a substantial period covering more than five decades, during which with the oldest interviewee entered the labour market in 1945 when she was aged 13 and the youngest interviewee commenced full time work after his graduation in 2003, so a temporal analysis is useful here. The contrasting experiences of participants provide a useful summation of transitional events over more than half a century and therefore analysis is categorised by the various decades participants began work. It is also illustrated through an examination of the semantics deployed in the literature regarding transition to employment (Evans & Furlong, 1997),

which uses metaphors to describe the theoretical conceptualisations that explain movement from education to employment (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005).

The earliest transition to work among the sample took place at the end of the Second World War when one participant completed a secretarial course at technical college. In the post-war labour market, entry was largely unhampered by legal restrictions so that recruitment was not subject to equal opportunities legislation. For this participant beginning work in 1945 employment was found through word of mouth:

“A friend of my sister worked for an Engineers Merchants, she said “we’re looking for somebody to help out in the office, an office junior” and she persuaded me to go, and he was so desperate he took me on.” (I19F70)

This case suggests an ad hoc approach to the recruitment of school or college leavers prevailed amongst small companies within the Coventry labour market at the time.

The next decade in which participants in this study began work was the 1960’s. This was a period of full employment in the labour market which meant that opportunities for young people were abundant. Within the local labour market employment by sector statistics indicate that the ethnic niche of construction employed 4.5% of the workforce as illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 21**EMPLOYMENT IN COVENTRY BY SECTOR 1966**

| INDUSTRY | 1966 | % of Coventry working population |
|----------------------|-------------|---|
| MANUFACTURING | 12,379 | 6.0 |
| CONSTRUCTION | 9,187 | 4.5 |
| SERVICES | 51,110 | 25.0 |

Source: Adapted from Thoms & Donnelly, (1986:39); Mallier & Rosser, (1980)

The type of careers available to young people at this time are described as ‘niches’ (Evans & Furlong, 1997: 17), exactly which niche a young person was able to fill would depend on their level of education. Three distinct niches existed and were linked to educational attainment, so that jobs requiring qualifications obtained through higher education offered extended careers; in contrast to those short-term careers where such jobs offered a shorter period of training before achieving maximum earnings for the occupation. The third niche was one where semi-skilled and unskilled jobs offered no training or career prospects (Ashton & Field, 1976).

During this period most British children were educated in secondary modern schools which they generally left at the earliest opportunity, that is when they reached the minimum leaving age of 15 (Kerckhoff,1990). There was ample unskilled and semi-skilled work in Coventry at this time (Thoms & Donnelly, 1986). Certainly within this

sample for those who left school during the 1960's jobs were plentiful and obtaining a first post appears unproblematic. This is evident for jobs that required no training:

“There wasn't an expectation to stay on at sixth form, it was to get a job and that was the whole ethos of the school. So I left and went straight to work in a factory.” (I6M50)

Likewise recruitment in to short-term careers requiring some training indicates that school leavers had a level of choice with plenty of jobs available :

“I left school at 16 and I was actually offered five jobs - all office jobs - I was offered five jobs and I didn't know which one to take. Before I left school I just applied, by going in to the places and walking in the door.” (I2F50)

This also applies in the case where a late change of plan did not deter the participant from obtaining an apprenticeship:

“I left school after O levels...I was planning to stay on. I was preparing for the Lower Sixth, all the recruitment period had finished and for some reason I thought, “ I'm just going to get a job”. I ended up at some sort of youth employment place and said “I'd like a job” and it was all “well it's a bit late isn't it because we've finished all the recruitment” but I said “that's what I want to do”. Then I ended up with an apprenticeship which was OK, going back to the parents they were quite alright, [brother] had an apprenticeship and it seemed like a good thing to do.” (I5M50)

None of the participants who joined the labour market during this period went into higher education straight from school.

By the mid 1970's full employment was at an end and this coupled with the raising of the school leaving age meant that the transition from school to work became extended with a rise in youth unemployment and greater numbers of young people directed in to youth training schemes. The Coventry labour market contracted throughout the 1970's so that 34,933 fewer residents were in employment by the end of the decade (Census, 1971,

1981). The composition of the local labour market altered and employment data indicates that 2.7% of employment was in the health sector, these figures included the ethnic niche of nursing (Mackie, 2008: 101). There was a significant decline in the percentage of the population working in construction:

TABLE 22

EMPLOYMENT IN COVENTRY BY SECTOR 1977

| INDUSTRY | 1977 | % of Coventry working population |
|----------------------|-------------|---|
| MANUFACTURING | 9,537 | 5.2 |
| CONSTRUCTION | 4,556 | 2.5 |
| SERVICES | 66,007 | 35.6 |

Source: Adapted from Thoms & Donnelly, (1986:39); Mallier & Rosser, (1980)

The increasing complexity of the transition to work was reflected in the terminology which described it as ‘bridges, routes and pathways to work’ (Evans & Furlong, 1997), the accuracy of which is questionable as few job opportunities for school leavers existed in actuality. Two participants went from sixth form to university and both recounted a straight forward movement into higher education.

At this time those participants who completed A levels but chose not to continue their education found themselves employed in trainee positions in retail and the service sector:

“So I decided then that retail would be the career for me and applied to [department store] to do a management training programme which I was accepted on.” (I3F40)

For the remainder of the sample gaining entry to the labour market was problematic with six participants directed on to government sponsored schemes:

“I remember we were down at the Reform Club...we did two weeks and we were supposed to be learning basic computer programming - I mean it was a nonsense, you went in and typed your name and they were saying “that’s computer programming” it was a scam, it was just some training company being paid money by the government to take kids who hadn’t got any qualifications and put them through some basic sort of course.” (I13M40)

Levels of employment in Coventry did not recover until 1998 (Mackie, 2008), hence problematic transitions to the labour market were perpetuated throughout this period.

Within the next decade, entering the labour market was described as a ‘trajectory’ (Evans & Furlong, 1997) the term acknowledging that social forces were the key to shaping labour market destinations and structural factors influenced employment outcomes. The youth labour market had been decimated by recession and restructuring and the rate of any young person’s trajectory was determined by structural factors such as gender, ethnicity, class and qualifications (Evans & Furlong, 1997:18) and one participant provides clear evidence that his Irish background influenced the careers advice he was given, directing him to work in an ethnic niche:

“Those people at school were telling me I’d be a brickie or this or that”, so much so that I’d convinced myself I wanted to be a plumber... I said “I want to be a plumber” and they [Parents] said “you’re not doing that, coming home covered in mud every day, you won’t like that”. I said “well it’s good money” My dad kept saying to me “son, computers, computers” and then I did a YTS at ITEC which is an information technology college.” (I4M30)

By the end of the century young people were expected to adopt a reflexive approach to gaining employment. Transitions are currently described as ‘navigation’ representing the idea of a young person ‘negotiating their way through a sea of manufactured uncertainty’

(Evans & Furlong, 1997: 18). Only one participant has joined the labour market in the twenty first century and this was following completion of a degree. Of interest here is that he was persuaded to stay on at school to do A levels despite having already secured a job:

“I wasn’t going to do my A levels because I got a job working in a photography shop, it started off as a Saturday job while I was at school and I was going to carry on working there when I left school. I got unexpectedly good results in my GCSEsand my photography teacher said that he wasn’t going to let me leave. He forced me to do A levels..... I carried on working in the photography shop as a Saturday job and working as a photographer and then went to university.”
(I9M20)

Hence even recent transitions to the labour market are not clear cut and in the case outlined above, after graduation this participant’s employment has consisted of low skill jobs due to few graduate level vacancies in his chosen profession.

If transitions are affected by prevailing labour market conditions then we need to examine those participants who moved directly in to ethnic niche occupations in order to ascertain why they opted for work in these sectors.

Transition to ethnic niches

Seven participants are currently employed in ethnic niche jobs, four in construction and three in nursing. Three of the construction workers have spent their entire working lives in the sector, the fourth moving in to the family construction business after a only a year working as an apprentice draughtsman. One of the nurses had very clear career plans and started training straight from school, the other participant (whose parents both worked as nurses) changed job after a short stint working in a factory. The third nurse embarked on training as a mature student after her children had grown up.

