

Conclusions

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OUR AIM IN THIS VOLUME HAS BEEN TO EXPLORE the changes that have been taking place in Ireland North and South over recent decades. As David Rottman shows in his chapter, there has been very little work up until now comparing the two parts of Ireland; most previous work has treated the Republic as a ‘critical case’ for exploring general theories of social change, while the North has been of more interest as a test case for understanding ‘settler societies’ and the associated ethnic conflict.

Both the ideas of general theory of social change and those of conflict in settler societies are germane to our current interests in the evolution of the two parts of Ireland, but they are not the *raison d’être* of our inquiry. Rather, our concern is with the question of whether, and in what respects, the two parts of Ireland have been converging or diverging in their patterns of economic, social and political behaviour. On the one hand, the two parts of Ireland may be exposed to common social and economic processes as a result of economic development and modernisation, membership of the EU, diffusion of values and secularisation. Both North and South share common exposure to the global forces (and more European ones) of small open economies on the European periphery (Rottman, this volume: 11). These common processes may lead over time to some greater commonality between the two parts of Ireland.

On the other hand, the two parts of Ireland have had very different historical legacies, even before partition, and they have evolved many different institutions since then. The most evident difference between them was the existence of religious-ethnic divisions which had arisen in the north-east of Ireland for specific historical reasons and which were not found to anything like the same extent on the rest of the island. This difference was exaggerated after partition, as the South became ethnically

and religiously more homogenous while the North remained a mixed society with, in recent years, the numerical balance of the Catholic and Protestant populations becoming more even. In addition, the two jurisdictions inherited very different economies from the nineteenth century. These, plus more recent legacies, also shape the current patterns of social relationships.

Our interest in these processes derives ultimately not from a concern with sociological or economic theory *per se* but with the prospects for Ireland's future. Ireland's future, whether it eventually becomes a single unified Irish state, or some joint sovereignty is evolved, or the status quo persists, will undoubtedly depend on political contingencies and decisions that we as sociologists or political scientists cannot conceivably predict. However, these decisions will be made within certain temporal and sociological contexts that may to some extent limit the scope for manoeuvre or alternatively make new options available. What we can try to offer then, as social scientists, is not a blue-print for the future but some understanding of the context and constraints within which decisions will be made.

We begin in this concluding chapter with some discussion of the distinctive legacies that our chapter authors have noted and then turn to the common social processes that they have detected. We conclude with some more speculative comments about their implications for the future.

Historical Legacies

For much of the twentieth century, long before partition, the two parts of Ireland had very different economies, the North having a major industrial base centred on ship-building and textiles in Belfast, while the South remained largely agricultural and experienced a very late economic modernisation. The effect of partition on the Southern economy, was, as one commentator later put it, 'as if Scotland had obtained self-government with Glasgow and the Clyde left out' (O'Brien, 1962: 11 quoted by Breen and Whelan, this volume: 320). As Bradley writes 'The South embarked on a path of political independence with an economy that was without significant industrialisation, but was dependent on mainly agricultural exports to the British market. The North achieved a degree of regional autonomy within the UK at a stage when the perilous state of its strong industrial base was still hidden in the aftermath of the economic boom created by the First World War' (Bradley, this volume: 45–46). Bradley concludes that there were many changes both in the North and in the South between 1921 and the early 1960s, but few were of major significance compared with the legacy of the pre-1922 period. The South attempted

to construct an industrial base behind a protective barrier of high tariffs, but with relatively little success. Meanwhile the North's staple industrial specialisations continued to decline. In this light it seems rather doubtful whether, in the absence of partition, the main Northern industries could have provided the innovation and resources for industrialisation needed in the mainly agricultural South. As in other aspects of the socio-economic legacy, therefore, the South was clearly different from the North even before partition, but the North also inherited a legacy that set it apart from mainland Britain, with a much greater dependence on a few, declining industries.

Allied to its rural character and institutions and the lack of economic opportunities, the South also inherited a legacy of a highly distinctive demographic regime. After the great famine in the mid-nineteenth century, late age at marriage combined with high marital fertility, frequent celibacy and partible inheritance produced a remarkable demographic regime in which the South displayed an exceptional (by European standards) level of natural increase and an exceptional level of outward migration. 'Emigration is the most distinctive feature of Ireland's demography, even more than its high birth rate, in per capita terms the greatest of all the European nineteenth-century diasporas' (Coleman, this volume: 78). As Coleman argues in his chapter, migration enabled high rates of natural increase to continue without feeding back on to population size, and there was therefore no demographic incentive for a reduction in marital fertility.

The Republic's demographic exceptionalism continued until the mid-twentieth century and beyond, and while the North was clearly different from the South, it also showed a distinctively Irish fertility regime with higher fertility and migration than in the rest of the UK (with the exception of the Highlands and Islands). The two communities in the North were also sharply different, the Catholics showing both higher fertility and higher propensity to migrate than did the Northern Protestants. 'Throughout most of the twentieth-century Northern Ireland shows the sharpest demographic contrast between any two neighbouring communities outside Kosovo in Serbia' (Coleman, this volume: 90). As a result, the rate of natural increase (excess of births over deaths) remained about three times higher among the Catholic compared with the non-Catholic population, a difference which would translate directly into differences in rates of population growth in the absence of migration. The legacy of Catholicism (and in the North of Protestant institutions) in accounting for these differences in fertility and family policy is undoubtedly important, but it is also essential to interpret the role of Catholicism in context. Coleman argues that there is no general tendency for Catholic teaching to be associated with high fertility: Italy and Spain have some of the lowest

fertility levels in the world. What we see in Ireland is probably, as Coleman suggests, a minority status effect: 'Roman Catholic influence, independent of socio-economic status, can only be shown to be important where Roman Catholicism acquired particular authority through being a focus for the national sentiments of a disadvantaged minority in a larger population' (this volume: 105–6).

