

Irish Women's Lives in the United States, c.1850-1914

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Abstracts

Short Abstract

This work examines the lives and wellbeing of Irish women in the United States from 1850 until 1914, encompassing the end of the famine and the age of mass European migration. Irish migration in this period has been the subject of a large body of research, but existing studies have focused primarily on men, despite Irish female migrants often outnumbering male migrants in the late nineteenth century. The decision to emigrate in this period has frequently been explained by wage differentials between Ireland and destination countries, but this was only one factor in a multifaceted process. The importance of the family and the home is usually overlooked, despite their centrality to the decision to emigrate; and insufficient attention has been paid to how the experiences and circumstances of Irish émigrés changed over time. Most glaringly, the particular experiences of female migrants have not been given sufficient attention, with the result that our knowledge of this exceptional group of women is scanty, and their seminal impact on the broader history of Irish emigration is underplayed.

This thesis takes a new and innovative approach to Irish emigration research, an approach which questions many of the assumptions underlying existing analysis. It does so in four main ways. First, this thesis places women at the centre of the analysis, considering their life in Ireland and, for emigres, their life in the United States. Second, it adopts a broad approach to wellbeing that extends beyond the typical and androcentric focus on real wages. Third, it considers how the lives of Irish women evolved over their life course, as workers, wives, mothers and widows. Fourth, it adopts a multi-level approach which combines

numbers with narratives. The former includes United States micro-census data which provides information on *all* individuals in 1880, allowing for a new, national and comparative picture of women's lives. The latter includes parliamentary papers, newspaper articles, philanthropic studies of urban life, and charity reports. Moreover, this thesis employs letters of Irish women, to extrapolate how these women themselves perceived their own lives.

Through this examination, this thesis shows the multidimensional nature of women's wellbeing, and how women's lives often deteriorated as migrant women aged. Although many women found independence and wellbeing in the US in their youth, many older women were left alone and destitute. Yet these women and their voices are central to our understanding of the history of Ireland, migration, and the making of the modern America.

Long Abstract

This thesis examines the lives and wellbeing of Irish women in the United States from 1850 until 1914 which encompasses the end of the famine and the age of mass European migration. Migration was embedded in the life of Irish people by the second half of the nineteenth century. Analyses of the Irish Diaspora have focused on men although Irish female migrants often outnumbered male migrants during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Migration is frequently explained by wage differentials between Ireland and destination countries although this was only one factor that entered the migration decision. Moreover, the role of migrants is normally examined through the lens of their work in the formal labour market despite the importance of the home and the family. And the elderly are banished to the periphery of analysis – just as many were isolated on the periphery of society in the nineteenth century.

Through its innovative approach, this thesis questions many of the assumptions underlying existing analysis of Irish emigration research. This approach takes four forms. First, this thesis places women at the centre of the analysis, considering their life in Ireland and, for those who migrated, their life in the United States. Second, it adopts a broad approach to wellbeing that extends beyond the typical and androcentric focus on real wages. Third, it considers how the lives of Irish women evolved over their life course, this included working in the formal labour market, but they were also wives, mothers and widows. Fourth, it adopts al multi-level approach which combines numbers with narratives. The former includes United States micro-census data which provides information on *all* individuals in 1880, allowing for a new, national and comparative picture of women's lives. The latter includes parliamentary papers, newspaper articles, philanthropic studies of urban life, and charity reports. Central to the methodological approach was to find and use documents for,

about and by women. This in itself is unusual in research on Irish emigration, but essential for this thesis and very much in line with women's history research more generally. It pays particular attention to institutional records, both religious and municipal. Although told through the voice of the powerful, these records provide important information about the experiences of women who engaged with, and resided in, these institutions. By reading these documents against the grain, historians can ask new questions, and build a more complete picture. Moreover, letters written and received by Irish women are central to this thesis. Correspondence between women, friends and family, both in New York, across the US, and back in Ireland are deeply valuable because they allow historians a glimpse into women's domestic world. It will be shown how the 'emigrant letter' was more than mere correspondence, it was a channel of intimacy and proximity for Irish women living far from home. By employing such sources, this thesis presents a picture not only of Irish women's lives, but shows how these Irish women migrants are essential to our understandings of nineteenth-century migration, Ireland, and the United States.