A key factor for the transition to construction work for three participants was family ownership of businesses within the sector, one participant training on the job:

“I was in the top grade at Ullathorne, but I wasn’t interested in education really. I’d already sorted out the fact that I’d start working for [brother] and that was it. It was all set in place for me because I’d worked for him for four years before that, school holidays and Saturdays, I’d be working most of the time. I did my apprenticeship then went into an ONC then did an HNC.” (I28M40)

Another participant who did not wish to remain in education despite good exam results opted for an apprenticeship but his tenure was short lived and he joined the family construction firm despite opposition:

“I got a job in a car factory, a draughtsman’s apprenticeship. We spent one year in a training school and I didn’t like it, it was factory orientated and I just...I resigned on my own volition. I said to my dad “I’m coming working for you” and he didn’t want me to work for him at all. I went to work for my father then did day release at technical college” (I21M50)

The one participant working in construction, who went from school to full time higher education, secured his first job as a management trainee with a construction company. He later joined the family business when he wanted to work on a particular project the company had won. The sole participant working in construction who does not have a family business in the sector was influenced in his career choice by his brother’s experiences as a Local Authority apprentice:

“When I left school I started working for Coventry City Council as a Road Craft apprentice, the reason I went to the council was because I had a brother there, doing an apprenticeship as a carpenter. I just wanted to work outside. It started off as a YTS scheme and then I was taken on as apprentice and it was road construction and highway maintenance and civil engineering and I done an apprenticeship there for four years.” (I20M30)

Family connections also influenced career choices for those going in to nursing, one participant following his parents in to the sector after spending a year working in a factory:

“I was bored with factory work, then I went into nursing - I didn’t anticipate going into nursing but I did voluntary work at a home for people who had come off motorbikes and were injured. I thoroughly enjoyed it so that’s why I went into nursing eventually.” (I6M50)

Having a clear idea of her future career intentions enabled one participant to begin a pre-nursing course during her first year in sixth form, which assisted in gaining a training place:

“I went down to the hospital two days a week and worked on the wards, and went to school the rest of the time. It was just work experience. We did everything, help the nurses, wash the patients, empty catheters, help feed patients, change the beds, we just helped. I suppose you wouldn’t be allowed to do it now because of security and you’d have to be police checked. It was really responsible, because we’ve seen lots of things we shouldn’t have seen. I finished that year and because you’d worked, you could start your training at 17½, I was interviewed in two London hospitals and one in Birmingham and they all offered me a place” (I16F30)

The other nurse qualified as a mature student, only entering the labour market at 38 after bringing up three children:

“ I got a job as a receptionist up at Tile Hill College, couldn’t believe they’d given it to me because I thought “I’ve got no skills, I’ve got no training.” I was there for about a year and kept thinking “there’s more to life than this, what do I want to do, the children are getting older, what do I want to do?” I kept thinking about nursing....because actually when I’d been in the sixth form I’d got a place at teacher training college and then dropped out to get married. So I kept looking at this nursing brochure and thinking “you need a degree, I can’t do a degree, I’ve only got 4 GCSE’s, I can’t do a degree” and my line manager at the college was so fantastic he said... do the Access to Nursing course... “do the course here where you’ve got friends and if you don’t like it you can have your job back.” I was like sponge; I just couldn’t believe I’d been out of education for so long. I was a real geeky student because it was a second chance and I loved it, every minute of it and then went and got my degree in Nursing after that.” (I12F40)

The data revealed evidence that reflected parental attitudes to work which was reinforced through schools, whereby a gendered approach to career transitions was evident particularly in the case of girls:

“I suppose part of what Sister Mary Philip regarded as careers for her girls the areas were “go to university” not to do anything specified but just go, then it was teaching of course, then it was nursing and civil service and that was it.” (I15F50)

It is also useful to remember that the collapse of the youth labour market in the late 1970s and early 1980s provoked widespread concern and not just in political circles. A good example of this is the play *Risky City*, (Hutchinson, 1981) set in Coventry, which depicted the sense of bewilderment and betrayal of a generation whose entire education had been geared towards employment in a waning engineering industry. The same year also saw the release of The Specials single *Ghost Town*, describing Coventry and commenting on the zeitgeist and teenage ennui.

Having considered participants’ transitional experiences it is now useful to examine their work histories to analyse key factors that have determined their current occupations.

WORK HISTORIES

This section examines participants’ work histories; as already explained the emphasis here is not on career development per se; neither does the analysis seek to provide a chronological summary of individual work profiles. Rather, the research interview enabled participants to relate their personal narratives by giving them an opportunity to reflect on the multiplicity of factors that had influenced their choice of work and subsequent career paths. Deciphering the intricacies of work histories, through an

interpretive reading of the data revealed some common characteristics that propelled participants in particular directions at certain times in their working lives. These can be classified into five clear areas: a dearth of career planning, general factors influencing the uptake of current occupations, gendered considerations, self employment and disillusion with career prospects leading to the accumulation of further job related qualifications.

It is evident from the data generated during the interviews that current occupations of this sample give little indication of the variety of jobs held prior to obtaining their current positions. Participants current occupations are detailed in table 23 overleaf, with each occupation categorised according to the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC), (National Statistics, 2006).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Managing Director Construction Co. HIGHER MGRL | Principal Pre-preparatory School HIGHER MGRL | Senior Lecturer LOWER MGRL | Publican SMALL ESTABLISHMENT | Cabin Crew (P/t) INTERMEDIATE |
| Managing Director Joinery/Building Co. HIGHER MGRL | Paediatric Sister LOWER MGRL | Dept. Manager Social Services LOWER MGRL | Director Publicity & PR Co. OWN ACCOUNT | Bar Worker ROUTINE |
| Manager 5 In-patient Psychiatric Units @ 3 Hospitals HIGHER MGRL | Nurse LOWER MGRL | HR Manager LOWER MGRL | Sound Engineer OWN ACCOUNT | Chair, National Charity (Voluntary) NOT CLASSIFIABLE (NON REMUNERATED) |
| Company Director Estate Agents HIGHER MGRL | Civil Engineer LOWER MGRL | Accountant LOWER MGRL | Exams Officer INTERMEDIATE | Catholic Priest NOT CLASSIFIABLE (NON REMUNERATED) |
| Managing Director IT HIGHER MGRL | Outreach Worker (Charity) LOWER MGRL | Managing Director Tarmac Co. SMALL ESTABLISHMENT | Clerical Officer INTERMEDIATE | Retired Garden Centre Worker NOT CLASSIFIABLE - retired |
| Commercial Director Training Co. HIGHER MGRL | Training Manager LOWER MGRL | Company Director Courier Co. SMALL ESTABLISHMENT | Company Secretary (P/t) INTERMEDIATE | Retired Clerk NOT CLASSIFIABLE - retired |

It is important to note here that the NS-SEC categories are designed to measure employment relations and conditions of occupations, differentiating positions within labour markets in terms of 'employment relations'. The classifications are formed from seventeen NS designated operational categories, which for purposes of categorisation collapse in to eight bands. Using the Paediatric Sister and Nurse as examples, they are both categorised as 'Lower Managerial/Professional', although the Paediatric Sister would seem to be a higher managerial post than a nurse, the job is not classified as Higher Managerial because she reports to Consultants and hospital management who have responsibility for strategic planning and supervision of operations. Nurses could not match the criteria for the 'Intermediate' occupation classification because they hold professional and technical qualifications; hence all nurses are coded to SOC 2000 unit group 3211, the paediatric sister having different employment status from the nurse but their conditions of employment being the same (National Statistics, 2002).

Career Plans

Parental attitudes discussed earlier revealed that their primary concern was the availability of work rather than academic achievement or career progression for their offspring. Therefore it is unsurprising that when asked whether or not they had a career plan only two participants stated that they did – the Paediatric Sister and the Accountant. For the rest of the sample current occupations had occurred through a mixture of moves due to disillusionment in particular occupational sectors, acquiring qualifications to facilitate career changes or happenstance. One participant described the course of her career as:

“A series of ‘happy accidents’ ” (I15F50)

Whilst another participant acknowledged that her serendipitous career choice as a new graduate had a limited time span if she wanted to move on and use her qualifications:

“It’s just been haphazard. It wasn’t a career plan, I wasn’t intending to fly this long, and still every year I say “I’ve got to do something different....I can’t be pushing that trolley when I’m 40”..... there’s a lot of ladies that are 50 and they never married and they can’t get out of it now.” (I17F30)

Even the Catholic priest, who arguably had the most apparent career plan of all the participants, was not ordained immediately on completion of his training, taking time out to work outside of the church whilst he considered his vocation:

“I took two years out then and I was a residential social worker in Brighton, which was fascinating. I could have been ordained at 24 and I thought “well, still a bit early” and the two years...I just got away from it just to think.... then I went back to see the Bishop and asked could I go back” (I25M50)

As there is general consensus that career planning was not used by all but two of the sample then other issues that have led to current occupations require consideration.

