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Introduction

Ireland's peripheral position has historically often delayed the arrival of waves of social and cultural change in other parts of Europe. Part of its self-identity has derived from the narrative of its having been as a refuge for civilisation and Christianity during the invasions of what were once known as the 'dark ages', when it was described as 'the island of saints and scholars'. Another part derives from its history of invasion, settlement and colonisation and, more specifically from its intimate relationship with Great Britain.

The Republic of Ireland now occupies approximately five-sixths of the island of Ireland but from the Act of Union in 1800 until 1922, all of the island of Ireland was effectively part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The war of Independence ended with the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, and on 6 December 1922 the entire island of Ireland became a self-governing British dominion called the *Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann)*. Northern Ireland chose to opt out of the new dominion and rejoined the United Kingdom on 8 December 1922. In 1937, a new constitution, the Constitution of Ireland (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*), replaced the Constitution of the Irish Free State in the twenty-six county state, and called the state *Ireland*, or *Éire* in Irish. However, it was not until 1949, after the passage of the Republic of Ireland Act 1948, that the state was declared, officially, to be the Republic of Ireland (Garvin, 2005).

During British rule and initial independence, Ireland was one of the poorest countries in Western Europe and was regarded by most of the global community as a small and remote island, with high emigration (Fitzpatrick, 1996). The protectionist economy was opened in the late 1950s, and Ireland joined what was then the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. This had an impact on Ireland's development as a nation that not even the most optimistic observers could have predicted. Membership contributed to rapid progress and increased prosperity in a range of areas including agriculture, industry and services. EU funds have also contributed significantly in supporting the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland.

Ireland has held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on six occasions, and most recently, in 2004 when it oversaw the biggest

enlargement in the history of the Union with the accession of ten new Member States - it was also one of the only three countries to open its borders to the workers from these new member states without restrictions or the need for a work permit.

Ireland has consistently been one of the most pro-European member states, with 72% of the population thinking EU membership is a good thing and 81% thinking Ireland has benefited from being a member of the EU, according to a 2009 Eurobarometer poll.

As Ireland increasingly looked to Europe changes have not only been economic but political and psychological as well. Ardagh for instance has argued that the EU has 'enabled the old unequal face-to-face relationship with Britain to change into a new, more relaxed partnership, within a wider club where both are equal members; and this has eased the old Irish complex about the English' (Ardagh, 1994: 328). But Ireland has also entertained strong and complex relations with the United States, as Mary Harney, then deputy Prime Minister expressed in a speech in 2000: 'Geographically we are closer to Berlin than Boston. Spiritually we are probably a lot closer to Boston than Berlin'.¹

After a further period of economic recession in the 1980s, the 1990s saw the beginning of the substantial economic growth that became known as the *Celtic Tiger*. Social changes accompanied this process, ranging from the decline in authority of the Catholic Church to a dramatic rise of immigration. In 1996 the country reached its migration 'turning point', the most recent EU-15 member state to become a country of net immigration - a decade later, in 2006, non-Irish nationals represented approximately 10% of the population.

This sets the scene for the current dominant sense of Irishness, which is an amalgam of references to Gaelic culture, Catholic religion, invasion and oppression, historical emigration and recent experience of economic success and cultural diversity, and the subsequent exploration of 'tolerance' in the Irish context.

National identity, State formation and citizenship

National identity

It may be argued that Irish national identity is defined primarily in opposition to Britain, or more specifically, England – the 'other' in terms of which it has been formulated. This also has significance for the position of the Protestant minority, the internal other, who have been seen as aligned with England, even if descended from those resident in Ireland from as long ago as the seventeenth century.

Nonetheless, social connections with Britain but also with the USA were substantial, as up to the late 20th century these represented the principal destination[s] of the emigrant flow that became a significant feature of Irish life, especially from the Famine of 1845-49, in which, of a population of 8 million, 1 million died and 1 million emigrated. This particular event and the legacy of emigration are also formative experiences in Irish self-definition.

1. Remarks by Tánaiste, Mary Harney in the Law Society of Ireland, Dublin on 21st July 2000 - <http://www.deti.ie/press/2000/210700.htm>

Relations with other Celtic neighbours have been less significant even though the Irish traditionally looked beyond England to France and Spain, which were for long Catholic powers, and traditional enemies of England, and where Irish exiles went for education, to serve in military, and to seek military and political support for independence.

In this sense, the conception of Irish identity has always been predominantly ethnic. Two principal strands intertwined in the nineteenth century: the Gaelic language and culture, and the Catholic religion. This identification of the two was maintained despite the leading role of a number of Protestant (Anglo-Irish) or English figures in both the national Gaelic cultural revival of the late nineteenth century and the political independence movement of the early twentieth century. This tension surfaced in a debate on Irish identity that raged furiously in the context of the Northern Ireland Troubles from the late 1960s. From this, a variety of interpretations of what it meant to be Irish emerged – was it to be Catholic, to be Gaelic speaking, to participate in Gaelic cultural and sporting activities, to live in Ireland, or to have been shaped by its history? Was it, as Conor Cruise O'Brien (1965) once wrote, 'not primarily a question of birth, blood or language, but the condition of being involved in the Irish situation and usually of being mauled by it'?

Another historically important dimension of the Irish self-image has been that of a predominantly rural people. There was very limited industrialisation or urbanization outside Dublin in the southern part of the country in contrast to the area around Belfast. In recent years, this pattern has changed significantly, with population growth, and significant agglomeration of the population in urban areas, especially Dublin, and in 2010 over one and a half million people live in the Greater Dublin area, over one-third of the population.

A further aspect of identity, if less controversial, is that living in Ireland was for most Irish people considered a precondition of being 'really' Irish. Despite references to the evil of emigration in literature and policy documents, the Irish diaspora was given little attention until President Mary Robinson's 1995 address to the Joint Houses of the Oireachtas, 'Cherishing the Irish Diaspora', in which she reached out to the '70 million people worldwide who can claim Irish descent' and spoke of the 'added richness of our heritage that Irishness is not simply territorial'.² Those who claimed to be Irish by descent, living in the United States or Britain were not seen as really Irish by those living on the island, and have sometimes been referred to in recent years as 'plastic paddies' (Hickman, 2002). This reflects a practical attitude of what has been termed a 'twenty-six county nationalism', which contrasted to the equally widely held official belief in the goal of unity of the whole island. At the same time, living in Ireland was not enough to be considered Irish, as even after living on Irish soil for many years individuals were regarded as 'newcomers'.

The foundation of the State

The institutional framework set up in 1922 operated first on the basis of an agreement with the British Government, and while it gave Ireland a limited independence, it did not initially lead to a radical restructuring of Irish politics or Irish society. The partition however, led to a further characteristic of Irish political identity - irredentism - with respect to what were known in the

2. <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/addresses/2Feb1995.htm>

South as the 'six counties'. In addition to its history, the geographic unity of the island was emphasised as a naturally defining characteristic.