Closely linked both with the agricultural character of the Republic and its remarkable demographic regime was a distinctive pattern of family policy. Fahey and McLaughlin argue in their chapter that, even before partition:

The political and literary elite of the new nationalist movement and the clerical leadership of the Catholic Church joined forces to generate a far-reaching ideological glorification of the small family farm and to elevate the pastoral idyll into a framework for emerging national identity. This outlook defined the countryside as the repository of true moral values and contrasted the authentic rural way of life with the social and moral danger of the city (exemplified in Patrick Pearse's pledge that there would be "no Glasgows and Pittsburghs in a free Ireland"). Conservative, patriarchal and stable forms of family organisation were central both to this worldview and to the reality of the small-farm economy which underlay it. The groundwork was thus laid for the powerful rural focus of state ideology and state practice in the post-partition Free State, the consequences of which had a major effect on family policy as well as on the broad lines of national development in independent Ireland. (This volume: 122)

Fahey and McLaughlin go on to argue that this ideology demanded strong state support for Catholic moral regulation as an essential part of the cultural superstructure. The new independent state responded appropriately, with a particular focus on sex, reproduction, gender and childhood discipline. Censorship (1929), the banning of artificial contraceptives (1935) and the drive to control occasions of youth immorality (such as the Public Dance Hall Acts 1935) were the main measures in the sexual and reproductive arenas. The promotion of a domestic role for women was pursued in the 1930s through the 'marriage bar' against female employment in teaching and the public service, and, for working-class women, the introduction of 'protective' legislation against 'unsuitable' work practices such as nightwork and heavy manual labour. The family articles in the 1937 Constitution, which emphasised patriarchal rights, the domestic role of women and a Catholic view of the impermissibility of divorce, represented the culmination of this trend.

The North also had a legacy that was distinctly different both from the Southern one and from that of Britain. While the bulk of the post-war Beveridge welfare state was applied to Northern Ireland as well as to

Britain, nevertheless the post-war Northern welfare system remained distinctive, as Unionist politicians, civil servants and professionals sought to achieve the (populist) benefits of the British welfare state through means which '[were] more in keeping with Unionist principles than those adopted in the system across the water' (Connolly 1990). 'Modifications to the Beveridge welfare system took three forms: firstly, tighter restrictions on entitlement to cash benefits [intended to protect the boundaries of the northern state and inhibit population movement from the South], a greater role for unelected administrative bodies, and thirdly, more restrictive distributive public services and normative family law' (Fahey and McLaughlin, this volume: 128). These differences in family policy and demographic regime were also manifested in different profiles of women's participation in the labour market. As O'Connor and Shortall (this volume) show (Table 1) married women in the South have always had a lower participation rate in the wage labour market than married women in the North.

In one respect, however, the South has had a more favourable legacy than the North. As Breen *et al.*, demonstrate, the South has long been superior to the North in levels of educational attainment. While it is difficult to compare the two systems, since the nature of the qualifications offered to pupils are different, nevertheless it is clear that the proportion of Southern pupils leaving school with no formal qualifications has long been lower than in the North. The North has had, and continues to have, a highly selective educational system in which a minority of pupils were sponsored for educational success.

Moreover, within the Northern jurisdiction, Catholics do not appear to have been at the kind of major educational disadvantage relative to Protestants that they experienced in other fields. The role of the Catholic Church in organising education for Catholics in both North and South is certainly part of this story and can help to account for the apparent anomaly of an agricultural society like the South offering high levels of school attainment. Schools were operated in a spartan and frugal manner; resources for education were marshalled by the Catholic Church and the religious orders themselves contributed both in terms of school building and the provision of teachers; and, lastly, the educational system economised by emphasising subjects which required little in the way of costly equipment (Tussing, 1978).

At the same time, however, and probably due to the lack of alternative channels of mobility in the South, social class differences in education were (and continue to be) markedly higher in the South. Again these differences are long-standing (although as Breen *et al.*, emphasise in their chapter selective patterns of migration may well lead to some exaggeration in the surveys of the underlying differences). Similarly in the area of social

mobility the South has a history of greater class inequalities and lower openness than other European countries, including Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales (Breen and Whelan, 1996). This finding is consistent with Fahey's (1998: 415) recent argument that the primary purpose of social service provision for the Catholic Church was to disseminate and safeguard the faith, not to combat social inequality or reform society, with Catholic schools being structured in such a way as to reflect, and to some extent reinforce existing social hierarchies.

While the separate school systems for Protestants and Catholics in the North meant that there has been little overt educational discrimination, there has clearly been a history of discrimination in the allocation of public housing, in the electoral system and in the labour market. There is also a legacy of structural disadvantage suffered by Catholics in the North: the 1971 census showed 31 per cent of male Catholics in non-manual occupations compared with 41 per cent of Protestants, and a rate of unemployment among Catholic men more than two-and-a-half times that of Protestant men. As Teague and McCartney argue 'Employers did overtly discriminate against Catholics (and Protestants) and Protestant workers did operate in a way that intimidated Catholics from particular firms. Probably more important, however, have been industrial relations practices with the unintended consequences of crowding Catholics into the lower end of the labour market. Thus, Catholic disadvantage was not some grand conspiracy on the part of Unionists or Protestants but, in part, the result of "normal" labour market processes becoming entangled in the local religious divide' (this volume: 356).

Alongside the legacy of religion is of course the legacy of politics. As Hayes and McAllister emphasise 'The political violence that Northern Ireland has experienced since 1968 is not new. The republican and loyalist organisations which employ political violence are the descendants of groups which used similar methods, for similar ends, at the turn of the century, and more distantly, in the eighteenth century' (this volume: 457). They go on to argue that 'research into the development of ethnic stereotyping suggests a continuing historical legacy of inter-group hostility and intolerance, particularly among Protestant children' (462).