Factors influencing current occupations

Frequent mention was made of the fact that participants found themselves working in occupations they had not intended to pursue or knew very little about at the outset of their working lives. In one case a job taken by chance played a part in an eventual career path, as the Social Services Manager recalls:

“I got two of my A levels and I wanted to be a PE teacher, I thought I’d go on a YTS scheme for a year and come back to my A levels.... the scheme was doing social care where you could go to a day care home for elderly people and after I did that for a few months, I got a permanent job there. I thought “what I’ll do is see how this goes for a while” because they used to send me out on these social care courses I thought “oh I hadn’t thought about social work as a career” I didn’t even know what it was. I got on these courses and on one I met a group of social workers and they were all talking about benefits and human rights... and I thought “gosh, I did Latin and

Religion at school” it was like really antiquated and I thought “that’s like real modern life” and I was fascinated. So the idea of going off and doing my PE teaching went to one side and the following year, I went to college and did a Certificate in Welfare for a year and they still employed me, and then I went on and did the Diploma and they let me go on day release.” (I11F40)

For some the need for financial security was the driving force in taking up initial job offers:

“I didn’t really want to end up in banking. I wanted to go and work for ICI. I was offered a job at ICFC and in retrospect I’m really quite sad I turned that one down, but Bank of America offered more money. So the driving force at the beginning was money and that was because of the need to have somewhere to live and to really have some form of financial security.” (I1F40)

Although in this case other considerations later overrode money and after achieving a director level position in the City this participant moved in to academe exchanging high salary and financial security for greater autonomy and an opportunity to pursue her research interests. Quite often boredom in one job would result in participants starting to look elsewhere which occasioned moves in to different areas:

“I didn’t really like these retail jobs, and the fashion shop was the most boring place on earth to work, just wandering round picking up clothes after lazy women who would drop them on the floor. I had no interest in progressing. By this time I was 22 the thought of another 20 years of working in a shop horrified me. But of course we were married and I had a mortgage. I saw an advertisement for a job in a print shop opening in the city, and thought “ I’ll go for this” it said in the advert it was basically counter work and some work on computers which were very new at the time....this seemed like a bit of a challenge, I’d never worked a computer before - my God it was a nightmare - got the job and absolutely loved it, every day was different, I was pricing jobs. It was unbelievable because I had this thirst to find out everything that I possibly could about how you printed things, so that I would understand what I was saying to the customer.” (I3F40)

Gendered career paths

The analysis has already discussed the tendency of Irish-born mothers to organise their careers around child care issues and consequently the gendered nature of participants' career paths merits further examination. Unsurprisingly for this sample, where the majority of participants are aged between 40 and 60, women's career paths and labour market experiences were influenced by gender considerations. This includes parental expectations regarding suitable 'female jobs':

“My father probably was the influence, I think he thought if you were a girl you got a job until you got married, that working class thing, my mother's work was always quite a bone of contention between the two of them.” (I3F40)

There is clear evidence that for the older women in the sample their career patterns resembled those of their mothers, generally leaving the labour market to bring up children and then later doing part time jobs to fit around children's schooling:

“I started back at work when they were about 7 or 8 doing mobile hairdressing in term time.” (I24F60)

Interestingly, for women returning to the labour market during the late 1980's keeping pace with workplace technology meant they needed to update their skills:

“I was terrified because they'd got computers. I mean I was still using a manual typewriter when I left work, only very senior people had electric typewriters, so of course to go from that into being confronted with this machinery.....they were using terms like “boot up”what? So it was quite a transition. I left work in 1977 and went back in '89/'90. Absolutely enormous change..... I mean we used to have a telex machine when I was at Rolls Royce and you thought that was absolutely amazing.” (I22F60)

One participant had seen the limitations that time out of the labour market could impose on a woman's future career prospects and sought to minimise such effects by undertaking part time training courses whilst her children were small:

“I was doing word processing courses in my own time... word processing and spreadsheets and CLAIT and all that sort of thing. I thought “well if I want to go back to work eventually I’ve got to learn this new word processing and all this new technology” so I did that while the children were young because I could get them off to play school, dash down and do this course.

I did that because I think it would be hard to go back into the workplace if you didn’t have those skills, you wouldn’t get back in. Because my cousin, she was a top Director’s secretary at Rolls Royce and when she had a few years off with her daughter and she didn’t do any courses - she’s working at Asda, and she’s been there for 27 years now, she never got back into her workplace. I thought “I don’t want that to happen to me”.” (I2F50)

The younger women in the sample have sorted out working arrangements to accommodate their child care considerations. Certainly recent legislation in the form of the Flexible Working Regulations (2006), giving eligible employees the right to request flexible working hours in order to care for their child, indicates a greater awareness by employers of the need to make provision for working parents. Examples were uncovered of fragmented working patterns being utilised to facilitate child care. The shift patterns of the Paediatric Sister and the part-time Cabin Crew member illustrate this. The Paediatric Sister spends part of the week working nights in a private hospital in Harley Street, thus enabling her to have time at home in Coventry and take her children to school in the early part of the week before commuting to London for work, while her family and husband juggle child care in her absence. However she indicated that her career path has been altered since having children, but that this had been compensated for by other things:

“I feel like in the last few years because I’ve got three small children, that I have put my career on the backburner and what started off very promising.....my friends that haven’t had children, like my best friend she’s a Matron now at the Whittington.....sometimes you look and you feel a bit envious that you haven’t got on as far... but then she didn’t get married and have a family and, you know, I’ve had other rewards in my life. So maybe the fact that I’ve still been able to be a Sister and balanced it with work and have healthy, happy children and a good married life then maybe I’ve got it all.” (I16F30)

Working in the travel industry has enabled one participant to job share in a role which lets her work alternate months:

“I’m part time now so I work very little - full time is difficult because you’re doing really long days. I job share with another lady and we do one month on, one month off. So I start back tomorrow and I’ll do a full time month but that will....I’ve literally got about 7 flights in that month, so we work very little but I’ll be gone all day tomorrow, I’ll be gone from 7 in the morning til 10 at night because I’ve got to go to Egypt.” (I17F30)

However not all attempts at flexible working have had such positive outcomes, with a poor experience of home-based working leading to one participant delaying having more children until she was able to withdraw from the labour market completely after the birth of her second child. Her exploitation at the hands of her employer during a period when she needed to retain an income and look after a new baby is evident:

“When I had [daughter] I had to work... we had just got married the year before, so I worked all the way through, I had an office brought home, so I worked on the day that I went in to have her and the day that I came out from having her.

[GO’M: But what about your maternity leave?]

Oh well....it was a one-man band sort of placeI was thinking “oh they’ve put the office at home for me, I must be really grateful for that.” It was naïve. I just thought that’s what I’d have to do, to prove that I could still work and be a mum... we needed the money and they knew we needed the money. So that’s why we’ve got such a big gap between our children, six and a half years.... because I didn’t want to not have proper maternity leave with the next one. I had the office here, I had [daughter] in the December and I was supposed to go back in the April but one of the girls had a hysterectomy so I had to go back in the February. She was about two months old, my mum had her from then. It was hard, we look back and you think you’re stupid but when you need the money you just do it, you just get on and do it really.

I stayed working actually in their office until she started school...when she started school they put an office back at home. I think that was even worse then because I would be working late at night as well, I’d be trying to prove that it was worth it. They dropped my pay by £2,000 to put the office in. Everybody thinks that you’re doing nothing, just watching daytime television. But I would get up in the morning and do the whole thing but also go back up at night, because they’d phone up and say “oh can you have a look at this” at half nine at night..... it was

very hard and that's why there's a big gap with the children - because I couldn't do that again." (I26F30)

One woman who had taken time out to look after her children began volunteering for a charity and initially informed the researcher she was 'doing a bit of voluntary work'. However, during the interview it rapidly became apparent that her self-effacing description belied her actual workload. Further discussion revealed that she was running a national charity, providing a service to 1,200 families, from a desk in her kitchen, including a telephone help line; she also provided advice for parents contemplating litigation for medical negligence and she was a national expert on shoulder dystocia. Furthermore, her expertise as a parent of a child with the condition had led to her addressing conferences of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. She was also instrumental in designing national accredited training days for midwives to boost knowledge of the condition and reduce the number of cases within the UK. Nevertheless, as all this work was unpaid she did not believe that it merited consideration:

"I don't get paid so I'm a housewife. I can never tell people what I do. If people say to me "are you working", I'll say "oh I do a bit of voluntary work". My best friendshe'll say to me "please don't say that, don't belittle what you do". But I find it really....I think it would be presumptuous for me to say anything other than "I do a bit of voluntary work" (I3F40)

The thesis has found examples of generational difference regarding attitudes to careers, whereby older participants career patterns were more akin to those of their mothers. Younger women had benefitted from a greater general awareness of equal opportunities

and it being more common nowadays for women to remain in employment after they start a family. However, the legacy of gendered assumptions led to one participant believing that unpaid voluntary work meant that her self description as a 'housewife' was accurate.

Self-employment

Extant literature on ethnic labour markets suggests that self-employment through business start ups are influenced by poor labour market positioning (Ram, 1997); or that certain businesses emerge to cater for a particular need within an ethnic community (Wilson, 2000). Longitudinal research in the US indicates that self-employment carries on in to the second-generation (Hout & Rosen, 1999). Forty percent of the sample is self-employed which is somewhat higher than employment patterns recorded in the 2001 Census where 15% of self-ascribed Irish were self-employed (National Statistics, 2006). Of the twelve self-employed participants, three inherited family businesses, eight started their own ventures and one person bought an existing business. All of the inherited businesses are in construction. The remaining companies vary in size and cover a range of sectors as illustrated in Table 23.