However, from the 1930s more distinctive social and economic policies were adopted, and the 1937 Constitution set out a model for the Irish state that was guided by the intention to express and promote a specifically Irish and Catholic way of life and norms. Even though it did not establish the Catholic Church as the state church (and recognised other Christian denominations and Judaism), the Constitution did emphasise that Catholicism was the religion of the majority,³ and, while there was a separation of church and state in one sense, it explicitly embodied an extensive range of Catholic social principles in the text. From 1933 at least, the Irish language was to be restored to the position of national language, became compulsory in schools and was required for work in the public service, the legal profession and other areas. Thus from its foundation, the state set about constituting a system that would give priority to the Gaelic and Catholic elements of Irish identity.

Gradual change in the character of Irish society, and a motivation of rapprochement with the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland led to the removal of the reference to 'the special position' of the Catholic Church in 1973, and the repeal of constitutional elements and legal prohibitions seen as particularly connected with Catholic beliefs and practices, such as the prohibition on divorce in 1996, though this was driven also by a strong demand within the Republic itself. The peace settlement of 1998 finally brought about a redefinition of the constitutional self-description of Ireland.

An indicator of wider contemporary concerns for equality may be seen in current legislation that forbids discrimination in employment and services (in both the public and private sectors), on grounds of gender (including transsexuals), marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race (including nationality), religion (or lack thereof), and membership of the Traveller community.

Citizenship policy

Despite the predominantly ethnic conception of Irish identity that prevailed in the twentieth century, Irish citizenship may be seen as representing a somewhat more civic conception of Irishness. Irish citizenship laws have evolved under the influences of British legal inheritance, republican ideas of political membership expressed in the state's founding documents, the territorial claim over Northern Ireland, and the fact of emigration. The first three influences contributed to the centrality of *ius soli*, the last to the place of *ius sanguinis* in these laws (Honohan, 2007; Handoll, 2010).

In the system that emerged citizenship was granted on the basis of *ius soli* to those born on the island as a whole, and on the basis of *ius sanguinis* to the children and grandchildren of 'natural born' citizens.⁴ Thus, alongside a conception inclusive of the resident population, the children of emigrants were granted citizenship on a medium term basis.

The foundation of *ius soli* laid the basis for a relatively open conception of citizenship, albeit one that sat uneasily with the more firmly bounded and exclusive ethno-cultural conception of the nation that prevailed in the public consciousness and influenced many areas of policy.

3. Article 44.2 Section 2 of the original 1937 Constitution read: The State recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens.

4. The current conditions allow those with an Irish-born grandparent to claim Irish citizenship. Those born abroad to Irish citizens born abroad may become citizens on registration.

For those who come to live permanently in Ireland, the conditions for naturalisation are a relatively short period of residence (legal residence in five of the previous eight years), the intention to live in the country, being deemed to be 'of good character', and swearing an oath of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State. There is still no test of language ability or cultural knowledge. But there is a high level of ministerial discretion, including the power to dispense with conditions on the basis of Irish descent or associations. In practice until recently the numbers applying were also rather limited. In recent years applications have increased, and there is a concern that ministerial discretion has been used to refuse many applications, and that there is no procedure for appeal (Handoll, 2010).

The most significant recent change in citizenship laws arose in the context of developments in the Northern Ireland peace process, and, in particular, of the dimension of North-South reconciliation. As part of the Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement, the article embodying the territorial claim to Northern Ireland was removed from the Irish constitution.⁵ It was replaced by Article 2, passed (with the rest of the Good Friday Agreement) by referendum in 1998. It basically granted the right to Irish citizenship to those born in Northern Ireland independently of the claim to territorial sovereignty over Northern Ireland. At the same time, it made a gesture towards the claims of Irish descendants that fell short of any explicit constitutional right to citizenship.

A significant change in the grant of citizenship was made in 2004, through which Ireland ceased to be the only country in Europe that granted unconditional *ius soli*. A referendum was held on this provision in the light of what was perceived as the instrumental use of birth in Ireland as a means to claiming residence in Ireland or another EU Member State. The Irish government introduced the proposal to restrict *ius soli* as a technical change necessary to remove a perverse incentive to give birth in Ireland.

Rather than removing or amending the recently introduced Article 2, the proposal inserted a provision in Article 9 (on citizenship) which returned the allocation of citizenship on the basis of *ius soli* to a legislative matter. Constitutionally it retained an element of effective *ius sanguinis* in making constitutional *ius soli* citizenship dependent on the citizenship of a parent. The legislation subsequently introduced (Irish Citizenship and Nationality Act 2005) grants *ius soli* citizenship only to a child whose parent has been legally resident for 3 of the previous 4 years, focusing thus on the *parent's* status and length of prior residence. Not just a technical adjustment, this change effectively tilted the conception of citizenship embodied in the constitution towards *ius sanguinis*.

Cultural diversity challenges during the last 30 years

Ireland's current population

Demographically, Ireland's history has been one of invasion, settlement, colonisation, and net emigration. For decades dating back to the famine in the 1840s, emigration has been a significant feature of Irish life.

The population of the area now comprising the Republic of Ireland was over 6.5 million in the first major census of population, the Great Census of 1841. The deaths which resulted from the Famine of 1845/49 and the

5. The pre-1998 Article 2 read: 'The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas.'

large scale emigration which followed led to a halving of the population by 1901, and the population low point of 2.8 million was reached in the 1961 Census. The population has increased in every intercensal year since then, apart from 1986-1991 when a fairly modest decline was experienced. As the economic recovery started to take hold, however, migration turned around in dramatic fashion, and since 1996 there has been strong net inward migration.

Comparing Ireland to other European Union countries underlines the rapid changes that took place during this period. During 1990-1994, Ireland was the only country among the member states of the then EU-15 with a negative net migration rate. In contrast, between 1995 and 1999, the country's average annual net migration rate was the second highest in the EU-15 (MacÉinrí and Walley, 2003).

The 2002-2006 period witnessed record population growth with the annual increase amounting to 79,000 - consisting of a natural increase of 33,000 and an annual net inward migration of 46,000. As a result, in recent years, Ireland has experienced a rapid growth in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. This diversity builds on the diversity (albeit in relatively small numbers) that always existed in Ireland and now includes Travellers, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and minorities from a variety of, Asian and African origins. Ireland is now a very diverse society – in terms of nationality, ethnic background and religion.

Ireland's population enumerated by the census of 2006 was 4,239,848 persons, an increase of 8.2% since the 2002 Census. Most significantly, non-Irish nationals increased from 224,000 to 420,000 over the same period, an 87% increase. They come from 188 different countries and, in overall terms, make up 10% of Ireland's population (see Table 1 below).