This thesis is organised as follows. Chapter One introduces the current literature on Irish wellbeing, migration, and gender relations, as well as the thesis research question, and methodology. Chapter Two uses parliamentary papers, published census reports and institutional data to argue that women in Ireland had rising aspirations but these aspirations were increasingly unfulfilled as women had limited opportunities within the country**.** Women worked in a narrow range of occupations which they were expected to relinquish on marriage, apart from rural women who were expected to continue to toil on family farms. For many, a reasonable quality of life (or for some, basic survival) was dependent on marriage and the prospect of becoming the matriarch of a household. Yet Irish marriage rates were comparatively low and took place at a relatively late age. Marriage and the shift into full-time

housework may have helped to fulfil the aspirations of some women as it afforded them power beyond the realm of the market economy. Others, however, were hampered by a society that stressed women's domestic duties as wives and mothers – duties that involved hard physical and emotional labour. For those that desired a husband and a family, the pathways to marriage were difficult and uncertain, especially as the rise of a patriarchal land system generated intrafamilial tensions and encouraged delayed marriages.

Rising aspirations were fuelled by economic growth and increasing levels of education but the opportunities to realise these aspirations were constrained and limited. By the 1880s education and emigration became complementary rather than alternative routes of betterment for Irish women**.** Women's agency was constrained by structural forces, mediated by cultural and religious, social and economic norms, and influenced by personal and familial circumstances which collided to shape women's life choices. And for many women this led them to leave Ireland. The aspirations of women were fed by emigration which also acted as a channel to realise such aspirations. As Irish people emigrated, experiences and information flowed back to Ireland suggesting that life was better abroad. For many Irish women, with burdensome domestic responsibilities and limited opportunities in the formal labour market, emigration seemed a route to achieve a better and life.

The challenge of physically relocating across the Atlantic Ocean is examined in Chapter Three. This chapter uses emigrant letters and (hitherto unexamined) records of the Irish Mission at Watson House to show that multiple factors influenced the decision to leave and to embark on a difficult and arduous journey. Women's ability to leave Ireland was contingent on individual circumstances, familial need, and institutional intervention. Young single women's labour was recognised as essential for familial wellbeing, but their presence

within the home in Ireland was not always welcome. By moving abroad, many young and single women were able to fulfil their obligations to their family who remained at home in Ireland. Yet, it is clear that older women, married women, pregnant single women, unmarried mothers also undertook the stressful, laborious journey abroad. Many negotiated with friends and family, as well as institutions in both Ireland and the US, to help them on their journey and to settle into their new country.

Chapters Four and Five provide a new perspective of the Irish migrant experience in the US, through the analysis of micro-census data. This approach allows for a fine-grained analysis of Irish women's demographic, household, and occupational structure, and also allows comparisons to be drawn between Irish migrant women with other comparator groups, including Irish men, white and Black American women, and other migrant groups. Chapter Four provides the national perspective and Chapter Five focuses on New York which was the main location where the Irish settled in the United States during the nineteenth century. New York was a place where the Irish, and especially Irish women, juggled the processes of continuity and change. Continuity as parts of New York had high concentrations of Irish who followed many of the customs and practices of the Irish in Ireland. Change, as the Irish had moved from a rural, Catholic-dominated country under British rule to an urban city in a fledgling democracy. The lives of Irish women, as with many migrants in nineteenth century New York, were difficult and impoverished. The Irish in New York not only had to contend with poverty but also with prejudice and bigotry, albeit not on the scale of the entrenched racism faced by Black Americans.

Yet despite these challenges, there were opportunities for Irish women. The analysis of census data reveals the sheer presence of Irish women in the US labour market, above all in

the country's industrial and mercantile capital. Thanks to their transferable skills, young Irish women dominated, often to the detriment of Black American women. Irish women were also found dominating the marriage market too, even in New York. Paid labour was supposed to be the precursor, rather than the alternative, to marriage. The ultimate long-term goal of migration was, for many, to marry and have children. As this thesis demonstrates, Irish women's motive for migration was multi-layered, with short-term and long-term goals.