What became apparent during the interviews was that the impetus to start their own ventures arose for a variety of reasons, yet all expressed feeling an element of frustration when working for other people:

“I got bored with working for people who weren't as intelligent as me, and they were just incompetent. It became frustrating. No matter how hard you worked - and I did work really hard – others could do nothing and still get paid the same.”(I29M30)

For those who have inherited family businesses, a clear career path was not always evident from the outset and two participants revealed that they had not originally intended staying in the family business:

“I suppose I’d already started at the bottom through working during holiday times. I remember the main reason I came was because my father had got this particular job which I thought “that’s very similar to a job I’ve just done, I’d like to have a go at this” but at the time I didn’t particularly intend staying here. But that’s the way it worked out! I’ve been here 35 years.” (I30M60)

Skill shortages in the national labour market resulted in one woman starting her own company; when a countrywide shortage of Sign Language Interpreters meant she could freelance and choose which work to undertake:

“There were only 69 people in the country who could sign to a standard to go into further education colleges and universities, so of course deaf students couldn’t get any further education. I went and helped students in colleges and worked in courts, police, you name it. That was fantastic and I set up my own business doing that, it was very lucrative, I’d be working here, there, everywhere - I loved it.” (I18F30)

Whilst there is a high number of self-employed in the sample there is no evidence that businesses were started as a reaction to poor labour market positioning or that ethnic enclave businesses emerged to provide specific services to the Irish community (Wilson, 2000). There is evidence that self-employment continues in to the second-generation with three participants continuing to run family businesses (Hout & Rosen, 1999).

Return to education

Throughout the interviews mention was made of key turning points in participants’ work histories. These points were often brought about by disillusionment in current roles or when participants perceived the need to obtain more qualifications in order to provide an

exit strategy from jobs they disliked. This was put most eloquently by one participant who had been working for a computer company:

“I was driving through the West Midlands, I used to go out on site, it was one of those days when the clouds were about 4 foot above your head and I was just driving along, it’s not even raining properly, it’s just like that horrible drizzly stuff and your wipers just won’t get the timing quite right and I was just sitting there thinking. I flicked on the radio and the line that came out was “days go by”, that Talking Heads song “when the days go by” and the line that came out was “I asked myself what was I doing here” I just cracked up. I thought that’s fairly poignant because I hadn’t got a clue how did I end up here, I never even knew this job existed when I was at school let alone have any aspirations to go into it. And it really got me thinking and within a couple of months I’d jacked my job in and I’d applied to go to college.” (I4M30)

Despite the high levels of qualifications held within the cohort often a move in to a different sector was the impetus for further study. No one explicitly stated that their return to study was specifically for purposes of continuous self-development, although a couple of people did admit that once they had started studying part time they had continued and gained more qualifications, eventually enrolling on courses that were not directly work-related but were able to facilitate further career moves if necessary:

“At BT I did my HNC and I did that so that I could get day release from work. Then I did my degree, part time. Then I did a Certificate in Personnel Practice which I didn’t need to do but I did that when I left BT just to be doing something. Then I did the Post-graduate Diploma in Personnel. I’ve just completed a Certificate in Counselling and I’m going on to do the Diploma in Counselling because that’s eventually what I want to move into.” (I23F30)

During periods of high levels of unemployment, when there was little chance of gaining work some opted for further study:

“I left Yorkshire [after University] and came back to Coventry, but it was the height of the recession and there wasn’t much work around at all, so I was unemployed for the best part of a year. But during that time I worked as a

volunteer on archaeological digs in Coventry. Then I used my savings and my family lent me money to do an MA in Archaeology.” (I7M40)

A number of pertinent factors have been examined thus far to ascertain if there are any particular reasons that either propel or prevent second-generation Irish from pursuing careers in nursing and construction. A summary of key findings is now discussed.

NURSES AND NAVVIES?

This thesis examines the British labour market experiences of second-generation Irish and explores whether or not they follow the migrant generation in to ethnic occupational niches in construction and nursing. From this small sample in a midlands city, we can see that seven participants worked in stereotypical ‘Irish jobs’. Four men were involved in the construction industry, three of whom had inherited family businesses and two women and one man worked in nursing, two at senior levels.

These findings do not mirror the official Census data for Coventry as outlined in the FIS, (2007a) report, as there are much lower levels of both construction workers and nurses in this sample. Just over half of the cohort was classified as being employed in either Higher Managerial, Lower Managerial or Professional occupations according to the NS-SEC categories. In order to compare Irish-born parents occupations with those of their offspring table 24 overleaf provides relevant job details, from which it is evident that more men follow their fathers in to construction whilst fewer women replicate maternal career paths in nursing. However, it should be noted that the table is not included in order to provide any commentary on social mobility; rather it is used to illustrate labour market

positionings regarding whether or not parental career patterns are replicated in the second-generation. Although it does appear to provide support for Wilkin's, (2008) assertion that there has been an embourgeoisement of the Irish Catholic working class in Britain.

TABLE 24
IRISH-BORN PARENTS AND PARTICIPANTS OCCUPATIONS

| IRISH-BORN FATHERS JOB IN BRITAIN | IRISH-BORN MOTHERS JOB IN BRITAIN | PARTIPCANTS JOB |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Construction worker | Mothers help/ waitress/ buses/cleaner | Paediatric Sister |
| Cabinet Maker/Shop floor, Car factory | Teacher/Housewife | MD Joinery/Building Co |
| Teacher | Civil Servant, Ministry of Defence | Senior Lecturer |
| Scaffolder | Shop floor factory/ Auxiliary Nurse/Civil Servant, Customs & Excise | Catholic Priest |
| N/A | Hotel work/shop work/Care Assistant | Cabin crew p/t |
| Shop floor Car factory/ Director Care Agency | Care work/Director Own Care Agency | Sound Engineer |
| N/A | Shop floor, Textiles factory | Training Manager |
| Shop floor Car factory/Own Tarmac co | Nurse/Waitress | MD Tarmac Co |
| Construction worker | Buses/p-t cleaner/Cleaning Supervisor | Accountant |
| N/A | Shop assistant/Planning Dept Local Authority | Chair National Charity (Voluntary) |
| Construction work/Foreman, Chain factory | Seamstress/Hotel work/p-t Cleaner | Dept Manager. Social Services |
| Foreman, Car factory | Nanny/Shop work/School dinner lady | Nurse |
| Shop floor Car factory/Own Social club | Nurse/ Shop floor munitions factory/ Own boarding house/Own social club | Clerical officer |
| Chief Engineer, Automotive Co. | N/A | Retired Garden Centre worker |
| Own Construction Co. | N/A | MD Construction Co |
| Own Building Co. | Nurse/Housewife | Principal Pre-preparatory School |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Construction worker/ Shop floor Tractor factory | N/A | Publican |
| Construction worker/ Shop floor Tractor factory | N/A | Bar worker |
| Army/Dustman/Construction worker | Shop floor Electronics factory/School dinner lady/Child minder | Company Director Estate Agents |
| Shop floor Car factory | Shop floor Electronics factory/Shop Assistant /Auxiliary Nurse | Civil Engineer |
| Press Tool Setter, Car factory | N/A | Director Publicity & PR Co |
| N/A | Waitress/Shop assistant/ Cleaner | Retired Clerk |
| Nurse | Nanny/Nurse | Manager 5 In-patient psychiatric units @ 3 hospitals |
| N/A | Office work/p-t Bar work/p-t Social Club work | Co Director Courier Co |
| Own chain of Barbers & Printing Co. | Nurse/Family business | Co. Secretary p/t |
| Shop floor Car factory/Shop floor Tractor factory | Shop floor Car factory/Café/Shop floor Car factory | Exams Officer |
| Shop floor Engineering factory/ Tunnel worker, Construction | Hotel manager/ P-t Cleaner | HR Manager |
| Construction worker/Shop floor Tractor factory | Nurse | Outreach Worker (Charity) |
| N/A | Housekeeper/ P-t Cleaner | MD IT Co. |
| N/A | Own Sub-Post Office | Commercial Director Training Co. |

n = 30

It is evident that the data illustrates structural changes in the labour market reflected by participants' current occupations. Clearly the demise of local manufacturing and engineering has impacted on jobs; only one participant- the HR Manager - worked in a manufacturing environment and in a role that is not manufacturing specific. Leaving aside the significant proportion of the sample who are self-employed; the spread of employment is predominantly within service sectors. Hence education, travel &

hospitality, the public and not-for-profit sectors predominate. This cohort demonstrates that they possess the requisite qualifications for a refined job market and have moved in to occupations that reflect those of the host population. Assessing the decade at which they entered the labour market, all but one participant started work after the 1962 change in UK immigration policy and this may account for the move in to jobs that are more closely associated with the host population, as assumptions regarding Irish assimilation became widespread.

Alongside information on current employment patterns the interviews captured data regarding particular types of behaviour in the workplace, which the overwhelming majority of participants attributed to their upbringing within the Irish community.