The fastest growing categories were EU nationals (66% of non-Irish nationals), 37% were from the EU15 including the UK; 29% were from the 10 countries that joined the European Union in 2004; 11% were from Asia; 8% were from Africa; and 5% were from America. The top ten nationalities were UK (112,548), Polish (63,276), Lithuanian (24,628), Nigerian (16,300), Latvian (13,319), US (12,475), Chinese (11,161), German (10,289), Filipino (9,548) and French (9,046), and these accounted for 82% of the total.

Nationality	2002		2006	
	Thousands	%	Thousands	%
Irish	3,585.0	92.8	3,706.7	88.9
UK	103.5	2.7	112.5	2.7
Other EU 25	38.4	1.0	163.2	3.9
Rest of Europe	14.7	0.4	24.4	0.6
Africa	21.0	0.5	35.3	0.8
Asia	21.8	0.6	47.0	1.1
USA	11.4	0.3	12.5	0.3
Other countries	11.2	0.3	22.4	0.5
Multiple nationality	2.3	0.1	2.4	0.1
No nationality	0.8	0.0	1.3	0.0
Not stated	48.4	1.3	44.3	1.1
Total	3,858.5	100.0	4,172.0	100.0

Source: Central Statistics Office (2007a)

A question on 'ethnic or cultural background' was included for the first time in the 2006 census. Both the format and the implications of this question have been contested; Cadogan (2008) for example argues that 'the pre-given 'ethnic categories' of the Irish Census 2006 are questionable, in part, insofar as they implicitly consolidate a large 'white Irish' ethnic grouping as culturally homogenous, as an undifferentiated 'majority' against which 'minorities' are highlighted as exotic and deviant'. Among those who responded, 'White' was the predominant category accounting for nearly 95% of the usually resident population.

Increased immigration has also led to an important increase in religious diversity. The effect has been to increase all minority religions, especially the Protestant, Orthodox and Muslim populations (see Table 2).

The primary religion in the Republic of Ireland remains Christianity, dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. In 2006, approximately 86.8% of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic. The number recorded increased by 218,800 or 6.3% between 2002 and 2006. However, as the percentage increase was lower than for the population as a whole over that period (8.2%), the share of Roman Catholics in the population fell from 88.4% in 2002 to 86.8% in 2006.

Table 2. Population classified by religion, 2002 and 2006

Population Religion	2002	2006	Percentage change 2002 - 2006
	Thousands		%
Roman Catholic	3,462.6	3,681.4	6,3
Church of Ireland (incl. Protestant)	115.6	125.6	8,6
Muslim (Islamic)	19.1	32.5	69,9
Other Christian religion	21.4	29.2	36,5
Presbyterian	20.6	23.5	14,4
Orthodox	10.4	20.8	99,3
Methodist	10.0	12.2	21,2
Apostolic or Pentecostal	3.1	8.1	157,5
Buddhist	3.9	6.5	67,3
Hindu	3.1	6.1	96,3
Lutheran	3.0	5.2	72,1
Evangelical	3.8	5.2	39,6
Jehovah's Witness	4.4	5.1	16,3
Baptist	2.2	3.3	47,4
Jewish	1.8	1.9	7,8
Pantheist	1.1	1.7	52,9
Agnostic	1.0	1.5	47,4
Latter Day Saints (Mormon)	0.8	1.2	48,5
Atheist	0.5	1.0	85,8
Quaker (Society of Friends)	0.8	0.9	2,7
Lapsed Roman Catholic	0.6	0.5	-8,5
Baha'i	0.5	0.5	2,9
Brethren	0.2	0.3	64,4
Other stated religions	8.9	8.6	-3,9
No religion	138.3	186.3	34,8
Not stated	79.1	70.3	-11,1
Total	3,917.2	4,239.8	8,2

Source: Central Statistics Office (2007c)

Significant Protestant denominations are the Church of Ireland (Anglican), the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, followed by the Methodist Church in Ireland; these have also grown in numbers. The most dramatic increases, however, have been the Muslim and Orthodox communities. Muslims represented the third largest religious category in 2006 – up 13,400 to just over 32,500. While adherents of the Orthodox religion doubled in number to 20,800 between 2002 and 2006. In percentage terms, this means that Orthodoxy and Islam were the fastest growing religions, up by 100% and 70% respectively (CSO, 2007).

There is now a resumption of net outward migration in Ireland (CSO, 2009). The number of emigrants from the State in the year to April 2009 is estimated to have increased by almost 44% from 45,300 to 65,100, while the number of immigrants continued to decline over the same period, from 83,800 to 57,300. These combined changes have resulted in a return to net migration for Ireland (- 7,800) for the first time since 1995.

Indigenous minorities

Since the foundation of the state in 1922, the principal minorities with respect to which tolerance issues could potentially arise have been religious: Protestants and Jews, and socio-cultural: Travellers. The relative position of the English and Irish languages also gave rise to some issues of toleration.

Protestants

There is a remarkable imbalance in the amount of research on Catholic-Protestant relationships in the two parts of the island: in the North the literature runs to thousands of items; in the South it comes to little more than a handful – it seems that in the South Catholic-Protestant relationships are not a significant issue.

With the partition of Ireland in 1922, 92.6% of the Free State's population were Catholic while 7.4% were Protestant (Collins, 1993). By the 1960s, the Protestant population had fallen by half. Many Protestants left the country in the early 1920s, either because they felt unwelcome in a predominantly Catholic and nationalist state, because they were afraid due to the burning of Protestant homes (particularly of the old landed class) by republicans during the civil war, because they regarded themselves as British and did not wish to live in an independent Irish state, or because of the economic disruption caused by the recent violence. The Catholic Church had also issued a decree, *Ne Temere*, whereby the children of marriages between Catholics and Protestants had to be brought up as Catholics.

In 1991, the Protestant population of the Republic of Ireland was at its lowest point at approximately 3%, but the 2006 Census found that a little over 5% of the population was Protestant and that all the Protestant denominations have gained in numbers since 2002.

Rather than any deep sectarianism, available studies suggest that the situation is complex.⁶ Protestantism was established in Ireland as part of a British colonising process and 'Irish independence placed Southern Protestants in the position that for centuries they had struggled to avoid: becoming a minority in a Catholic-dominated state' (Ruane and Todd, 2009).

6. See Bowen (1983), Murphy and Adair (2002).

Traditionally, being a Protestant in Ireland has carried with it presumptions of British identity and loyalty, and of distinction from Catholics not simply in terms of belief, but by virtue of a different history on the island of Ireland and different ethnic origins.