To expand on these findings, the quantitative analysis of the census data is combined with archival sources which allow the women to speak for themselves. Uniquely, this analysis is framed through the life course. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight examine the Irish immigrant in New York, as young, middle-aged, mature and elderly women, to understand how the goal of migration matched with the reality of women's lives.

Chapter Six focuses on young women and shows that so-called 'invisible Irish women' were very visible in the formal labour market. Many who were young and unmarried worked in domestic service, a job that offered wages with board and lodgings. This chapter shows that employment opportunities were limited as the labour market was highly segmented by sex and migrant status. Women's domestic service provided the foundations of urban Irish identity in the United States. Such work offered some independence – albeit often living in the employer's home; and some agency – albeit constrained by gender norms and a labour market segmented by migrant status. But as the letters written by young Irish women reveal, life for many was better than the alternative of staying at home in Ireland – as in New York, they were (mostly) employed, relatively well paid and led full social lives.

Chapter Seven shows that life for many Irish middle-aged women was hard and precarious. Marriage might have been the goal, but it was not much of a reward for many migrant women. They were often married to men who had unstable jobs with relatively low wages. Their work in the home was arduous and they raised large families – as was the case for most married women in Ireland. Many married women continued to work in the formal labour market, but their employment was restricted to a narrow range of occupations. Their wages were essential for the household finances but, even when combined with the wages of husbands and children, were often insufficient to keep their families above the breadline. Analysing records of institutions in New York, including American Protestant and Irish Catholic charities, provide insights into how many women carefully used institutions such as religious charities as a temporary means of support as they navigated their families through difficult times. This navigation was often to the detriment of women's personal wellbeing, as shown by some of the painful letters sent to the New York Foundling Hospital. Some women remained single; but although they did not embrace the shackles of marriage and motherhood their lives often became difficult. Remaining single was stigmatised, job opportunities were limited and wages tended to fall with age. Whatever their marital status, Irish women were living difficult lives in their middle age.

Chapter Eight shows that the wellbeing of many Irish women deteriorated as they entered old age. The means of survival were few and the means of prosperity were fewer. Irish women endured three main difficult paths into old age. First, some continued to work in the formal labour market. The labour market, segmented by sex and by migrant status, was further segmented by age – work for old and older women was largely limited to domestic service, laundry and peddling in its various forms. The work was hard, it was often irregular and unstable, and wages tended to fall with age. The wages of many women were insufficient

to provide then with a basic level of subsistence and they often had children to feed and house – they lived in a 'starvation regime.'

Family and social networks provided a second means of support. The prosperity of a family with children who were working was much higher than that of a family with children who were not working. But the level of prosperity of the former was often ephemeral as children grew older, left home and started their own families. Some children who had started their own families continued to support their parents, particularly if their mother was widowed. Such support was, however, not uniform, and letters between women and institutions reflect the desperate difficulties faced by Irish women as ageing migrants in a relentless city. Without the support from their families in Ireland, yet disconnected from their children in the US, many elderly Irish women were caught between the world they grew up in, and the world they now lived in.

A third - and often the final - route to survival was recourse to help from institutions. The demand for help from institutions was large, particularly from old Irish women who had very few other sources of help, as shown by an analysis of the New York Alms House admissions data. Similarly, the supply of institutional support was widespread, helped by funding from migrants and the mission creep of the Catholic church. Life in institutions was often grim and unhygienic and accessing support was not a simple market transaction – it needed skills and acumen. But a careful analysis of records of the New York Alms House show how many Irish women had accumulated the skills to negotiate with institutions: through engagement with the Catholic church; by navigating the migration journey, often alone; and though a lifetime of engagement with institutions. The testimony of elderly Irish women reported by the Alms House Warden reveal how women's lives often collapsed into

poverty and precarity. But articulating their often-appalling living conditions and their sense of abandonment in times of crisis, Irish migrant women continued to advocate for themselves; their belief in their right to not merely exist, but to live and to flourish.

As discussed in the conclusions in Chapter Nine, the wellbeing of Irish women in the United States was multidimensional. Women's expectations and capabilities shifted throughout their life course, contingent on multiple factors, from family and relationships, through to occupation, age, and location. Moreover, emigration was not simply an 'escape' from a country reeling in the aftermath of the famine as women sought a better life abroad. Many young Irish women found independence and a better quality of life in the United States than they would have achieved in Ireland. But their quality of life deteriorated with age, and many older women were left alone and destitute. Yet, one characteristic that persisted throughout Irish migrant women's lives was resilience.