A number of our authors emphasise that we must avoid imprisoning ourselves within myths about Irish history. Bew argues that 'Unionists are presented within an exaggeratedly intransigent version of their own history while nationalists are encouraged not to reflect seriously on their own stance' (this volume: 401). But perhaps the key to understanding the political legacy is to recognise, as Girvin argues, that there are two nations in Ireland:

The available evidence suggests that there has never been a single nation on the island of Ireland, that when an Irish nationalism did emerge it was

predominantly Catholic and that another distinct nationalism emerged in the Northern area which considered itself to be Irish (or Ulster), British and overwhelmingly Protestant. This leads to a further conclusion: that is that partition in Ireland pre-dates the political arrangements of the early 1920s. What the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and the 1922 Treaty settlement did was institutionalise an already existing social and political reality. That Irish nationalism has refused subsequently to accept partition is closely linked to the refusal to recognise a separate nationality in Northern Ireland. (This volume: 373–74)

Girvin argues that there had perhaps once been a chance in the 1790s to realise Wolf Tone's objective of uniting the three religious subcultures (Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian) and forge a single Irish nationality, but that chance has long since gone. Within Northern Ireland the survey evidence captures the continuing polarisation of the two communities in which the gap between Catholics and Protestants on a wide range of issues is overwhelming (Breen, 1996; Irish Political Studies, 1995). Girvin concludes that the two identities are as far apart as ever and one should not confuse the possibility of cooperation between the two nationalisms with the dissolving of differences. Conversely, it is clear that the hostility of the new Irish state towards Northern Ireland during the 1922/23 period, as documented by Bew, has given way to a complex evolution of attitudes, culminating, by the end of the 1980s, in what Girvin describes as the exhaustion of the seam of neo-traditional nationalism and the development of a new set of nationalist aspirations in which gradualist assumptions take priority. Opinion polls in the South in the 1990s show the continuing importance of nationalism but the emergence of more pragmatic views in relation to options with, as Hayes and McAllister (1996: 80) show, Irish Unity becoming a minority preference and a large majority favouring changes to the constitution to accommodate political settlement.

However, one should not overemphasise the historical differences between the two parts of Ireland. In some respects political independence in 1921 did not end British influence in the Republic of Ireland. For example, a common legal framework was inherited from British rule before partition (Brewer, this volume: 162), and there were common industrial relations structures too. As Teague and McCartney argue, 'Like many other parts of the administrative structure, little attempt was made to recast the established industrial relations arrangements by the early governments of the Free State. Indeed industrial relations in Britain and Ireland remained virtually indistinguishable until the mid-1970s' (342). One aspect of this was the continued functioning of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) which covered both North and South. The South's economy also remained for a substantial period closely tied to Britain's, reflected also in the major flows of migration between the South and Britain.

Common Social Changes

As Bradley argues, both North and South entered the 1960s in a state where major policy changes were needed, and although the major policy changes that came were very different in the two parts of the Ireland, they produced not entirely dissimilar results. In the South the highly protectionist regime of the pre-war state was eventually abandoned with the First Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958 and the abolition of the Control of Manufactures Act,¹ which had prohibited foreign ownership, and its replacement by a policy which encouraged Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Since then there has been a phenomenal growth of export-oriented FDI in the South which has led to a major modernisation of the Southern economy. Meanwhile the North struggled with the reverse problems of a declining industrial base and the consequent economic restructuring. FDI has not had the same impact as in the South, but, particularly after the imposition of Direct Rule in 1972, there have been major UK subsidies for inward investment and a substantial expansion of the public sector. Thus, starting from very different origins, the North and South have both been exposed to the forces of modernisation. While they have not yet converged, they both share some of the standard developments of modern Western economies—increasing proportions engaged in non-manual work, especially in the growing service sector. Up to the 1950s the South had been a rural society where 40 per cent worked on the land. Since then Southern Irish employment has shifted to urban, manufacturing and service jobs; by 1995 only 12 per cent worked in agriculture compared to 20 per cent in manufacturing, 8 per cent in utilities and 61 per cent in services. In Northern Ireland the comparable figures were 6 per cent, 19 per cent, 6 per cent and 69 per cent.²

Similarly Breen and Whelan argue that the ‘history of the class structures of the two parts of Ireland since partition has been one of very gradual convergence. The post-1958 industrialisation of the Republic, the decline in the importance of farming, and the growth of the service sector have acted to bring its class structure closer to that of Northern Ireland where recent industrial decline and the impact of “the Troubles” have led to surprisingly little change’ (this volume: 320).

Like other Western European countries, both North and South have seen dramatic increases in educational attainment. Breen *et al.*, (this volume) show that in the South, the proportion who have completed the

¹ The act was repealed completely in 1964. From 1958 it could be waived by ministerial order (via the Industrial Development [Encouragement of Investment] Act).

² Source: NI: NIAAS, 1997 Republic of Ireland: ILFS, 1997.

junior cycle or above has risen from 46 per cent in their earliest birth cohort (educated in the 1950s) to 81 per cent in the most recent (educated in the 1970s and 1980s). The North shows almost as large an increase from 39 per cent to 70 per cent. This kind of expansion seems to be a fairly universal feature of contemporary Western societies (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993), probably reflecting young people's growing recognition that jobs for the unqualified were becoming fewer and fewer in number. But what is particularly interesting is that, in both parts of Ireland, in common with most other industrialised countries increasing levels of educational attainment have not resulted in, or been accompanied by, a decline in class differences in attainment. These 'persisting class differentials' have been explained, in a rather general way, as the result of the greater ability of those with power and privilege to maintain their position in spite of changes that might be expected to threaten it. In a recent paper, Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) have tried to present a rather more detailed explanation of the phenomenon. They argue that more ambitious educational options carry higher risks for some social classes than others. Viewed from this perspective the large increase in overall educational attainment in both parts of Ireland can be seen as, in part, the result of inflation in the levels of educational attainment needed to secure a given class position, while the persistence of class differences is chiefly the consequence of the underlying, and unchanged, distribution of risks associated with the institutionally structured alternatives among which young people must choose.