Coakley (1998) posed the question whether Southern Irish Protestants are an ethnic or a religious minority, and his conclusions tended to indicate that they are now a religious rather than an ethnic minority. Most studies effectively indicate that Protestants in Ireland, with very few exceptions, see themselves as Irish rather than British. After partition, it was often considered that Protestants in many ways constituted a privileged minority in terms of ownership of land, industrial property, and income. However, Butler and Ruane (2009) argue that their situation was far from unproblematic. Between the 1930s and 1960s there were numbers of incidents that led to significant controversies in relation to cases of employment, education and intermarriage. Nonetheless, with the higher social and economic status of Protestants, freedom of worship, and state support for educational provision for Protestants, toleration of Protestants was not widely perceived to be an issue.

More recently, the dominant view is that the transformation of the Republic into a modern, outward-looking, liberal and pluralist state means that Southern Protestants are now much more at ease with it. Catholics and Protestants share inter-church religious and commemorative ceremonies, schools, workplaces and leisure activities, and there is more recognition by the state of the distinctive history, identity and memory of its Protestant citizens. The evolution of the situation in Northern Ireland has also given Southern Protestants an opportunity to re-negotiate their identity, separating the religious and ethnic aspects of Protestantism and renegotiating boundaries. While the question of a 'dilution of the Protestant identity' within the majority culture has been raised, Todd et al. (2009) argue that, rather than 'disappearing', Protestants in the Republic are redefining their identity and renegotiating their ways of being Protestant in various ways.

Controversies emerged in 2009 following the reclassification of schools in the October Budget and the decision to remove ancillary grants for fee-paying Protestant schools, covering expenses such as caretaker and secretarial supports, and to increase their pupil-teacher ratio. This special arrangement had been in place since 1967, and was seen as an acknowledgment that the schools were viewed by the Government as separate, serving a special purpose by allowing the geographically dispersed Protestant population to maintain affordable education provisions in accordance with their religious ethos. The decision was widely criticised by the Protestant community.

Jews

Ireland's Jewish population dates mainly from the last years of the nineteenth century. In 1871, the Jewish population of Ireland was 258; by 1881, it had risen to 453. By 1901, there were an estimated 3,771 Jews in Ireland and by 1904, the total Jewish population had reached an estimated 4,800. Most of the immigration up to this time had come from England or Germany. In the wake of the Russian pogroms there was increased immigration, mostly from Eastern Europe and in particular from

Lithuania. As Ireland was part of the United Kingdom at this time, the Jewish community benefited from the British government's emancipation laws, and new synagogues and schools were established to cater for the community. Many of the following generation became prominent in business, academic, political and sporting circles.

Ireland's Jewish population reached its peak in the late 1940s and declined steadily since (mainly through emigration to larger Jewish communities such as those in the United States, England and Israel). With the arrival of the Celtic Tiger and the immigration it has brought, the Jewish community has also benefited from new families settling down. According to the 2006 census, there are 1,930 Jews in the Republic of Ireland (CSO, 2007) – there are two synagogues in Dublin and one in Cork.

Although the Jewish community has always been small in numbers, it has generally been well-accepted into Irish life and incidents of overt anti-Semitism in Ireland have generally been few and far between. However, historically, there have been some cases of 'institutional' and 'perceived' anti-Semitism. One of the most serious incidents recorded is the anti-Semitic boycott in Limerick in the first decade of the 20th century known as the *Limerick Pogrom*, which caused many Jews to leave the city. It was instigated by a fundamentalist Catholic priest, Fr. John Creagh of the Redemptorist Order, whose sermons led to a two-year trade boycott of Jewish businesses accompanied by harassment and beatings and resulted in the almost total departure of the Limerick Jewish community (Rivlin, 2003).

There was also some domestic anti-Jewish sentiment during World War II, most notably expressed in a notorious speech to the Dáil in 1943, when independent T.D. Oliver J. Flanagan advocated '*routing the Jews out of the country*' and a certain indifference from the political establishment to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust during and after the war.⁷ Ireland had an extremely restrictive policy on immigration for Jews from Europe during the Nazi period. Nevertheless, Jews were generally prosperous and respected in society from the middle of the twentieth century and at one time in the 1990s, there were three Jewish TDs (MPs). Although many Jews complain of increased apprehension in the community relating primarily to events in the Middle East and Europe, there appears to be no perceptible change in attitudes among the Irish population. Incidents of anti-Semitism are considered to be few and at a low level, with no evidence of systematic targeting of the Jewish community in Ireland.

Travellers

A cultural minority regarded as Irish, but becoming increasingly marginalised in Irish society throughout the 20th century are 'Irish Travellers'. The historical origins of Irish Travellers are the subject of academic and popular debates. It was once widely believed that Travellers were descendants from landowners or labourers made homeless by Cromwell's military campaign in Ireland and the 1840s famine. However, their origins may be more complex and difficult to ascertain because through their history Travellers have left no written records of their own. Furthermore, even though all families claim ancient origins, some families adopted Traveller customs centuries ago, while others did so in more modern times.

7. Dáil Éireann - Volume 91 - 9 July, 1943.

An exact figure for the Traveller population in Ireland is unknown. There were 22,435 Irish Travellers, representing 0.53% of the total population, enumerated in the 2006 census. This represents a decline of 1,254 or 5.3 % compared with 2002. However, Traveller organisations estimate that there may be up to 30,000 Travellers with a further 1,500 Travellers in the North of Ireland.⁸

Originally following a nomadic lifestyle and pursuing occupations of horse rearing and traditional rural crafts and services, the urbanisation of Irish society led to the disruption of their way of life. On the one hand there were calls for the provision of education and other services to improve their welfare; on the other hand policies promoted their settlement and conformity to urban norms. While there is a traveller dialect (gammon or cant) this does not create a linguistic division between Travellers and the rest of population.

There have been increasing tensions with the 'settled community', over locations of settlement and anti-social behaviour, feuding and inter-Traveller violence. The legal requirement of the state to provide serviced halting sites has generally not been met, in part due to local resistance to their establishment in particular areas, and laws of trespass have rendered many of their practices illegal.

The European Parliament Committee of Enquiry on Racism and Xenophobia found Travellers to be amongst the most discriminated against ethnic group in Irish society (Danaher, Kenny and Leder, 2009). Travellers fare poorly on every indicator used to measure disadvantage: unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, health status, infant mortality, life expectancy, illiteracy, education and training levels, access to decision making and political representation, gender equality, access to credit, accommodation and living conditions.⁹ Prejudice against Travellers is so strong that MacGréil (1996) described the prevailing attitude in relation to Travellers as one of 'caste-like apartheid'.

Since the 1960s there have been several official initiatives to address these problems, even though early efforts blatantly identified the Traveller lifestyle as 'the problem' and advocated a policy of assimilation (Helleiner, 2000; Fanning, 2002).