BEHAVIOUR IN THE WORKPLACE

During the pilot interviews for this study, it became apparent that both pilot interviewees lost jobs after raising sensitive issues at work. In one case this occurred after alerting senior executives to fraud being perpetrated by a director, in the other following a complaint about sexual harassment. A distinction could be drawn between these two pilot interviewees, one was working at a senior level, the other was in her first job, nevertheless it alerted the researcher to a possible pattern and therefore a question on the topic was included in the interview schedule. In order to discover whether there were any examples of similar behaviour within the sample, when interviewing participants the researcher described such behaviour on a continuum, with whistle-blowing at one end and what was termed ‘speaking out at work’ at the other end.

All but one of the participants readily identified with such behaviour in the workplace and provided many examples, several perceiving it as their duty, often based on their position:

“I was in charge and I had to lead that team, so I couldn’t just ignore what I was seeing because the buck stopped with me.” (I16F30)

Others reflected on the effect that particular corporate cultures had on their behaviour:

“There have been moments in my previous job at [Police force] where I had to keep my gob shut or else I wouldn’t have been able to do what I did. There were quite a few times that I was compromised in my values, but if it was something I passionately believed in I would definitely open my mouth.... some people view it as being a bad thing, and it was probably what tipped me over the edge, that actually shoved me out of the doorthe lack of honesty. In such an organisation you would expect there to be honesty and integrity and yet I didn’t feel that.” (I18F30)

One person suggested that it had been the reason for starting his own business:

“I’ve never been very good or able to keep my counsel in large organisations and in virtually every organisation I have ended up with a number of individuals within those organisations where we’ve clashed. And they generally are quite aggressive bullying types and I’ve always found it hard to let that go. And I believe now - and I think it took me until I was 40 to realise - that a corporate environment may not be the right one for me.” (I10M40)

Catholic, Colonised or Camouflaged?

Participants sought to explain their tendency to raise contentious issues at work and suggested a variety of reasons, either due to their religious upbringing which provided clear differences between right and wrong, a trade union background or deeming speaking out as being a particularly Irish characteristic. A Catholic background was cited by several participants believing it made them more likely to call attention to something that was wrong, one participant recalled confronting her manager over an injustice:

“If I think something’s wrong I have to..... we were so indoctrinated in our Catholic upbringing and if I see anything unfair I have to say something.....I can’t help it.” (I22F60)

However, it is important to remain mindful that despite a significant proportion of participants readily ascribing their propensity to ‘speak out’ to their Catholic upbringing (including those who voluntarily identified themselves as ‘lapsed’); Catholicism per se cannot be privileged over other religions. Speaking out may not be an exclusively Catholic trait, although several respondents in this study suggested that it played a key part explaining their behaviour.

In families where parents had been strongly involved in the Trade Union movement, raising poor working practices and supporting colleagues was seen as a duty:

“Mum was Treasurer for her union, so she’d go to Labour conferences and speak. It’s come from a strong Labour background, of looking after each other, putting a good day’s work in and if you see something wrong, stand up because they might not always be able to stand up for themselves.”
(I8M30)

Two people had left jobs after whistle-blowing, one after exposing internal fraud and the other was serving her notice at the time of the research interview after informing management she was being bullied by one of the directors:

“I think this is the first time in my life that I’ve stood up for myself, in my current job.... and it doesn’t make me feel very comfortable. Because even though I’m the injured party I find it very uncomfortable that it’s got to that stage that I’ve had to report my boss.” (I23F30)

The interviews found further evidence that two participants were currently in discussions regarding work issues that they thought were wrong:

“I have recently blown the whistle on somebody in the past three weeks. I believe she’s committing fraud and I also contacted Revenue & Customs because she’s also evading paying tax. She’s running a scam pocketing the money [from a

charity shop] that should be going direct to the charities which I can prove...I have a very strong sense of injustice, I don't like people being treated badly when there's no need for it."(I3F40)

Neither of these participants had hesitated in alerting management or external agencies to issues they thought needed addressing:

"We're having a big change round at work and they've been throwing stuff away that cost a lot of money. We have an environmental group at work and the policy is that all these things should be given away – but instead things have gone in to a skip. So I did an email to our Chief Exec today and just said that I thought it was a disgusting waste of resources. I go out to schools as part of my team's work, to audit they've got all the right things that we've provided for them and they're crying out for equipment and they can't have it because there's no money in the budget and we're just throwing things in to a skip. So I did an email about it." (I22F60)

Raising issues at work appear to be mediated by which sector the participant worked in.

One respondent employed in the public sector acknowledged that her approach sought to maintain a harmonious relationship with the teams she worked with:

"I'm passionate about getting those children a better quality of life, so if there's anything going on in the three main teams I will always bring it to attention. I've got a diplomatic way of making sure justice prevails and I will do that. I will definitely let people know who need to know what's going on but I will do it in a way where it's not obvious whistle blowing. I do have a relationship with all the teams and will make sure if people are not pulling their weight or doing a fair days work I will let it be known." (IF30)

This is in contrast to reported actions from participants employed in factories and on building sites where a more robust approach prevails:

"I'm quite outspoken at work – not that I shout and bawl because I don't think that's the right way to do it ...a major sticking point with me is the welfare facilities for people doing my sort of work. I'm on this job and we're getting set up and they're spending millions on temporary offices and there's no soap to wash your hands when you've finished work. That drives me mad, I've had a couple of warnings about it...if people say 'just get on with it' then I won't get on

with it because that's not right, it's double standards. Because I'm underground in the trenches I have Health & Safety people on me all the time and I say 'stop worrying about the fucking trenches and go and get running water in the rest area and get the toilets cleaned.' I've refused to work because of it when I've had to do a connection into a large sewer and I refused to do it because there was nowhere to wash my hands." (I20M30)

What is clear from the responses to this question is that unlike many of their parents, the second-generation do not appear to refrain from drawing attention to themselves; neither do they keep their heads down at work.

In seeking to explain this kind of behaviour, three possible reasons emerged: Catholicism, the legacy of colonialism or assumed assimilation which results in the second-generation being camouflaged in the workplace. It is already noted that some participants referred to religious upbringing as a possible driver for such acts. During interview few supported the notion that their behaviour could be as a result of the legacy of colonialism; although within the sample the majority identified speaking up against injustice as a specifically Irish characteristic:

"I'm familiar with the notion of speaking out....I've come to the conclusion that it's a Celtic trait..... to find it difficult not to say something, when something isn't quite right in terms, primarily, of issues around justice. Quite why that is, whether it's my background or my ethnicity or whether it's because of attitudes my parents may have had to face I don't know but it's very much to my way of thinking a common Celtic trait.... there have been times where I generally find myself being a more outspoken person about a range of issues but often times most strongly where they present some form of injustice" (I14M40)

Many of the second-generation are 'camouflaged' as they can easily pass as being part of the indigenous population, without the markers of an Irish accent or an Irish name their ethnic background is not obvious. Having witnessed their parents being subjected to

racial taunts and injustice may explain why they are quick to speak out themselves when they see something wrong at work. During the interviews the rapidity of a sense of recognition of this trait, expressed by all but one of the sample, indicates that trying to keep their counsel at work appears to cause much difficulty. It could well be that the NESc, (1991:206) suggestion that after attaining British qualifications and losing 'perceptible Irish characteristics' the second-generation are less likely to be affected by discrimination in employment. Yet these factors may actually result in instilling confidence which allows the second-generation to challenge wrong doing and injustice in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined parental origins and occupations alongside participants' labour market experiences, including transitions to work and aspects of individual work history that have influenced career paths and current jobs. There is evidence that parents were engaged in ethnic niche occupations with 52% of Irish-born fathers working in construction at some time. Furthermore contacts in the sector were utilised to facilitate job search during periods of high unemployment. A third of Irish-born mothers were employed as nurses at some time during their careers. This is similar to earlier findings which indicate that 33.3% of Irish-born women involved in Health and Social work (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002: 44). In this thesis, nurses and women employed in allied roles as care assistants' account for 40% of mothers in the sample.

Data presented here regarding the second-generation indicates that the sample does not mirror the FIS, (2007a) figures regarding occupations of self-ascribed Irish in Coventry, with fewer in the cohort working in construction or nursing than might be expected given the Census data for the city. Only seven of the sample are employed in traditional 'Irish' jobs and more men than women had followed their parents in to such roles, three quarters of whom had inherited family businesses in construction. A relatively high percentage is self-employed; for the rest of the sample, service sector work predominates.

It was evident that labour market experience was influenced by which decade participants began work; older members of the cohort had commenced employment at a time of fewer opportunities for tertiary education, but when jobs were plentiful. For those now in their late 30's and early 40's gaining their first job was more problematic and several were placed on government sponsored youth training schemes at the start of their working life due to economic recession.