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For Finn.

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Glossary

NYCMA	New York City Municipal Archives
NYHS	New York Historical Society
NYT	New York Times
TLRW	Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
TM	Tenement Museum

Conventions

The following conventions are followed in this thesis.

1. Comparator groups - the population of the United States has been disaggregated into the following birthplace group: United States; Canada and Canadian Territories; the Americas; Europe; England; Scotland; Wales; United Kingdom; Ireland; Asia; Africa; and Australasia. The United States birthplace group is also further disaggregated by race (Black and white). Not all of the categories are used in every table (as indicated in the text) as some birthplace groups are excluded where the absolute number in the category is low.
2. Age groups - the young were between 15 and 29 years; those in mid-life were between 30 and 44 years; the mature were those between 45 and 64 years; and the elderly were 65 plus.
3. Percentages - percentage points are rounded to the nearest integer throughout the text apart from the reporting of growth rates.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Margaret Nagle worked a long day. At 5.30 in the morning, she crept down the stairs of the New York townhouse in which she resided and worked to begin her morning chores: laying and lighting the kitchen fire, polishing the stove, sweeping and dusting the kitchen and downstairs rooms, and cleaning and sweeping the front steps. Next, Margaret prepared and served breakfast to her employer's family. While they ate, she rushed upstairs to make the beds, empty and clean the slops, basins, ewers and bottles, and ensure that each family member had fresh water in their room. Going back downstairs, she cleared the family's breakfast dishes and finally sat down to her own meal, but the respite was short. The rest of the day was spent cleaning, cooking, and clearing. Some eleven or twelve hours after rising, Margaret made her way back to her attic room[1] On some evenings, flopping down on her bed, she wrote a letter to her father back in County Cork, Ireland. These letters rarely mentioned her daily routine and the toils of a domestic servant in 1860s New York. Instead, she reassured her family that she was '*so far* very well pleased that I came over here.[2] Margaret Nagle's decision to migrate was not a mistake.

Millions of women like Margaret left Ireland in the nineteenth century. Between 1801 and 1921, at least 8 million people emigrated, with the mid-century famine accelerating emigration to unprecedented heights.[3] By the turn of the twentieth century, Irish diasporic communities could be found across the globe, from Australia to Argentina, from New York

[1] Based on the timetable outlined in Elizabeth Ellet, *The New Cyclopædia of Domestic Economy, and Practical Housekeeper* (Norwich CT, 1872), 42-44.
[2] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 26 March 1867, TLRW, AIA.077.
[3] Bernadette Whelan, 'Women on the Move: A Review of the Historiography of Irish Emigration to the USA, 1750-1900', *Women's History Review,* 24/6 (2015), 901. The famine took place between 1845 and 1852.

City to New Zealand. But of the many places the Irish settled, the most prominent diaspora community could be found in the United States. No other European country contributed as many emigrants to the US throughout the age of mass migration.[4] Unlike other European countries, however, this migration included a huge number of women, who made their way across the Atlantic – often alone – in order to start the next stage of their lives. Although throughout the early nineteenth century Irish women did not migrate to the US in the same numbers as Irish men, they were more migratory than any other group of European women.[5] The migration rates during the famine were broadly similar for men and women, but from 1871 onwards, the number of women arriving in the US from Ireland surpassed that of men.[6] These women were, moreover, likely to have come from the west of Ireland. Yet the history of nineteenth century Ireland and its migratory outflow remains implicitly and explicitly masculine. Women and women's agency are subsumed into grand narratives of the history of migration.

Migration from Ireland is often presented as a natural, almost pre-determined, phenomenon. As Jennifer Redmond has pointed out, water metaphors – 'a flood, a tide, a wave, a tsunami of people' – remain common, long after boats ceased to be the primary method of leaving Ireland. Such metaphors emphasise the fluid, leaky nature of Ireland's population, prone to drifting between shores.[7] The 'wave' reached its high tide with the

[4] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 901.

[5] Charlotte Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the USA in 1841: Part I. Emigration from the British Isles', *Population Studies*, 43/3 (1990), 360-361.