One of the main issues regarding Irish Travellers is their recognition as an ethnic group. In December 2008 the Irish Traveller Movement launched the Traveller Ethnicity campaign (ITM, 2009) and their claim is supported by the Equality Authority, which emphasises that the lack of recognition as an ethnic group 'has negative practical implications in the promotion of equality of opportunity for Travellers and in the elimination of discrimination experienced by Travellers' (Equality Authority, 2006: 8). However, the Irish government does not officially recognise Travellers as an ethnic group and refer to them as a 'cultural group'. In spite of this, since 2009 the government have indicated through a series of statements the possibility that ethnic group status may be recognised to Travellers¹⁰.

Language has been less central to matters of toleration, but issues have arisen with respect to Irish and English, the two historical and official languages of the state. Irish, the 'first official language', is spoken daily by a small percentage of the population, though knowledge at varying levels is more widely distributed. It is a compulsory school subject, is used in public

8. Pavee Point Website, www.pavee.ie

9. <http://www.nccri.ie/traveller.html>

10. See the combined Third and Fourth Reports by Ireland to the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

documentation and plays a significant role in cultural activities including music and literature. Until recently knowledge of Irish was required to pass the school Leaving Certificate, and to enter university or the public service; this requirement has been lifted in most areas, but continues to apply in some, mainly teaching, posts. Irish is given greater priority in the Gaeltacht – those areas of the country officially designated as Irish-speaking – where, however, the number of native speakers has steadily declined.

Immigrant minorities

As we have seen earlier, Ireland has experienced a strong net inward migration since the mid 1990s. Initially, the most significant groups of immigrants were returning Irish, or came from Britain and the USA, but by the end of the 1990s flows from other parts of the world came as workers in the expanding economy and as asylum seekers. After 2000 continuing economic expansion and the enlargement of the EU brought significant flows from Eastern Europe. These rose further when Ireland (together with the UK and Sweden) admitted workers from the 2004 accession countries without requiring work permits.

At the time of the last (2006) Census, there was a total of 420,000 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland, representing 188 different countries. We will focus especially on the groups which have made the strongest imprint on Irish society - three ethnic groups: the Poles, Nigerians and Chinese, and one religious group: Muslims.

Poles

Polish migration flows to Ireland started in the mid 1990s and were mainly motivated by economic considerations. After Poland joined the European Union in May 2004, Ireland was one of just three EU members to open its borders to Polish workers, and thus quickly became a key destination for Poles wishing to work abroad; in 2004 a website advertising Irish jobs in Polish received over 170,000 hits in its first day (RTE, 2004). Polish migrants to Ireland performed the classical 'chain migration': they came having been encouraged by someone who had already been staying in Ireland for some time; very often they had a place to live when they arrived, and in some cases they also had a job; in addition, as the issue of visa or work permits does not apply to Polish workers, they only need to register with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and receive a Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) to be entitled to work legally in Ireland (Kropiwek and King-O'Riain, 2006).¹¹

The Polish community now represents the second biggest group of 'non-Irish nationals' in Ireland (after UK nationals). A total of 63,276 Poles were living in Ireland in April 2006 – almost 90% arrived in 2004 or later (CSO, 2008). While Poles appear to account for a significant number of those who have left in the post-Tiger period, Polish people still live in every town and city in Ireland, and in some towns make up a significant proportion of the population.

11. The PPSN is a personal reference number used for access to public services, tax authorities and for health and social benefits.

The Polish community is possibly the community that has established itself the most strongly as a community and Polish presence is quite visible in Irish society. The growing number of Poles in Ireland has led to the provision of a

number of media outlets catering to them. Newspapers include the *Polska Gazeta* and a section in Dublin's Evening Herald entitled '*Polski Herald*'. Polish, although not officially an established subject in the school curriculum, can be taken as part of the Irish Leaving Certificate examination (as is the case with all official languages of the European Union)¹². During the 2007 Polish general election, Polish parties campaigned in Ireland and three voting locations were set up in Dublin, Cork, and Limerick (RTE, 2007).

The overall perception of the community is generally positive – Poles are thought to be good workers and reliable, like the Irish they are fervent Catholics, good drinkers and share a common past of fighting against an empire - however there are many accounts of being discriminated against in terms of wages (Roos, 2006). In addition, while well integrated into the wider society, and blending in as white Europeans, Poles tend to live together, socialise together, they have their own media, their own food shops, etc. A significant proportion of the community does not speak English and tends to see Ireland as a 'temporary' home, and so many do not feel the need to learn (Lejman, 2006).

Nigerians

Although Ireland did not colonise any country in Africa (or elsewhere) in the official sense, through its church missionaries it was considered a part of the alleged western 'civilizing mission' in Africa and thus has always entertained strong links with the continent (Rolston and Shannon, 2002; Ugba, 2003). Africans' reasons for coming to Ireland have changed overtime; from the 1950s to the mid-1990s, (the few) Africans in Ireland were mainly students, visitors, or specialized workers including doctors, and nurses. They were reasonably accepted, probably because of their very small numbers and the temporary nature of their stay (Mutwarasibo, 2002).

At the time of the 2006 Census, however, a total of 16,300 Nigerians were living in Ireland – an increase of 82 % on the 2002 figure of 8,969 - they now represent the 4th largest 'non-Irish national' community (CSO, 2008).

The African/Nigerian presence in Ireland – and especially in Dublin – is now very visible and for instance, so many Africans have set up grocery stores on historic Moore Street that it is known as 'Little Africa'. As the main 'visible' minority, several issues regarding negative representations, stereotyping, incivilities, discrimination and racism have arisen. A small section within Irish society sees Africans generally as scroungers, illegal immigrants, and so on. According to Mutwarasibo (2002) this is partly a reflection of the images portrayed by some sections of the media that have tended to cover stories on the cost of looking after asylum seekers or the crimes committed by a minority within the immigrant population. As Nigerians were the greatest section of asylum seekers this increased their 'negative' visibility (Ruhs 2004; Coakley and Mac Einri, 2007).

Prior to 2004, some highly publicized cases of African women arriving in the latter stages of pregnancy supposedly to avail of the provision within Irish law that children born on Irish soil had a right to Irish citizenship were perceived by the government and some section of the population as unacceptable (Ruhs, 2004). This also led to a 'racial targeting' of African women and, by extension of the African community in Ireland – according to some (i.e.,

12. <http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ex&sc=eu>

Lentin, 2003; 2004; Luibhéid, 2004) Africans challenge Ireland's conflation of national and racial identity and Nigerians, as the largest and most active and 'visible' group, have become the focus of discrimination as a result.