As with other Western societies, both North and South have also seen a major reduction in gender inequalities in education. Married women's participation rates in the labour market also rose dramatically between 1961 and 1991 in both North and South, so that in both parts of Ireland the rates for all women and for married women have become virtually identical (this volume: Breen and Whelan, Table 2; O'Connell, Table 4). Conversely men's participation rate fell in both North and South, and hence much of the increase in total employment has been taken by women, especially in part-time work (reported both by O'Connell and Gudgin in their chapters). Declining male labour-force participation in the Republic of Ireland is principally due to a marked decline in participation in the younger age groups associated with increased educational participation, although there has been a trend towards earlier retirement among older males (aged over 45). While younger women's participation rates have also declined, this has been more than offset by a marked increase in participation among women aged over 25. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s increased female participation coincided with a sharp increase in part-time working among women, although with the more recent employment

expansion most of the increase in women's employment has been in full-time work. Again this is a feature shared with other European societies.

In both the North and South, too, there has been a reduction in the male/female earnings gap following enactment of equal pay legislation (O'Connor and Shortall, this volume: 290). In the North women in 1973 earned only 63 per cent as much as men, rising to 75 per cent in 1980; in the South the comparable figures were 60 per cent in 1973, rising to 69 per cent in 1980. Much of this equal opportunity legislation, O'Connor and Shortall argue, 'arose in the context of entry to the European Community in 1973. As signatories of the Treaty of Rome, Ireland and the UK became bound by a series of Directives regarding equal pay and equal treatment in the area of access to employment, vocational training and social security. Such directives have been widely seen as an attempt by the EU to give concrete expression to a gender-neutral concept of citizenship' (O'Connor and Shortall, this volume: 306).

In the labour market, both North and South have also seen declining frequency of strikes and industrial disputes, reflecting as Teague and McCartney point out trends common to virtually all European economies. Less fortunately, both South and North have a shared experience of unemployment. 'In summary, the deterioration of the Northern labour market from the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s was replicated in the South, where over-shooting of employment growth after the fiscal expansions of the late 1970s was unsustainable. In both regions a serious problem of structural or long-term unemployment emerged.' (Bradley, this volume: 53).

The combination of an expanding middle class and rising unemployment effectively means, as O'Connell argues, that the labour market in Ireland has been characterised by a process of polarisation, with upgrading of positions for those at work combined with the exclusion of those lacking capacities to compete for access to work. It is likely that a similar process of polarisation has been at work in the North too. Both parts of Ireland have also witnessed, as Brewer and his colleagues describe, large increases in crime rates and at nearly the same time—from the late 1950s in the North and the mid-1960s in the South.

Partly as a result of these economic and educational changes, the South (and also the North) has now gone through the same demographic transitions that other European countries have experienced, although the first demographic transition came very late to the South, perhaps some sixty years behind the times. As Coleman shows, dramatic changes took place in the 1970s and 1980s. While Irish fertility, both North and South, is still towards the higher end of the European range, it has in both parts of the island fallen below replacement level. By 1994 the Total Fertility Rates had

fallen to 1.87 and 1.92. Coleman concludes that 'The distinctive Irish fertility regime is nearly over, [and will become] questions of recent history rather than of the contemporary world' (108).

Moreover, Ireland North and South have begun the second demographic transition with some gusto, before they have even quite finished the first. As elsewhere in north-west Europe, illegitimate births, once very rare, have increased sharply since the 1970s and the trend between North and South is scarcely to be distinguished. Although still well short of that in England, Wales or Scotland, rates in 1995 have comfortably exceeded levels in countries such as Italy and Spain, even though starting from a lower position, 'This indicates a startling change in attitudes; the end of a tradition of sexual restraint before long-delayed marriage' (Coleman, this volume: 88).

As Fahey and McLaughlin argue, 'The Catholic moral heritage in the fields of sex and marriage became more and more contentious. The initial major challenge came from an increasingly liberal Supreme Court in the 1960s and 1970s, most notably in the McGee judgement in 1973 which struck down the legal ban on contraceptives as unconstitutional. In the South throughout the 1980s and early 1990s public debate was convulsed by controversy over the "politics of the family".' On the surface the dominant outcome of the conflict has been to provide support for traditional approaches to the family. The constitutional referendums in the 1980s installed an anti-abortion clause in the constitution and rejected any change to the prohibition of divorce in Irish law. The 1995 constitutional amendment permitting divorce was passed by only the tiniest majority. However, these developments co-existed with decisive moves away from traditional approaches in order to accommodate new patterns of behaviour in family life (Whelan and Fahey, 1990). Similarly, a strong and apparently unshakeable anti-abortion consensus prevailed throughout the 1990s, yet in 1992 this consensus was thrown into turmoil by the 'X' case in which the Supreme Court ruled that a fourteen year old who was the victim of an alleged rape had a constitutional right to an abortion, on the grounds that her life was threatened by suicidal tendencies arising from her pregnancy. In the subsequent referendum the rights to travel abroad to have an abortion, and to disseminate information in Ireland on legal services available abroad were affirmed, while a proposed new and more restrictive amendment to the 1983 anti-abortion clause in the Constitution was rejected. Fahey and McLaughlin conclude that 'The general tenor of family policy has therefore tended to converge towards that in the North' (137).