The entire sample has qualifications and for the majority who hold higher level qualifications these had been acquired once they were in the workforce, generally studying whilst working full time. The NS-SEC categorisation of participants' jobs indicated that the majority were employed in managerial or professional occupations; they match or exceed the UK population (Hickman, 1995). This finding also supports Wilkin's, (2008) proposition that over time there has been an embourgeoisement of the Irish working class in Britain as the community benefitted from access to tertiary education, although in this thesis only a very small number of participants had actually gone direct from school to university.

Younger women in the sample tended to remain in work after having children, unlike their mothers, all but one of whom took time out of the labour market to bring up families. This is a result of younger women entering a labour market regulated by equal opportunities legislation and a concomitant change in social mores where working mothers are commonplace. Part-time working for this group appears to have been superseded by fragmented working patterns to accommodate child care.

Over a decade ago Hickman, (1995: 209) suggested that it was too early to determine if the second-generation had been disadvantaged by encountering discrimination in the workforce. In the previous chapter, this thesis revealed individualised accounts of discrimination that participants had experienced at work. However personalised accounts of work history revealed a tendency for participants to leave organisations where their ethnic backgrounds had been the cause for adverse comment; specifically this factor had been the impetus for two people starting their own businesses.

The NES, (1991) suggested that the second-generation did not have 'perceptible Irish characteristics' which made them less likely to suffer discrimination. This study revealed that a lack of identifiable 'Irish characteristics' alongside the host populations assumption that second-generation Irish have assimilated has had an unexpected outcome. With many participants witnessing their parents' experiences of racist attitudes, this cohort do not seek to keep their heads down and has greater confidence to challenge the status quo in the workplace regarding issues such as poor management practices, corruption or

dishonest behaviour. As they are not readily perceived as coming from a different ethnic background, (lacking their parents Irish accents for example and often not identifiable by their names), the binary divide of ethnicity has actually served to facilitate speaking out, which all of the sample described as a particularly Irish trait.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is predicated on the notion that for over one hundred and fifty years repeated waves of Irish migrants were employed in gendered and stereotyped occupations in nursing and construction (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002) so that these 'hypertrophied gender stereotypes' (Buckley, 1997: 109) became associated with the Irish to such an extent that for those working in construction, their very job titles became synonymous with the Irish diaspora. O'Connor & Goodwin's, (2002) study of over 1,000 Irish-born people employed in Britain revealed that for the migrant generation ethnic niche occupations predominate. However there is sparse extant literature regarding their progeny, hence this research set out to explore the labour market experiences of the second-generation Irish. The second-generation are under-researched for such a large group (Hickman, 1998; Walls, 2001) and consequently they are both overlooked (Mac an Ghail, 2000) and thus 'invisible and inaudible', (Arrowsmith, 2000:35).

This study gathered data regarding their labour market experiences to answer the research question of whether or not the second-generation are still 'nursing and navvying'. The research set out to examine contemporary accounts of second-generation Irish experience in the British labour market, with the intention of determining whether or not second-generation labour market positioning replicated parental patterns of employment in the gendered and stereotyped Irish ethnic niches of construction and nursing

(Cowley,2001;Walter,2001). It gathered individual narrative accounts of labour market experience in order to investigate in what ways, if any, the second-generation's location in the UK labour market differs to that of their parents. The research did not attempt to investigate patterns of social mobility or career development per se; rather it focused on participants' employment histories and whether or not their jobs mirrored the occupational patterns of the migrant generation (O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002). However, the research is limited by sample size and location, inasmuch as the thesis presents the results of a study undertaken in one midlands town based on thirty face to face depth interviews. Whilst such a sample does enable inferences to be drawn they are based on indicative findings reflecting the experiences of this group in this locality.

A review of the literature identified that there is a gap in knowledge in so far as there is little extant literature regarding the career patterns of second-generation Irish. This is partially accounted for by the dominant conception of ethnicity whereby the binary view focuses on skin colour which has resulted in the second-generation Irish being ignored because they are overwhelmingly 'White' (Mac an Ghail, 2000). This has resulted in a lack of multigenerational data for this group as they are difficult to locate in official statistics (Akenson, 1993; Holmes, 1991). Furthermore, occupational segregation by ethnicity and trends in occupational difference and disadvantage do not provide any data regarding the second-generation Irish (Blackwell & Guinea, 2005). This results in the second-generation becoming 'culturally invisible' (Mac an Ghail, 2001) as commonly held perceptions fail to acknowledge a distinct Irish community in Britain (Hickman, 2002a). Consequently notions of identity are multifaceted amongst the second-

generation, who are deemed to inhabit a space somewhere between parental heritage and complete identification with the host society; according to Arrowsmith, (2000:35) this renders them ‘invisible and inaudible from the point of view of recognition’. This position exacerbates the complexities of the cultural persistence of Irishness alongside the second-generation’s integration with the host population who are the former colonial power.

The research findings fall into two categories, those related to identity and ethnicity and secondly, labour market experiences. These areas are now discussed after which contribution to knowledge is explored and the chapter concludes by suggesting areas for further research.

IDENTITY & ETHNICITY

A framework for investigating participants’ views regarding their identity and ethnicity was developed which categorised topics into two dimensions, so that they were discernible through either external formal manifestations or internal individualised mechanisms. This was followed by analysis of any anti-Irish behaviour that participants and their parents had experienced.

External markers of ethnicity

Religion played a significant role in the early lives of all participants, influencing their educational experiences and was inextricably linked with notions of identity and ethnicity thus supporting Cadge & Ecklund’s (2007) assertion that religion is a mechanism for

identity construction. Despite there being no specific question about current religious adherence, the interviews generated spontaneous references to Catholicism. Participants described the church as fulfilling several roles: a source of welfare, education, advice and support as well as providing a venue for social activities. This corroborates existing literature regarding religion as the conduit for the transmission of ethnic culture and the provision of support networks (Fortier, 2000; Min, 2005; Haddad, 2004; Foner & Alba, 2008; Hirschman, 2004; Butler, 2008).

The type of schooling experienced by second-generation immigrants has been described as a means of acculturation and a method of shaping integration (Gans, 1992) and evidence within the sample indicates that this is the case here. All participants in the sample attended Catholic primary schools and all but two attended Catholic secondary schools. These findings validate Hickman's (1996:28) contention that second-generation Irish are integrated into a segregated education system. Whilst attendance at Catholic schools was de facto, parental attitudes towards educational attainment varied. The majority of participants reported that their parents adopted a relaxed attitude towards educational attainment, although this stance may well be explained by the Irish-born parents own experience of fragmented schooling and the comparatively plentiful job opportunities available to their offspring.

As decisions pertaining to religion and schooling are in the first instance parental, it is not until participants have to complete official documents, such as the census and passport application forms, that they need to make a conscious choice regarding their self-

ascription of ethnicity. The findings regarding these two aspects demonstrate that there is a level of inconsistency inherent in self-ascribed ethnicity. Hence almost half the sample (14 participants) claim to have ticked the 'White Irish' ethnic group box in the 2001 Census, 12 ticked the 'White British' box and 4 could not recall which box they ticked. These results support O'Keeffe's, (2006) research which suggested that lack of familiarity with an Irish ethnic option on an official form and failure to read the explanatory note lead to an under-recording of the second-generation. However the results regarding the type of passport held do not mirror their Census ascriptions, as 25 have British passports, 3 hold Irish passports and 2 participants have both British and Irish. These findings are indicative of a flexible attitude towards self-ascribed ethnicity whereby participants provided evidence of effortless switching of ethnicity citing pragmatic reasons for doing so. This is symptomatic of the requirement for the second-generation to embrace a hybrid identity as a mechanism of incorporating the dual aspects of Irish parental heritage with their own British experience and also confirms earlier research by Ullah, (1985) which revealed that there was no single impartial factor that determined ethnic identity.

Internal mechanisms of identity

However, by adopting a hybrid identity participants find themselves in a situation where they are not easily classifiable, there being no hyphenated descriptor for second-generation Irish in Britain in common usage (Hickman, 1998; Walls, 2001). Such variances were evident when participants were asked to choose their own words to describe their identities, which resulted in nine different permutations being suggested.

Furthermore, twenty five participants employed descriptors that acknowledged an Irish background, so that 83% of this sample does not support the notion of ethnic fade (Garrett, 2002) or waning Irish identity (Walker, 2007; Ryan, 1990). Indeed these findings are similar to those of McCarvill, (2002) who uncovered evidence of multiple identities in his subjects who sought to encompass aspects of both Britishness and Irishness as part of their ethnicity. Moreover, the adoption of ‘multiple cultural identities’ (Castles & Miller, 2003:248) is congruent with research into other ethnic groups where a fixed identity is not apparent in the second-generation (Wessendorf, 2008b). Participants in their 50’s and 60’s also confirmed Hickman et al’s (2005) research, stating that they became more confident in asserting aspects of their ethnic identity as they matured.