Chinese

From the 1950s to the 1970s the majority of Chinese immigrants originated from Hong Kong and many Chinese immigrants first travelled to Great Britain before travelling to Ireland. During the 1980s Malaysian Chinese came to Ireland primarily as students, however, it is only since 2002 that people from mainland China have started to come in greater numbers and to open Chinese restaurants. Research on Chinese immigrants in the Republic of Ireland is minimal and most of the academic interest has focused on the Chinese students rather than on the global community (Yau, 2007). Chinese students have been coming to Ireland in significant numbers since 1998, mainly as language students but also as third level students. This inward migration was greatly facilitated by a decision in 2000 to allow all non-EEA students to work part time to help finance their studies. However, in 2005 restrictions were introduced which meant that only full time students on third level courses of at least one year duration were allowed to work (Wang and King-O'Riain 2006).

A total of 11,161 Chinese people were reported as living in Ireland in 2006 - an increase of 91% on the 2002 figure of 5,842 - making them the 7th largest 'non-Irish national' minority community, though estimates suggest that the numbers are considerably larger.

Chinese are possibly the most 'isolated' minority community: they mainly develop contacts, friendships and support networks within their own community, do not generally socialise in pubs and have their own media. The major newspapers are CNewsxpress and the Shining Emerald Newspaper and there is a Chinese radio station called Chinatown Radio. As a result, Chinese people are still isolated from mainstream Irish society and have parallel communities to the mainstream. However, unlike the Poles or Eastern European generally, Chinese cannot 'blend in' society easily: most are not Catholic and they are racialised as 'non-white' and clearly a 'visible' minority in Ireland (King-O'Riain, 2008). On the other hand, according to Yau (2007), because of the 'black-white dichotomous framework in Irish society', Chinese can actually become 'invisible'. In addition, in many cases, their immigration status severely limits Chinese people's freedom - they cannot apply for jobs freely because of the work permit system. As non-white, non-Catholic, non-EU immigrants Chinese tend to report more experiences of racism both at work and on the street.

Muslims

Muslims are another rapidly growing minority, one which is potentially 'visible' and which may be the only 'new religious minority' with the potential to truly challenge Irish society. Compared with other EU countries, especially the neighbouring UK, the Muslim community in Ireland includes a great variety of ethnic and national origins including Malaysia, Somalia, South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Bosnia and Pakistan. Muslims in Ireland also have a distinctive social and economic background as 'the majority of Muslims that

came to Ireland already had a solid background and education. They were doctors, engineers, business people and students. It made it easier for them to integrate and become part of the community' (Fitzgerald, 2006).

In 1976 the first mosque and Islamic Centre in Ireland was opened in Dublin. The ICCI now hosts the Muslim National School, a state funded primary school with an Islamic ethos.

According to the 2006 Irish census, there are 32,539 Muslims living in the Republic of Ireland, representing almost a 70% increase over the figures for the 2002 census (19,147) (CSO, 2007). Islam is a minority religion in Ireland, and, in terms of numbers, is relatively insignificant; although Muslims can claim to be the third largest faith group in Ireland (BBC, 2007). However the Muslim community is an important part of the growing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in Ireland.

The Muslim community is well organised with a number of mosques, some of which have many hundreds of people participating in Friday prayers and others attracting only a small number of people, two Muslim primary schools established under the Department of Education and many societies. There are also several student Islamic societies (ISOC) in universities all across Ireland. In 1992 Moosajee Bhamjee became the first - and to date only - Muslim Teachta Dála (Member of Irish Parliament).

The experience of living in Ireland has been generally positive for Muslims. One of the spokespersons for the Islamic Centre, Ali Selim (2005), argues that the Muslim community has integrated well into Irish society and has avoided the assimilation model, preserving their faith and way of life. There are sporadic incidents related to racism/Islamophobia. Typical incidents relate to verbal abuse and other forms of harassment and disrespect rather than physical assaults or criminal damage. This can increase at times of heightened global tensions. In particular, the NCCRI Racist Incident Reporting Procedure reported in 2001 that almost one fifth (20%) of all incidents recorded between May and October 2001, were directly related to September 11th.¹³

As Muslim schools are accommodated within the state funded system, there have not been contentious issues about separate schooling. Many Muslim children attend other schools, and there is as yet, no post-primary Muslim school. Thus Muslim students can encounter a number of issues e.g. food, prayer and hijab. There have been over the past few years some issues regarding headscarves. Many schools allow the wearing of the hijab, but some do not. In September 2008, the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Integration jointly agreed recommendations on school uniform policy. The recommendations were that: 1) the current system, whereby schools decide their uniform policy at a local level works and should be maintained; 2) no school uniform policy should exclude students of a particular religious background from seeking enrolment or continuing their enrolment in a school; 3) schools, when drawing up uniform policy, should consult widely in the school community; and 4) schools should take note of the Equal Status Acts before setting down a school uniform policy. They should also be mindful of the Education Act, 1998 - this obliges boards of management to take account of the principles and requirements of a democratic society and have respect and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

13. National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)

The first comprehensive poll of Muslim opinion in Ireland was carried out in 2006 for the Irish Independent/RTE Primetime and revealed that the vast majority of Muslims living in Ireland have integrated successfully into society and strongly reject Islamic extremism (Byrne, 2006). However it also showed that a minority holds more extreme views. Among younger people, More than a third (36%) would prefer Ireland to be ruled under Sharia law, while 37% would like Ireland to be governed as an Islamic state. It also found 28% of young Muslims aged between 16 and 26 believe violence for political ends is sometimes justified. These contrasting views suggest that there may be important cleavages within the Muslim-Irish community.

Sikhs

Finally, another religious minority, much smaller in size but also, to a certain extent increasingly 'visible' in Irish society, should be mentioned: the Sikhs. It is impossible to find an exact number for members of the Sikh community in Ireland as the category did not appear in any of the population Censuses and, while it is possible to 'write-in' a particular religion on the form, it does not seem that (many) people do as the term 'Sikh' does not appear at all in any of the Census findings. However, there are approximately 2,000 Sikhs in Ireland ranging from children to the very elderly.¹⁴ They are primarily of Punjabi descent and the main community lives in the Dublin area, but there are also small communities in Cork, Clare, Limerick, Sligo and Roscommon. The only Sikh public place of worship (Gurdwara) in Ireland is based in Dublin. Besides being a place of worship, it functions as an information and support centre for Sikh and Indian immigrants. The Irish Sikh Council was established in 2004.¹⁵

Following 9/11, (male) Sikhs in Ireland became more vulnerable to prejudice and racism because of their turban and full grown beard that often led misinformed people to equate Sikhs with followers of Bin Laden. Some faced not just verbal abuse but also suffered physical attacks on the streets of Dublin and in other areas.

In 2007 an issue arose in connection with a Sikh applicant for membership of the newly instituted Garda (Police) Reserve, to which minorities were invited to apply. The applicant, who had taken part in the training process was informed just before being commissioned that he would not be allowed to wear his turban with the uniform. This ruling diverged from the established practice in the United Kingdom, and gave rise to considerable discussion. The applicant said that he would not take up the post on the Garda Reserve.