The explanation of these processes of the first and second demographic transitions in Ireland are, as Coleman notes, highly complex but lying behind them are likely to be the common processes that seem to have

operated elsewhere, namely 'the increased costs of higher quality children in a modern economy; the effects of near-universal literacy and higher education standards (especially among women), an open society offering rewards to those with skills and education, the parallel erosion of traditional and religious influences aided by greater geographical mobility and urbanisation, and the movement of married women into the workforce' (this volume: 100). This decline of traditionalism and community is also likely, as Brewer argues, to be associated with the rise in crime rates.

Religious change in Ireland has most frequently been considered in terms of models of secularisation defined as the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the dominance of religious institutions or symbols. In the South until recently, as Fahey observes, the Catholic Church's role as a social provider exceeded anything provided by any other non-state organisation in the nineteenth or twentieth century. The sheer scale of its resources enabled it to 'control the moral discourse and practice of the Irish people' and maintain a 'moral monopoly'. Today, the Church's role as a service provider is dwindling because falling vocations have left it without the personnel to sustain its role. Church attendance, which remained as high as 80 per cent weekly, has declined significantly in recent years, perhaps not entirely unrelated to a series of scandals which rocked the Church in the 1990s. Corish (1996) concludes that 'if Catholics could come to terms with accepting that the clergy numbered among them a small minority of deviants, they found it much more difficult to accept the mishandling of these cases by the hierarchy'. Hornsby-Smith and Whelan (1994) conclude on the basis of the European Values Survey that Catholics in the South increasingly reject the Church's right to speak with authority on matters of personal morality.

In the political sphere, too, Evans and Sinnott note that there have been some similar processes, again shared with several other Western European countries. Specifically, there has in both North and South been a substantial weakening of people's attachment to political parties. The South, with the North following close on its heels, had the lowest levels of attachment to party across fourteen European political systems in 1994. However we explain this decline in party attachment in the two systems, the process involved has left the two parts of Ireland looking very similar to each other and very different from the majority of member states of the Union. Evans and Sinnott note that 'It is perhaps significant that the only case that comes close to Irish levels of detachment from party is Belgium, a state that has also been characterised by a fundamental cleavage on the nationalist issue . . . it appears that, rather than maintaining or even intensifying attachment to party, the prolonged conflict in Northern Ireland is associated with reduced attachment to parties' (this volume: 436).

Thus in both countries we have seen, over the last thirty years or so, demographic transition, educational expansion, growth of the middle classes, increased participation of women in the labour market, a reduction of gender inequalities and in the political sphere a reduced attachment to the political parties. Less happily, both parts of Ireland have seen rising unemployment and rising crime rates. Many of these changes have been shared, in general character if not in extent, by other Western European countries. These changes have been a product of a variety of linked processes, especially economic modernisation, social liberalisation and possibly the weakening of religious values; but some have also in part been stimulated by membership of the EU and its common directives. Hence in many respects there has been convergence.

Persisting Differences

Despite these common processes of change, Ireland North and South have by no means wholly converged. For example, while much reduced and now below replacement level, fertility is still slightly higher in the South than the North, and in the North it is higher among Catholics than Protestants. Probably related to the historical differences in family size, we find that there are large remaining differences too in married women's labour force participation (this volume: Breen and Whelan, Table 2; O'Connor and Shortall, Table 1). The proportion of women working in the North was similar to the EU average, which was 45 per cent in 1995, while that in the South, despite the dramatic increases in the 1980s, remained below the EU average. As Callan and Farrell (1991) have shown, in the South women's participation in paid employment halved with each additional child, while O'Connor and Shortall show that the differences in participation are larger among the older cohorts, where the fertility differences were also larger. O'Connor and Shortall go on to argue that, although there are no significant differences in the level of state provision of child-care North and South, there are taxation differences, perhaps reflecting the South's continued stronger endorsement of the male breadwinner model. In particular, they argue that:

Differences in the taxation systems North and South make it more or less worthwhile in economic terms for married women to be in paid employment. In the North, as in the UK, separate taxation for husbands and wives is automatic and universal. Furthermore, the additional tax allowance which is granted to married couples, can be allocated to either or it can be split between them. On the other hand in the South (and arguably reflecting its stronger endorsement of the male breadwinner model) double tax allowances and double tax bands are allocated to a married couple, regardless of whether

or not the wife is in paid employment. This implicitly challenges the economic wisdom of a married woman [in the South] participating in paid employment. (299)

Certainly, institutional differences between the two jurisdictions persist in this, and in other respects.

Crime rates, despite the rapid rises in both jurisdictions, are also slightly lower in the South, and indeed, as Brewer and his colleagues argue, there are greater differences now between North and South than there were before the recent period of the South's urbanisation and industrial development. Part of the explanation lies in the levels of violent crime in the North, linked to 'the Troubles': offences against the person, for example, comprise roughly one per cent of Dublin's total recorded crime, but are about 7 per cent of all recorded crimes in Northern Ireland (Brewer, this volume: 174). But even in Northern Ireland, crime rates are still lower than in the rest of the UK, and probably reflect the fact that community structures have to some extent persisted in both parts of Ireland despite modernisation.

Nor has convergence yet occurred with the class structures: 'for men the Republic has a much larger share of those at work in agriculture and a much smaller share in the skilled and semi/unskilled (non-agricultural) manual classes . . . both class structures continue to carry a strong historical imprint' (Breen and Whelan, this volume: 321). This historical imprint also remains on contemporary patterns of social fluidity and educational opportunity.

Andrew Greeley concludes that religion still provides very different world views, or 'stories' North and South. Indeed, he sees Ireland as having three religions. In the South Greeley sees a Pelagian worldview, which he names after the monk Pelagius 'who did battle with Saint Augustine on the issue of whether humans could do good without God's help'. Pelagius, who was Irish, held that they could. Southerners are significantly more likely to be Pelagians (this volume: 147). Greeley contrasts this with the Calvinist worldview of Northern Protestants who exhibit a sense of predetermination or predestination.