[6] Between 1871 and 1881, the ratio of Irish female migrants to Irish male migrants rose from 0.82 to 0.95; and increased further to 1.15 between 1891 and 1901. In the period between 1891 and 1901, 231,956 women left Ireland which was 30,386 more than men. The female/male emigration ratio for those leaving ports in County Mayo between 1876-85 was 1.2, rising to 1.75 between 1886-1905. Between 1871 and 1971 net female emigration outnumbered male; for every eight Irish men who left, ten Irish women did. See: Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 901.

[7] Jennifer Redmond, *Moving Histories: Irish Women's Emigration to Britain from Independence to Republic* (Manchester, 2018), 1.

famine. It was a 'trickle in the 1790s, a stream in the 1820s, a river in the 1840s, and a flood from the late 40s.'[8] The 'floods' or rates of migration have also been characterised as a rational utility-maximising response to Ireland's economic failures of the nineteenth century. Kevin O'Rourke, Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson have argued that as the country recovered economically from the famine, by the late nineteenth-century workers no longer needed to leave the country in search of a better life.[9] Rising national income and declining international wage differentials had stemmed the flow of emigration.

The characterisation of Irish migration in the post-famine period as a natural and almost automatic response to wage differentials robs migrants of agency and ignores the far more complex reasons that men, and perhaps especially women, chose to uproot themselves and move elsewhere. For a start, living standards measured solely by GDP and male real wages only tell a partial and patriarchal story of economic wellbeing, missing the non-traded economy (especially domestic work) and women's and children's wages.[10] Furthermore, while economic wellbeing is a crucial component of total wellbeing, the two are not synonymous. Health matters. Family matters. Social networks, communities, marriage markets, institutions, intergenerational welfare, safety, reputation – 'capabilities' and options

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[8] Sheridan Gilley and Roger Swift (eds), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), 1.

[9] Kevin O'Rourke, 'Emigration and Living Standards since the Famine', *Journal of Population Economics*, 8/4 (1995), pp. 407-421; Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, 'After the Famine: Emigration from Ireland, 1850-1913', *Journal of Economic History*, 53/3 (1993), 575-600; Kieran Kennedy, Thomas Giblin, and Deirdre McHugh, *The Economic Development of Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1988).

[10] Jane Humphries and Jacob Weisdorf, 'The Wages of Women in England, 1260-1850', *Journal of Economic* History, 75/2 (2015), 406. See also: Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social Change and Agrarian England 1660–1900* (Cambridge, 1985); Maxine Berg, 'What Difference Did Women's Work Make to the Industrial Revolution?', *History Workshop Journal*, 35/1, (1993), 22–44; Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, 'Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male-Breadwinner Family, 1790–1865', *Economic History* Review, 48/1 (1995), 89–117; Joyce Burnette, *Gender, Work and Wages in Industrial Revolution Britain* (Cambridge, 2008). Studies into Irish women's economic activity include: Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland 1890-1914* (Oxford, 1993); and Mary Daly, *Women and Work in Ireland* (Dublin, 1997). For a study of American women's historical economic activity see: Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana IL, 1997); and Claudia Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women* (Oxford, 1990).

– all matter.[11] The market and the rational male *homo economicus* are not 'sufficient metaphors for human experience.'[12] The assumption of a link between (rising) wellbeing and (declining) emigration rates in Ireland further obscures the experience of Irish women. Improvements in living conditions expressed in solely economic terms, clearly did not affect women and their migration patterns in the same way that they did men in Ireland.

There is, moreover, a disjuncture in the historiography. While some historians of the Irish economy have argued that living standards improved in the post-famine period, many historians of women have suggested this was to the detriment of women and gender relations within the country. Changes in inheritance practices, agricultural labour, and family structure 'drastically weakened' women's status and economic independence in post-famine Ireland.[13] The rising age of marriage and life expectancy as well as declining marriage rates combined with the continuation of large family sizes led many parents to view their daughters as 'unwelcome financial burdens.'[14] High emigration rates of young women reflected their declining status and their lack of value within their homeland during the second half of the nineteenth century.[15] If a woman had no dowry or earning prospects, such as in the west of Ireland where paid female employment had been in decline since the famine, then 'America was the singular choice.'[16] Living in Ireland led to an aspiration gap for women as their rising

[11] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford, 2001).