Cultural persistence of Irishness (Diner, 1983) was discernible through a variety of factors. Participants generally mentioned matters that occurred within the home, specifically listening to Irish music, also the consumption of Irish food which indicates a similarity to the results found by Kneafsey & Cox, (2002). Additionally, parental attitudes to hospitality were evinced as an exemplar that differentiated them from the host population. Likewise socialising with co-ethnics was quoted as a way of maintaining Irish culture, as was being sent to Irish dancing classes, Comhaltas events or staying with relatives in Ireland for summer holidays.

Experience of anti-Irish behaviour

Seventeen participants had direct experience of negative remarks because of their ethnic background. Eighteen participants also cited incidents of an anti-Irish nature that their parents had been subjected to. The stereotyping and hostility that was experienced by both generational groups centred on anti-Irish sentiments that have been used since the nineteenth century concerning levels of intelligence and a propensity for trouble making and violence (Mac an Ghail, 2001; Nagle, 2005) alongside more recent typecasting regarding terrorist activity (Hillyard, 1993). The one instance where a participant had been informed that her chosen career path would be restricted because of her Irish background resulted in a symbolic assertion of her ethnicity (Modood, 1996).

There was a noticeable difference between participants who were at work during the 1970's IRA campaign and younger participants. Older participants reported that during periods of IRA activity they sought to minimise anti-Irish racism by 'keeping their heads down' at work and not drawing attention to their Irish heritage. A recurrent theme discussed by participants was the position they were in where they either kept quiet or challenged racist remarks and the regret that they felt in not having contested anti-Irish comments. Older participants also expressed the view that any complaints they might have about anti-Irish remarks would not be taken seriously if they attempted to register them formally. Hence older second-generation Irish question the authenticity of their experiences when compared to other minority ethnic groups thereby supporting the findings of Mac an Ghail, (2000) regarding the invisibility of anti-Irish racism. As a result of the prevailing attitude of assumed assimilation due to similarity of skin colour

with the host population second-generation query the validity of their own experiences of racism.

This is in contrast to the younger participants who categorised any references to their ethnicity, usually coming from friends, as ‘banter’ and inoffensive. However they were also quick to point out that what was acceptable from friends would not be permissible in the workplace. The younger participants experiences were markedly different and may be explained by what McGovern, (2002: 79) calls the ‘commodification of Irishness’ with the rise in popularity of Irish theme bars and Irish dancing shows.

What is clear from the data is that participants’ early experiences of socialisation and schooling occurred almost exclusively within an Irish Catholic milieu. They spent their formative years with co-ethnics and members of their own religion and for the majority it was not until they joined the labour market that they encountered other experiences.

LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCE

Parental labour market positions were explored to establish whether or not they were employed in Irish ethnic niche occupations (O’Connor and Goodwin, 2002). This was followed by an examination of labour market experience of the second-generation; which was assessed by discussing factors that influenced initial labour market entry, transition to work and work histories and whether or not the participants have a propensity to work in construction and nursing. Finally a work- related theme regarding ‘speaking out’ at work was considered.

Parental Labour Market Positioning

This thesis is based on the findings that for over one hundred and fifty years Irish migrants to Britain have been employed in specific gendered occupational niches (O'Connor and Goodwin, 2002) in roles in construction and nursing (Cowley, 2001; Walter, 2001). Forty eight parents came from the Republic of Ireland (or Irish Free State), with an even distribution across all four provinces. Twenty five participants had Irish-born mothers and twenty three had Irish-born fathers, of these eighteen participants were from households where both parents were Irish-born.

In order to determine whether or not participants' labour market experience mirrored parental employment patterns it was necessary to first establish the type of work parents of this sample were involved in. These results indicate that a significant proportion of parents were engaged in ethnic niche activities so that 52% of Irish-born fathers had worked in construction at some point, which exceeds O'Connor & Goodwin's, (2002) findings which establish that 26.4% of Irish-born men in the British labour market were engaged in construction. This is higher than anticipated given the bias towards manufacturing that predominated in Coventry throughout most of the twentieth century (Mackie, 2008).

Maternal occupations were similar to those discussed in the literature with a third of Irish-born mothers working as nurses at some time, which is the same figure as Irish-born women in the study by O'Connor & Goodwin, (2002) and the interviews uncovered evidence that this was perpetuated by female chain migration (Ryan, 2008a). There was a

complexity to mothers' careers as they moved in and out of the labour market or gave up paid work in order to accommodate child care; as a result of this many worked in low paid part-time positions.

Second-generation in the labour market

This research established that it was difficult to locate second-generation Irish in the labour market with any accuracy, as they are an under-researched group (Walls & Williams, 2003), due to a lack of multigenerational ethnic data (Akenson, 1993). The only comprehensive review, of a combination of three existing official datasets, presented by Hickman et al, (2001) argues that the second generation are in slightly higher status socio-economic groups and with higher educational levels than their British born peers, with women more successful than men. This is substantiated by findings from this cohort which are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Pre-labour market entry

There is evidence to suggest that second-generation hold qualifications that equal or exceed those held by their British counterparts (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988:520). These findings are confirmed within the sample as this cohort all hold some type of qualification; 43% are graduates and a third of participants hold postgraduate qualifications. Notably only four participants went straight from school to higher education, the rest gaining qualifications through part time study alongside full time employment and two participants returned to full time study as mature students.

A small percentage of participants reported negative experiences with respect to careers advice they had received. They believed this advice was the result of racial stereotyping when they were directed towards ethnic niche occupations, which supports previous research which argued that ethnic stereotyping facilitates the perpetuation of employment in ethnic enclaves (Schrover et al, 2007; Wilson, 2003). Three quarters of the sample had part-time jobs whilst still at school. Participants indicated that contacts within the Irish community were utilised to gain information on available jobs and secure part-time work (Wilson, 2003).

Transition to the labour market

It was apparent when reviewing participants' transitional experiences that these were affected by which decade they had entered the labour market. This cohort spans a substantial period in terms of commencing employment with the oldest participant beginning work in 1945 and the youngest in 2003. Mindful of the time span, the analysis presented results grouped around which decade participants started work. For those who began work at times of full employment during the 1960's obtaining a job was relatively straightforward (Thoms & Donnelly, 1986); unlike those who entered the labour market during the early 1980's, the majority of whom were directed on to government-sponsored youth training schemes. Seven participants went in to ethnic occupational niches, four straight from school and two within twelve months of leaving secondary education, (the remaining participant training as a nurse in her late 30's). A key feature in transition to construction work was family owned construction businesses; the sole participant in this sector who did not join a family business was still subject to familial influence as he

followed his brother on to a local authority apprenticeship. Family connections were less influential regarding a career in nursing, only one of the three nurses in the sample followed parents into the sector.

Work histories

Participants current occupations were classified according to the NS-SEC categories (National Statistics, 2006) the results of which show that over half the sample were engaged in managerial or professional occupations; seven participants are in Higher Managerial/Professional occupations and nine in Lower Managerial/Professional work. The remaining participants are evenly spread with three running small establishments, two working on their own account, four employed in intermediate occupations and one in routine work. Of the four participants whose occupations were not classifiable, two are retired and two work in non-remunerated roles, one as Chair of a national charity on a voluntary basis and the other as a Catholic priest. Less than a quarter of the sample is engaged in ethnic niche occupations: four in construction and three in nursing. This does not reflect FIS, (2007a) data regarding occupational patterns for the Irish community in Coventry which suggests that 21.3% of men are engaged in construction work and 47.6% of women work in public services, health or social services.

Given the preponderance of managerial positions within this sample there is evidence to support Wilkin's, (2008) assertion that there has been an embourgeoisement of the Irish working class in Britain and likewise Hickman et al's (2005) proposition that the second-generations' occupations have come to closer replicate those of the host population.

Factors influencing current occupations

Investigating how participants arrived at their current roles revealed that only two participants had career plans, the remainder relying on happenstance or acquiring qualifications to facilitate job changes once in the labour market. A significant number of participants revealed how they had found themselves working in jobs they had not intended to pursue or knew little about at the commencement of their working lives.

There was clear evidence of the gendered nature of careers and generational differences. With older women in the sample having work patterns closely aligned to their own mothers, generally taking a break from work to bring up children and later returning to part-time work to facilitate childcare and school holidays. For the younger women in the sample, aged under 40, a significant number had adopted flexible working arrangements. Those who held positions with fragmented working patterns (most notably the paediatric sister and part-time cabin crew) utilised them to facilitate their childcare arrangements. It is necessary to note here that these women have entered a labour market that is closely regulated where they benefit from parent friendly legislation in the form of Flexible Working Regulations, (2006) and a greater awareness of equal opportunities, so that structural arrangements have enabled their career choices to reflect their responsibility as parents at the same time as allowing them to remain active in the labour market.