The third religion in Ireland is that of the Northern Catholics. 'It is Catholic (in the sense of being like Southern Catholicism) in its faith, devotion, morality and some of its attitudes ([on] feminism, sympathy for criminals, tolerance of cheating . . .), but it is not like Southern Catholicism in its worldviews or much of anything else' (Ibid.: 158). 'Northern Catholics are as pessimistic as their Protestant neighbours, perhaps because the culture of the six county majority has been absorbed by the minority community. The "story" of the meaning of life which Northern

Catholics tell is more like that of the Northern Protestants than that of the Southern Catholics' (148). Greeley concludes that the religion of Northern Catholics 'fits nicely into the model of a (repressed) minority group torn between its traditional heritage and the cultural environment in which it finds itself' (158).

On the conventional measures of secularisation, too, major differences persist between Catholics and Protestants, and between Ireland generally and most of Europe. Even by the 1990s almost four-fifths of Southern Catholics attended Mass weekly or more frequently and the vast majority continue to have their children baptised and confirmed, to be married and buried in church, and to draw comfort and strength from prayer. In the North the figure for Catholics was almost identical, while half of Presbyterians attended church at least once a month, and two-fifths of Anglicans did so. While the Protestant figures are much lower than the Catholic ones, they are still notable by European standards. In Germany or Britain for example, under two-fifths of Catholics attend church monthly and under one-fifth of Protestants do so (International Social Survey Programme, 1991).

Finally, there are two fundamental ways in which Ireland North and South continue to differ. First, Northern Ireland, unlike the Republic, remains an ethnically heterogenous and divided society, in which, on aggregate, the Catholic community continues to hold a disadvantaged position. This is perhaps most evident in the labour market, where Catholic men are twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestant men and are over-represented in unskilled manual jobs (although, in contrast, Catholic women are over-represented in professional jobs but under-represented in administrative and managerial occupations). High levels of residential segregation combined with higher rates of Catholic unemployment mean that areas of Northern Ireland with high unemployment rates have majority Catholic populations and areas of low unemployment have majority Protestant populations.

As Teague and McCartney note, agreement tends to break down when it comes to explaining why Catholics have fared worse than Protestants in the employment system and, in particular, on the role of discrimination. Econometric studies (Smith and Chambers, 1991 and Murphy and Armstrong, 1994) suggest that about half the unemployment differential between Catholics and Protestants can be accounted for by factors such as age, number of children, housing tenure, qualifications and area of residence. These are commonly labelled 'structural' factors. Opinion is then divided as to the degree to which the remaining half of the differential can be attributed to discrimination, whether this is direct, indirect, or the so-called 'chill factor'. The central thesis of the Gudgin-Breen (1996) study is

that while some discrimination clearly does occur it is not currently of sufficient magnitude to contribute in any important way to the maintenance of the unemployment rate differential. This conclusion has been the subject of a sometimes rather technical debate (Bradley, 1997; 1998; Breen, 1998; Murphy, 1996; Rowthorn, 1996). Moreover, because the Gudgin-Breen study focused only on the 1971–91 period, it did not address the question of the extent to which the various disadvantages suffered by Catholics under the Stormont regime may have helped to shape some of the religious differences in the current distribution of structural factors—and, clearly, it would be difficult to deny either that this was the case, or that the resulting disadvantage was not then reproduced across generations.

The second major, and persisting, difference between the two parts of Ireland is simply that the Republic is a state while Northern Ireland is a region of a state. As a state, the Republic of Ireland possesses a degree of relative autonomy (Breen *et al.*, 1990) denied to a region of the UK. From this a number of important differences follow. One very clear example is found in the revival of neo-corporatism in the Republic in the late 1980s. As O'Donnell and Thomas (1998: 118) observe 'in a context of deep despair in Irish society, the social partners acting through the tripartite National Economic and Social Council—hammered out an agreed strategy to escape from the vicious circle of real stagnation, rising taxes and exploding debt'. The series of national agreements which followed played an important part in economic recovery through holding down wages in the tradeable sector, tying wage increases to a tight fiscal and monetary regime as part of the country's objective of achieving membership of EMU. Trade union commitment to such arrangements should be viewed in the context of European integration as an imagined economic and social order which shapes social policy in Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, Teague and McCartney conclude that UK public sector industrial relations are on the threshold of fragmentation, and this process has already taken place in the private sector. Decentralised enterprise-level bargaining has become the norm, and private-sector wages in Northern Ireland are now much lower than in any other UK region. This new low-wage environment they conclude is likely to have been a significant factor in producing the impressive employment growth in the service sector. Certain aspects of the labour market are coming to resemble an American-style deregulated, flexible employment system leading, as Teague and McCartney note, to a concern about a low-skills, bad jobs trap. Even within the manufacturing sector, as Gudgin (this volume: 265) documents, half of the manufacturing employment in Northern Ireland is in the relatively low productivity food, drink, textile and

clothing industries. As Teague and McCartney conclude, on the one hand Northern workers have little incentive to improve their human capital and on the other hand firms do not provide good jobs (either because they do not require high-skilled labour, or because there is a relative scarcity of high-skilled labour).

A similar distinction is evident in relation to macroeconomic policy. Within Northern Ireland economic policies are set mainly according to UK norms. While tax rates in Northern Ireland are identical to the UK rates, the pattern of public expenditure can be set with some limited discretion within the overall block grant made to the Northern Ireland Office. A case where this discretion has been used is in the design of generous subsidy-based industrial incentives. Nevertheless, the fact remains that policy norms in Northern Ireland are those designed with the wider UK in mind, and they can be unsuitable for a peripheral region. While the subvention assistance can be used to design and operate beneficial policies to address Northern Ireland's structural problems, some of these problems may originate in the first place from application of UK-wide policies to Northern Ireland.