[12] Bourke, Husbandry to Housewifery, 1-2.

[13] Joseph Lee, 'Women and the Church since the Famine', in Margaret MacCurtain and Donnchadh Ó Corrain (eds), *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension* (Dublin, 1978), 37-38.

[14] Cara Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 2019), 17.

[15] Kenneth Connell, 'Catholicism and Marriage in the Century after the Famine', in Kenneth Connell (ed.), *Irish Peasant Society: Four Historical Essays* (Oxford, 1968), 113-161; Robert Kennedy, *The Irish: Emigration, Marriage and Fertility* (Berkeley CA, 1973); David Fitzpatrick, 'The Modernization of the Irish Female', in Paul Ferguson, Patrick O' Flanagan and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Rural Ireland: Modernization and Change 1600-1900* (Cork, 1997), 167-169; Rita Rhodes, *Women and the Family in Post-Famine Ireland: Status and Opportunity* (New York NY, 1992); Kerby Miller, with David Doyle and Patricia Kelleher, '"For Love and Liberty": Irish Women, Migration and Domesticity in Ireland and America, 1815-1920', in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide. Volume 4: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), 43.

[16] Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Abingdon, 2000), 139.

expectations encountered declining opportunities. Ruth-Ann Harris has concluded that 'the lack of incentive or ability to remain within their families, coupled with rising levels of education and social expectation, led large numbers of Irish women to seek opportunity by emigrating.'[17] According to David Fitzpatrick Irish women faced a 'practical choice between remaining "Irish" and becoming "modern"'.[18] As one woman migrant in New York explained in 1900, 'we came to this country to better ourselves.'[19]

Some historians have posited that women's emigration was not a simply a 'mere flight' from poverty, but a conscious rejection of the gender inequalities in Ireland's social, political and religious system.[20] From 1801 until 1921, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. While Ireland was given direct representation in the imperial British Parliament, it was considered subordinate. Ireland and its people were uniquely 'part of the metropolitan core while simultaneously remaining a crucial component of the imperial project' of British colonisation.[21] Irish women, according to Pauline Jackson, sought 'escape from an increasingly patriarchal society, whose asymmetrical development as a colony generated insufficient social space for women, even as wife and mother.'[22] Although expectations of

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[17] Ruth-Ann Harris, '"Come You All Courageously": Irish Women in America Write Home', *Éire-Ireland,* 36/1&2 (2001), 170.

[18] Fitzpatrick, 'The Modernization of the Irish Female', 163.

[19] Helen Campbell, *Prisoners of Poverty: Women Wage-Workers, Their Trades and Their Lives* (Boston MA, 1900), 225.

[20] Pauline Jackson, 'Women in 19th Century Irish Immigration', *International Migration Review,* 18/4 (1984), 1018.

[21] Christine Kinealy, 'At Home with The Empire: The Example of Ireland' in C. Hall and S.O. Rose (eds) *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), 78. Louise Ryan argues that the colonial relationship gave the Irish 'many social and political rights in Britain', but also reproduced negative stereotypes of the Irish as inferior and dependent on British rule. These stereotypes involved both national and gendered hierarchies, which positioned the English and Anglo-Irish Protestants as the 'masculine', 'powerful' elite, necessary to rule over the 'feminine', 'weak' Irish Catholics. See: Louise Ryan, 'Family Matters: (e)migration, Familial Networks and Irish Women in Britain', *Sociological Review*, 52/3 (2004), 353. For another useful discussion on race and Irish women in a British colonial context, see: Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race: Irish Immigrant and Southern Black Domestic Workers* (New Brunswick NJ, 2020), 38-49.