Definitions of tolerance/acceptance/recognition-respect in Ireland

Given the drive to promote a Gaelic and Catholic Ireland that succeeded the foundation of the state, it may be argued that the idea of tolerance was not a central term in the discourse of diversity in Ireland. It is only in recent years that the idea of tolerating or even respecting moral and cultural diversity, in addition to religious tolerance, has become part of the mainstream discourse.

14. Health Services Intercultural Guide – Accessed 22.09.2010

15. <http://www.irishsikhcouncil.com/default.aspx>

Individual toleration was perhaps less recognised than collective toleration of specific, mainly religious minorities. In the Republic of Ireland, these were small and not regarded as a threat. Some structures of toleration for minorities were paralleled by official and popular attitudes that prioritised certain values, whether these were deemed to be prescribed by the Natural Law, Christian/Catholic teachings or an Irish way of life, whether democratically, or more likely, traditionally determined. Thus prohibitions on birth control, censorship of books, and prohibitions on divorce and homosexuality continued later than in many other western European states.

While the dominant position of Catholicism has been seen as a driver of intolerance of diverse religious perspectives, there is another view, which holds that because Ireland has traditionally been a religious society it may be more hospitable to religious minorities, and which has been expressed by members both of the Jewish and Muslim communities. While particular values were established in Irish institutions, officially promoting a particular view of Irish identity, in practice, practical accommodations were facilitated in areas of dispute.

The modernization of Ireland that has taken place over the last forty years has changed the conditions of tolerance considerably. Liberal reforms have removed most, though not all institutional restrictions on individuals. The consuming public debates through which these reforms emerged focused primarily on matters of individual, rather than groups/cultural diversity. Arguments in favour of a 'pluralist' society became more widely expressed from the 1960s onwards.

But tolerance of cultural or ethnic groups remains an issue. An indication of the grounds on which discrimination is likely to be a concern can be seen in the legal prohibition on discrimination in employment and services (from both the public and private sectors) on grounds of gender (including transsexuals), marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race (including nationality) and membership of the Traveller community, as well as religion (or lack thereof).

While education is deemed in the Constitution to be the responsibility of parents, the State finances free primary education. This was set up on a denominational basis, with the Catholic Church being the main organiser of schools at elementary and secondary level, with small numbers of Protestant and Jewish schools. Nearly all primary schools are denominational in their intake and management. As the numbers in other religious denominations grew, there was no institutional obstacle to their setting up schools supported by the state. But a different strand of education is provided through multi-denominational schools, emerging in the late 1970s to meet 'a growing need in Irish society for schools that recognise the developing diversity of Irish life and the modern need for democratic management structures'.¹⁶ The role of religion in schools and especially the role of the Catholic Church in managing schools has been an increasingly contentious issue.

Children of immigrants and non-nationals make up 10% of the primary school population and 8% of the post primary school population (ESRI, 2009). These represent many nationalities and religions. In this context, a new set of guidelines for Catholic secondary schools to deal with students

16. See http://www.educatetogether.ie/1_educate_together/whatiseducatetogether.html.

of other faiths was circulated in September 2010 after several Catholic schools asked for clarity on how to embrace other religions while still maintaining their Catholic ethos (Donnelly, 2010).

In Ireland the concepts 'tolerance' and/or 'toleration' are not noticeably articulated in the debates about diversity, and these concepts are actually seldom used. Interestingly, the term 'tolerance' is not used in most 'official' documents or policies which tend to refer instead to notions such as equality, interculturalism, accommodation of differences and, most of all, 'integration'

Since Ireland's migration turn in the late 1990s/early 2000s, the Irish Government has taken several measures in response to the changes and increasing diversity in Irish society. A 'Know Racism' campaign, to stimulate awareness of racism and respect for cultural diversity was launched in 2001, followed by the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR) 2005-2008, designed to provide a strategic direction for a more intercultural inclusive society in Ireland. Support for national and local strategies promoting greater integration in workplaces, the police service, the health service, the education system, the arts and within local authorities was provided.

New structures have also been put in place to address the challenges of immigration to Ireland. In April 2005, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) was established to provide a 'one stop shop' in relation to asylum, immigration, citizenship and visas. In 2007 the Government appointed the first Minister of State for Integration and established the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI) to develop and co-ordinate integration policy across Government departments, agencies and services. In 2008, the OMI published *'Migration Nation: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management'* setting out the key principles of state policy with regard to integration: 1) a partnership approach between the Government, and civil society, 2) strong links between integration policy and wider state social inclusion measures, 3) a clear public policy focus that avoids the creation of parallel societies, and 4) a commitment to effective local delivery mechanisms that align services to migrants with those for indigenous communities.

Importantly, unlike in many other EU states, non-citizens enjoy political rights of various kinds in Ireland. On the one hand, all EU citizens are entitled to vote and stand in local and European elections, but voting and standing in local elections had been extended to all legally resident foreigners in Ireland independently of this EU provision. Ireland also grants reciprocal national voting rights to British citizens, which allows them to vote in national elections, but not referendums and presidential elections. Fanning and O'Boyle (2010) have recently observed that 'high levels of immigration to Ireland have left an impact on the economy and society, but arguably less of an impact on politics'. Studies have shown that prior to both the 2004 local government elections and the 2007 general election, Irish political parties made few efforts to either attract the support of immigrant voters or to encourage immigrants to get involved in party politics.¹⁷ This 'openness in principle' but lack of concrete measures nevertheless translated into forty-four immigrant candidates contesting the 2009 local government elections - and four being elected.

17. See Fanning et al. (2004); Fanning et al. (2007)

Contemporary debates about how 'tolerant' Irish society is have often related to the idea that the Irish, having been for centuries a nation of emigrants, know what it feels like to be a foreigner in a new country and can not only understand immigrants' experiences and difficulties but also empathise with their tribulations. The evidence with regard to this is mixed.

Ireland's new ethnic and cultural 'diversity' has been relatively well perceived, it has been seen as an 'enrichment' and a 'revitalization' of society and overall the experience of most migrant communities is a 'positive' one. However, there are also concerns that there might be 'too much' diversity which has potentially negative implications for Irish society and 'Irishness'. Institutional responses to issues of toleration with respect to the immigrant minorities have focused on themes of anti-racism and interculturalism. Racism has been identified as an issue in Irish society, but the extent of racism is a matter of debate. Several studies and surveys from the 1990s onwards have consistently found a significant minority who held hostile attitudes to 'the other'.