The Future

As we argued at the beginning of this chapter, Ireland's future, whether it eventually becomes a single unified Irish state, or some joint sovereignty is evolved, or the status quo persists, will depend on political contingencies and decisions that we as social scientists cannot conceivably predict. However, these decisions will be made within specific historical and social contexts that may to some extent limit the scope for a political settlement or alternatively make new options available. What we have tried to offer then, as social scientists, is not a blue-print for the future but some understanding of the context and constraints within which political decisions will be made.

Many of the processes of convergence that we have noted in this chapter might be expected to make a lasting settlement of the Northern Irish question a more attainable option. The two jurisdictions are in many respects more similar today than they were at the time before partition, when they were under a single jurisdiction. And in several respects we can expect the North and South to develop in ways that continue to make them more alike. Extrapolation from past trends into the future is always hazardous, but Coleman expects the Irish demographic pattern to settle to that of north-west rather than of southern Europe. While the end of Ireland's demographic exceptionalism will not in itself solve any political problems, it may reduce some of the pressures on the two economies and,

following Gudgin's line of reasoning one stage further, it may mean that unemployment rates generally, and the Catholic/Protestant ratio in particular, will be lower than would otherwise have been the case.

Demography will, however, leave the major political problem unchanged. The Catholic population in the North in 1991 was 42.1 per cent of the total according to the best estimate (from Breen, 1997). It seems likely that the Catholic population will stabilise, at or just less than, half of the population of Northern Ireland. Thus Northern Ireland will remain an ethnically divided society whose competing groups are of approximately equal size. This would seem to rule out any majority in favour of a change in the constitutional position of the region while ensuring that the nationalist minority remains sizeable.

Nevertheless, we may expect continuing changes both North and South, and among Catholics and Protestants alike, as both societies continue to become more highly educated, more liberal on social questions, and perhaps more secular, and less inclined to more extreme political views. Evans and Sinnott suggest that (net of the effect of age, on which more below), higher education does indeed lead to reduced support for hard-line political parties. These processes, it might be hoped, would lead eventually to shared attitudes and perhaps identities. Higher education elsewhere is associated with greater cosmopolitanism and reduced support for locally based nationalisms (Heath and Kellas, 1998). In the very long run we might anticipate that the higher-educated might tend towards more European-wide identities, although the impact these developments will have on Ireland, both North and South, will depend crucially on the economic opportunities available at home. The highly educated may be better placed to emigrate, and there is some evidence that it has been the better-educated who have in the past emigrated from the North. Moreover, education may be a two-edged sword: the highly educated are likely to have a greater sense of political efficacy and to be inclined towards political participation and activism, and as the history of new social movements shows, they are not always active in conventional ways. Uneven social and economic development may therefore solve few problems or even lead to unintended consequences. If the supply of graduates outstrips the labour-market's demand for graduates, increased political activism and protest rather than a liberal consensus on a middle way may follow.

On the economic front, continued convergence of the two economies and, in the North, of Catholic and Protestant economic fortunes, is not an unreasonable hope. As Teague and McCartney argue 'active government initiatives, particularly the adoption of fair employment legislation, have gone a long way to addressing . . . [the need for] an inclusive form of economic citizenship. Moreover, informal industrial relations processes

can no longer be regarded as generating unequal status in the labour market' (this volume: 359). While there are still widespread perceptions of prejudice and discrimination in the North, we would argue that in the long run such perceptions will depend at least in part on the extent of actual discrimination. While it is quite possible for false beliefs to be self-sustaining, we see no need to be defeatist on this score.

On the political front, too, there is perhaps some cause for optimism. As Evans and Sinnott report, attitudes in the South have become substantially more favourable towards some kind of power-sharing. Hayes and McAllister (1996) have noted that the preference for a united Ireland is now substantially lower than in the past among Southerners. To be sure, Girvin rightly points out that 'None of this means that Irish nationalism has changed its essential nature. There appear to be no circumstances where Irish nationalism considers that unity should be abandoned or that Northern Ireland should remain in the United Kingdom in perpetuity . . . [but a] significant proportion of the public is more pragmatic in terms of options, more realistic in regard to Northern Ireland and less tolerant of the use of violence by the IRA for the promotion of nationalist objectives' (this volume: 386). Similarly in Britain there is substantial willingness for some kind of change to the present constitutional arrangements, either in the form of joint arrangements with the Republic or in the form of a united Ireland (Evans and Sinnott, this volume: Table 1). These developments give politicians on both the Southern and British sides greater freedom for manoeuvre.

There are, however, many grounds for pessimism, both economic and political. A continuation of the troubles would inhibit convergence of the two parts of Ireland in many respects. Not least it will make the North a less attractive site for the location of foreign direct investment, which may, in turn, lead to a growing gulf between the structure and nature of industry in the two parts of the island. As Bew points out, another issue which may act to exacerbate the differences between the two parts of the island is the different attitudes towards the EU in the UK and Republic of Ireland, respectively, and specifically, their different stances towards monetary union. As he points out, 'the greater integration between the two economies, a key intellectual prop of the [1995] Framework Document, now looks to be a rather more uncertain project. The decision by Ireland to join the single European currency while the UK stays out has seen to that' (this volume: 415). However, the consequences of the South's entry into monetary union for differences and similarities between it and the North are far from clear, not least because there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the likely effects of EMU on the Southern economy, and about the date at which the UK might also join.