Self-employment

The data revealed that there were twelve self-employed participants. This is higher than employment patterns recorded in the 2001 Census, which indicated that 15% of self-

ascribed Irish worked for themselves (National Statistics, 2006). The levels of self-employment indicated that three participants had inherited businesses all of which were in construction, thereby supporting Hout & Rosen, (1999) whose study found that ethnic self-employment carries in to the second-generation. The literature on ethnic labour markets suggests that self-employment arises to counteract poor labour market positioning (Ram, 1997), but there was no evidence in the sample to indicate that this was the case for the nine participants running their own businesses, all of whom cited frustration with corporate life rather than limited career prospects as the impetus for becoming self-employed. There was no evidence to confirm that ethnic enclave businesses emerged to provide specific services to the Irish community as suggested in the research on ethnic labour markets undertaken by Wilson, (2000).

Nurses and Navvies?

It is evident that there are lower levels of ethnic niche occupations within this sample than could be predicted by extrapolating data from earlier studies (FIS, 2007a; O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002). A comparison between Irish-born parents and their progeny indicates that only seven of the sample replicated parental career patterns in nursing and construction, with more men following their fathers in to construction than women mirroring their mothers work profiles in nursing. Three quarters of the men working in construction having inherited family businesses. A review of current jobs held by the cohort illustrates structural changes in the labour market, with the demise of local manufacturing and engineering (Mackie, 2008). Current employment patterns show that

the service sector predominates. This highly qualified cohort reflect Hornsby-Smith & Dale's, (1988:532) assertion that the second-generation attain educational parity as both genders equal or exceed qualifications held by their English peers.

Younger participants have benefitted from entering a labour market regulated by equal opportunities legislation and a concomitant change in social mores, where it is no longer acceptable to discriminate on the basis of ethnicity. It could be argued that as all but one participant started work after the 1962 change in immigration policy this may explain why the second-generation are employed in occupations more closely aligned to those of the host population as assumptions relating to Irish assimilation with the mainstream became more widely accepted. Additionally, the NESC (1991:206) survey says by attaining British qualifications & losing 'perceptible Irish characteristics' the second-generation are less likely to be affected by discrimination in employment, although Hickman, (1995:209) argued that there is insufficient extant research to determine if discrimination in employment has affected the labour market positioning of the second-generation. Over ten years later there is still inadequate data in this area and no definitive research has been carried out to date.

Behaviour in the workplace

Both of the pilot interviews for this study provided examples of the second-generations' propensity to raise contentious issues at work and not shy away from speaking out when they felt something was wrong. As a result a theme was incorporated in the interview schedule to reflect this. All but one participant recognised this kind of behaviour and identified with it to such an extent that many asserted that they had a responsibility to

raise a variety of work-related issues within the workplace when colleagues were unwilling or unable to do so. When asked to explain these responses three main reasons were advanced, either their Catholic upbringing, the legacy of colonialism or ‘speaking out’ as a specifically Celtic trait. Extending the analysis regarding such behaviour led to the conclusion that it could be explained by the ‘3 C’s’ of: Catholicism, the Colonised and the Camouflaged. By which it is apparent that a Catholic upbringing instilled a strong sense of right and wrong in participants, the legacy of Colonialism making them willing to speak up when they witness any form of injustice and as the second-generation, subjected to forced inclusion (Hickman,1998:288) they are Camouflaged and able to pass as being part of the host population. Consequently it appears that the NESC, (1991:206) assertion that the second-generation lose ‘perceptible Irish characteristics’ has had an unexpected outcome – so that any assumption that they have assimilated has had unforeseen results. Unlike their parents, this cohort do not keep their heads down at work but rather are self-assured enough to challenge the status quo; hence the binary divide of ethnicity in Britain has actually served to facilitate their speaking out in the workplace.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This research has examined the British labour market experiences of 30 second-generation Irish in Coventry. A number of factors emerged that add to our understanding of the second-generation experience in this sample; there is evidence that a small proportion do follow their parents in to the ethnic niches of construction and nursing. Most notable here is that three quarters of those men who work in construction do so because they have inherited family businesses in the sector. Of the other twenty six

participants, nine worked in a self-employed capacity and of the fifteen remaining, thirteen were employed in various roles in the service sector and two were retired.

A further outcome of the research is the findings concerning the second-generations' willingness to speak out at work; so that unlike their parents they do not keep their heads down in the workplace. On the contrary, assumed assimilation that occurs because of the dominant binary divide regarding ethnicity in Britain has meant that for many of the sample, with no 'perceptible Irish characteristics' (NESC, 1991:206) their ethnic origins are not easily identifiable and this appears to have had an unexpected consequence. So that awareness that their parents were subjected to workplace taunts means that they are quick to speak out on contentious work issues.

This research is unique and significant because to date there has been limited studies on the second-generation Irish in the British labour market (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988; McMahon, 1993, Hickman et al, 2001). None of which adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach. Furthermore, the data presented here enabled the reporting of participants' labour market experiences in their own words thereby providing individual narrative accounts from a group that has hitherto been overlooked (Hickman, 1998; Walls, 2001) and therefore deemed 'invisible and inaudible' (Arrowsmith, 2000).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The data obtained from 30 second-generation Irish has categorised a number of dimensions that enable an account of their labour market experience to be constructed. The same research could be conducted with third-generation Irish to determine if they have similar work profiles and whether or not they continue to work in ethnic niche occupations or if they have occupational profiles closer to those of the host population. The sample was limited to 30 people; further research could replicate this study using the same questions with a larger sample size elsewhere in Britain. At an early stage of the research design it was decided that the research parameters would only include those participants with parents from the Republic of Ireland. This was because extant research suggested that there are differences in levels of attainment between those whose parents are from a Republic of Ireland background compared to the children of Northern Ireland-born parents; indicating that the latter have qualifications and work profiles that closely resemble their English counterparts (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988; McMahon, 1993). Further research could incorporate second-generation whose parents come from the six counties.

IN CONCLUSION

It is evident that the historical position of the Irish community in Britain, combined with the binary divide of ethnicity has led to there being insufficient data on the second-generation Irish; so that to date little has been known about their labour market positioning. This research has attempted to fill a gap in knowledge by capturing data regarding the second-generation's work histories. Mass emigration from Ireland as

witnessed for most of the past two hundred years is unlikely to happen on the same scale again; this means that the second-generation are likely to decline in numbers. Almost a decade ago Arrowsmith,(2000:35) asserted that the second-generation are ‘invisible and inaudible’; this research has attempted to redressed the balance; albeit with a very small number, by giving the second-generation a voice with which to describe their own unique labour market experiences, the majority of which do indeed differ from that of their parents.

APPENDIX 1

THIRD PARTY COPYRIGHT

THIRD PARTY COPYRIGHT

APPENDIX 2

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED],
COVENTRY
[REDACTED]

5th August 2007

Dear Fr. [REDACTED],

Parish Boundaries in Coventry

I am a parishioner at St. [REDACTED], Coventry and am currently studying for a part-time Doctorate in Social Science at Leicester University. My thesis examines the British labour market experiences of second-generation Irish.

I am going to conduct my fieldwork in Coventry, in order to gain sufficient participants I have analysed the local authority wards by ethnicity as reported in the 2001 census. I would now like to map the council wards against Catholic parishes to enable me to determine in which parishes in the city potential respondents live, as parish boundaries and council wards do not correspond entirely. I will then advertise for participants through parish newsletters. The parameters of the research are that participants should be the children of Irish Catholics who migrated from the Republic of Ireland.

I would be grateful if you could let me have information regarding parish boundaries in the city. Fr. [REDACTED] can confirm that I am a bona fide researcher and my supervisor at Leicester, Dr. Henrietta O'Connor can verify my research area if necessary. My email address, should the information be available electronically, is [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Geraldine Hammersley

RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

I am looking for volunteers to take part in research about second-generation Irish and their experiences at work in Britain. The research is being carried out as part of the Doctoral Studies programme at the Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester.

In order to take part, one (or both) of your parents must have been born in the Republic of Ireland, with a Catholic background and you must have been born in England.

The research requires you to be interviewed about your work history and interviews will be taking place in Coventry between February and March 2008. Interviews will last approximately 40 minutes.

If you would like to help or discuss the project in more detail please contact:

Geraldine Hammersley on [REDACTED]
or email [REDACTED]

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW THEMES

BACKGROUND:

- Parents
 - Bring photo (Visual - photo elicitation)
 - Parent(s) background
 - What job did parent(s) do before they left Ireland
 - When/why did they emigrate
 - Parent(s) job in England
- Schooling
 - What type of school
 - Parental attitude to education
 - Part time/Saturday job
- Further Education/Training
 - Qualifications obtained

IDENTITY & ETHNICITY:

- Self-ascribed ethnicity
 - 2001 census
 - Passport
- How did Irishness manifest itself at home
 - Summer holidays in Ireland
- Experiences of racism
 - When/how
 - Terms of abuse/discrimination
- Ever sought to hide their ethnic origin
 - Why
 - Depending on age ask about IRA bombings in Coventry

CAREER:

- Transition to labour market
 - First job: how you got there
 - Parental attitude to first job
 - Career plan or haphazard
- Career history/Current job
 - What job in now
 - How got there
- Evidence of 'speaking out'/whistle blowing at work

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