In November 2006 an ESRI study explored the experience of racism and discrimination of work permit holders and asylum seekers in Ireland – it showed that:

- 35% of the migrants sampled reported experiencing harassment on the street, in public places or on public transport.
- Among those entitled to work, insults or other forms of harassment at work was the second most common form of discrimination, with 32% of work permit holders reporting this.
- Black Africans experienced the most discrimination of all the groups studied, in the work domain, in public places, in pubs/restaurants and in public institutions.
- Asylum seekers were much more likely to report discrimination than work permit holders (McGinnity et al., 2006).

Two other reports indicate that discrimination in work and other areas is experienced particularly by sub-Saharan Africans, and that immigrant children experience bullying at school (FRA 2009; Smyth et al., 2009).

The main findings of a Special Barometer survey revealed a more positive and optimistic picture (Eurobarometer, 2009). It showed that people in Ireland tend to have a fairly diversified circle of friends and acquaintances in terms of religion, disability and sexual orientation. However, results also showed that Irish people mixed less with people from a different ethnic background than respondents from other Member States did.

In all these surveys, an important issue is that both the level and the nature of discrimination – and, conversely, of 'tolerance' – vary across different types of migrant or ethnic minority groups. Under current conditions the principal groups that are likely to be seen as subject to prejudice and intolerance are Travellers and immigrants of different race or colour - it could be argued that these are the two groups who contradict the 'ideal' of Irishness as 'white, Catholic and settled' the most.

A body of work argues that identity in Ireland is indeed 'racialised', a phenomenon (if not a process) that originates in the country's history of colonisation, oppression, struggle and threat and has led to a necessary 'narrow'

definition of 'authentic' Irishness, more 'exclusive' than 'inclusive', and which has precluded and now negates diversity among its members.¹⁸ As a result, in this view Ireland can only 'accommodate' diversity and not 'integrate' it within its definition of the nation or its definition of identity/Irishness; hence the lack of references to 'multiculturalism' in Ireland, and this transpires at the level of the institutions of the state (Tannam, 2002).

Concluding remarks

A context and driver for recent developments in toleration and of the discourse of toleration, and one whose importance it is hardly possible to overestimate, has been the evolution of the peace process between Protestants and Catholics on the island, and in Northern Ireland in particular, as well as between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and the Republic and the United Kingdom. A second context and driver has been the area of sexual morality, from the increasing acceptance of unmarried mothers, to the admission of divorce and the tolerance of lesbian and gay sexuality, up to the recognition of civil partnerships in 2011.

Ireland's experience of large-scale immigration and cultural diversity began later than in most other west European countries – taking place only in the last twenty years – and immigrant minorities still represent a relatively new phenomenon. In 1996 Ireland reached its migration 'turning point'; a decade later, in 2006, non-Irish nationals represented approximately 10% of the population. While this change has already posed certain issues of integration and accommodation, many of the claims and challenges deriving from cultural diversity have yet to arise.

The pattern of diversity emerging in Ireland is distinctive in a number of ways. Its long history as a country of emigration and recent transformation into a destination of choice for immigrants distinguish it from most EU member states. Ireland has never been a colonial power; its migrants do not come from countries it had previously occupied, although some come from regions in which Irish missionaries were active in the western colonisation enterprise. Ireland did not have a guest worker programme in the 1950s and 60s, and therefore did not go through a process of coming to terms with the fact of a permanent migrant population that this entailed. As immigration is still a recent phenomenon in Ireland, the main focus is still on 'newcomers' or 'new communities' rather than second and third generations. The great bulk of migrants comes from within the European Union and includes a significant contingent of returning Irish migrants. The newcomers are predominantly of working age, and tend to be well educated and highly skilled.¹⁹

It is also notable that increased immigration coincided with a period of economic prosperity, so that economic competition between the native population and migrants may have been less evident than under the conditions of recession that later came to prevail, and less liable to arouse fears of the potentially negative impact of the newcomers. These factors may account for the fact that Ireland has not seen the emergence of any real right wing, anti-immigrant party, or indeed any significant political campaign or protest against immigrants as a reaction to its recent

18. See Lentin and McVeigh (2002); Ruth (1988)

19. Nearly three quarters of persons from the EU 15 (excluding Ireland and the UK) are educated to third level, and the equivalent figure for persons from the rest of the world is over 50% (CSO, 2008)

large-scale immigration. This is not to discount the evidence for significant underlying levels of racial discrimination.

It is noteworthy, also, that there has not been a strong emphasis on the 'security' issue connected with migration and diversity, unlike in other countries (UK, France for example), by either political parties or Government. Nor has 'Muslim radicalisation' come to the fore (so far at least) in Ireland. As we have seen, the Muslim community in Ireland is quite different in terms of origins and socio-demographic composition from that in other EU countries. This, and the fact that the Irish Government and institutions have sought to establish a dialogue with the Muslim community and have allowed for some accommodation of religious practices might be seen as the two main reasons for the absence of either major claims or problems with regard to Islam in Ireland.

Among the new religious minorities, Sikhs have encountered some difficulties and lack of understanding regarding the observance of their religious practices; this made the headlines in 2007 and 2008. On both occasions, the problems concerned the wearing of the turban – both gave rise to considerable debate, and neither was accommodated. But perhaps the most recurrent challenge to principles of toleration and acceptance arise with respect to Ireland's indigenous cultural minority, the Travellers, in connection with their status as an ethnic group, the issue of halting sites and educational provision.

Ireland has had to generate immigration and integration policies against a background of rapid change, limited experience, and, until recently, a largely monocultural society. There was no official 'planning process' regarding immigration, and it has been argued that, initially, and for a number of years, Ireland lacked a coherent integration policy and that 'the dominant economic ethos of *laissez faire* translated into an amalgam of piece-meal policy statements and reactive policy responses to immediate issues' and to a certain attitude of 'welcome if you fit our national interest' (Boucher, 2008: 22).

The language of toleration has not been prominent in discussions of diversity. From a historical context in which the toleration of diversity as permission was seen as suspect, Ireland has evolved to a situation in which 'mere' tolerance as permission, or even respect, are seen as inadequate responses to diversity. Rather the official emphasis has been on integration of diverse religious and cultural communities now present in Ireland, framed in terms of 'interculturalism', defined in Ireland by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism as the 'development of strategy, policy and practices that promote interaction, understanding, respect and integration between different cultures and ethnic groups on the basis that cultural diversity is a strength that can enrich society, without glossing over issues such as racism' (NCCRI, 2006: 29). This emphasis on interculturalism as a strategy for integration and social cohesion again distinguishes Ireland from other EU countries whose focus has been on either assimilation or multiculturalism. Yet the development of institutional and practical toleration, as well as attitudes of toleration, has been mixed. It may be speculated whether the late arrival of immigrant cultural diversity will or will not allow new approaches to tolerance, and lessons from other countries' experience to be applied.

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