Since Northern Ireland has no scope for independent monetary policy, the impact of monetary policy mismatch on cross-border interactions must also be viewed in the light of the decision of the Republic of Ireland to participate in EMU and the decision of the UK to stay out, at least initially. The biggest danger from monetary policy mismatch for North-South interactions could arise if sterling stayed out of EMU, was the target of large-scale speculation in international currency markets and became very unstable. In the light of the structural weaknesses of the Northern Ireland economy, a situation where sterling devalued or even moved erratically would undoubtedly disrupt cross-border trade and other forms of North-South interaction. The fact that the important small-firm sector in Northern Ireland is heavily dependent on the Republic of Ireland as an export destination exacerbates the problem.

The Republic of Ireland's experience during the early stages of its adherence to the narrow band of the EMS (1979–86) showed how long it can take for expectations to adjust to fundamental changes in monetary policy regimes. Hence, any uncertainty that endures about differences between UK and Republic of Ireland attitudes to EMU are likely to delay the deepening of North-South economic interactions, were this to be on the agendas of the authorities in both regions. In such a situation of uncertainty, Northern Ireland would tend to retain its focus on British policy as the most likely option for minimising economic disruption. One might therefore envisage a situation in which the Republic comes to look increasingly towards Europe and progressively reject Anglo-Saxon or liberal models in favour of continental models while the reverse happens in Northern Ireland.

It is also necessary to recognise that recent economic trends have led to growing economic polarisation within both societies, and again there is little reason to suppose that this trend will reverse itself. As O'Connell and Gudgin both point out, unemployment rates have been particularly high in both parts of the island of Ireland, and the incidence falls particularly harshly on young men. Even if the demographic convergence helps to contain this problem, polarisation has been a feature of other Western countries too, and we doubt if the two parts of Ireland will escape its consequences. Continuing high rates of unemployment can only be bad news for social integration, either within the two societies or for the integration of Ireland as a whole. High unemployment among unqualified young men, and the associated social exclusion, is a major concern for Europe generally and is surely likely to be especially worrying in the Northern Irish context.

Of similar cause for concern are the findings reported by Evans and Sinnott and by Hayes and McAllister suggesting that the younger genera-

tions in Northern Ireland may actually be more intransigent than the older generations. While we might have expected to find that rising levels of education would have made the young more liberal and tolerant in their attitudes, there appear to be specific generational features that counteract this liberalising tendency. Evans and Sinnott, for example, find that the young tend to show considerably greater support for the more hard-line parties within each community in Northern Ireland. Thus (net of class and education), younger Catholics are more inclined to Sinn Féin rather than the SDLP, while among Protestants there is a similar tendency for the young to support the DUP rather than the UUP. They argue that 'The marked effects of age on partisanship can probably be best understood in terms of political socialisation—both Sinn Féin and the DUP only started to compete electorally after many older voters had already developed attachments to the more established representatives of unionist and nationalist political visions. The recruitment of the young and unaligned was therefore an easier prospect' (Evans and Sinnott, this volume: 452). Similarly Hayes and McAllister believe that the answer to whether or not the Northern Ireland problem can be resolved within the lifetimes of those presently alive will depend upon whether this younger minority of the population emerge as more tolerant, or more prejudiced as a result of their experiences. Their own view is distinctly pessimistic. They take the view that, as it is the young who have been most exposed to the violence during their impressionable years, and it is the young who are most active in sustaining paramilitary organisations, then the prospects for a lasting political solution to the Northern Ireland problem may well be grim.

Just how pessimistic these findings should lead us to be depends ultimately on how much force Evans and Sinnott's, and Hayes and McAllister's generational explanations have. As Hayes and McAllister point out, the data themselves do not ultimately tell us whether generational or lifecycle interpretations of the differences are to be preferred. While theory does strongly suggest that a generational interpretation is plausible, it must be said that the findings on political disaffection are more likely to have a lifecycle interpretation (see Heath and Park, 1997): young people do seem to display lower levels of conventional political participation but many are likely to conform to more conventional modes as they grow older (and perhaps as they acquire greater family commitments and a greater stake in established society). Moreover, other evidence from Britain and the United States suggests that generational differences are by no means immutable and that the major component of attitude change over time tends to be due to 'period' experiences that affect all people alike. In other words, attitudes can shift (either in an intransigent or in a conciliatory direction) in response to contemporary changes. We agree with Hayes

and McAllister that the Troubles have left their mark, but we suspect that the future may be more open than they allow—if only because both new and old generations may now have some experience of peace, however temporary.

Moreover, there is some evidence that senses of national identity can perhaps be shaped by emerging political institutions. For example the Catalan experience suggests that devolution and the meeting of some Catalan aspirations have been able to satisfy many Catalans and preserve their dual identity as both Spanish and Catalan (Kellas, 1991). The entrenchment of successful all-Ireland political institutions, which fall short of unification, could conceivably lead to the emergence of new, dual, senses of identity.

Above all, however, as social scientists we would emphasise the importance of taking a longer-term view in shaping not only political institutions but people's everyday experience. Here we would see an inclusive citizenship as paramount. As the Framework Document argues 'any new political arrangements must be based on full respect for, and protection and expression of, the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland and even-handedly afford both communities in Northern Ireland parity of esteem and treatment, including equality of opportunity and advantage' (Para. 10: iv). This needs to be translated into matters of practical experiences and not merely of political rhetoric. One area in which this is essential is the labour market. If, for example, as the Gudgin Breen study would lead one to suspect, current discrimination is often overestimated as a cause of Catholic disadvantage, the need for policies that address the wider issues concerning the ways in which disadvantage is maintained becomes all the more urgent. To the extent that religious discrimination is no longer a major proximate factor in explaining Catholic disadvantage, then policies that concern themselves solely with religion are likely to be ineffective. Policies that seek to tackle the factors that directly influence individuals' chances of getting a job are likely not only to be more efficient, but have the very considerable advantage of being to the benefit of the disadvantaged in all communities.

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