[22] Jackson, 'Women in 19th Century Irish Immigration', 1018.

and opportunities for women differed across the country, from the urban Protestant middle classes through to the rural Catholic labouring poor, women of all backgrounds were expected to conform to a domestic ideal.[23]

A time of 'increasingly intensive church-centred practice' for all denominations, the Catholic religion of the working-class majority emphasised a Tridentine parish-based administrative and devotional practice, and support of the religious order. [24] In Emmet Larkin's influential argument, the Catholic church strengthened Ireland's national identity in the post-famine period, as well as providing social, health and educational services that improved overall welfare of Ireland's general population.[25] By 1878, the church was 'characterised by a strong allegiance to Rome, a vast institutional presence through its control of Catholic education, health and welfare homes, a disciplined clergy under episcopal control, a remarkably high level of religious practice among the laity' and a constant link between the Catholic faith and an Irish nationalist political identity.[26] The spread of institutional Catholicism, however, only exacerbated women's loss of economic and family status. Institutions were authoritarian and patriarchal, and by the early twentieth century Ireland 'bolstered its patriarchal consensus by legislating against "deviant" female sexuality as well as creating oppressive Church/state-run institutions such as Magdalen asylums.'[27] Building

[23] Caitriona Kennedy, 'Women and Gender in Modern Ireland' in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton NJ, 2016), 367.

[24] Protestant denominations also experienced revivals particularly in Ulster. Eastern European Jewish immigrants also began to arrive in Ireland in bigger cities towards the end of the nineteenth century. See: Caitríona Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester, 2007), XIII. On the debate over whether this change led to a 'devotional revolution' see: Colin Barr and Daithí Ó Corráin, 'Catholic Ireland, 1740-2016' in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 69-75.

[25] Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75,' *American Historical Review*, 77/3 (1972), 625-652.

[26] Barr and Ó Corráin, 'Catholic Ireland, 1740-2016', 75.

[27] Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism*, p. 5; Eve Mahon, 'Ireland: A Private Patriarchy?', *Environment and Planning,* 26/8 (1994), 1278

on the works of Geraldine Meaney, Mary O'Dowd and Bernadette Whelan, Cara Delay has suggested that many single women saw emigration as a way to find independence, improved living and working conditions, and to reject the post-famine Catholic idealised version of motherhood.[28]

While those who study women in Ireland have identified the patriarchal push to women's emigration, studies of Irish women abroad have emphasised their ability to secure paid labour and live in (some level of) material comfort. Louise Ryan, Breda Gray, Ide O'Carroll, Bronwen Walter, Mary Hickman, Sharon Lambert and Mary Muldowney have focused on Irish female emigrants abroad and the 'unique nature' of the Irish female emigration phenomenon.[29] The most in-depth work on Irish women's emigration to the US in the second half of the nineteenth century have been conducted by Hasia Diner, Margaret Lynch-Brennan and Janet Nolan. Employing localised datasets, these have suggested that Irish women enthusiastically entered the paid labour market. In contrast to rural Ireland, Irish women in America could easily find work in service. Service became such an Irish profession that the stereotyped domestic 'Bridget' became a stock character, a central part of the American middle-class home and discourse.[30] Despite the arduous journey abroad and encounters of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice, Diner, Lynch-Brennan and Nolan have suggested that it was worthwhile, as it led to economic self-sufficiency, as well as the ability to make choices about marriage and children.[31] Nolan has concluded that as US domestics,

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[28] Delay, Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, p. 18; Geraldine Meany, Mary O'Dowd and Bernadette Whelan, *Reading the Irish Woman: Studies in Cultural Encounter and Exchange, 1714-1960* (Liverpool, 2013), 4.

[29] Redmond, *Moving Histories*, 4.

[30] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 907.

[31] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983); Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-193*0 (New York NY, 2009); Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington KY, 2009).

Irish women's 'lives after emigration surpassed those they could have expected at home… the young women who left Ireland between 1885 and 1920 were the first generation of Irish women to realize fully their own social and economic modernization as women.'[32] Financial independence from familial obligations has been portrayed as essential for freedom from patriarchal constraints – and Irish migrant women's ability to live better lives than those they left behind.

The conflation of 'better life' with female independence and autonomy needs clarifying. As Whelan has noted, women's ability to make personal decisions and to leave home depended on individual and familial circumstances, as well as family size, class, religion, economics, as well as gender.[33] Moreover, Irish women's migration was rarely a break with other Irish people or with the homeland. It was often financed, organised, and led by other female migrants.[34] They might have moved to new urban centres of the US north-east, but these centres were filled with other migrants, not only from the same country, but often the same county parish, who they often went onto marry.[35] Family ties back home were retained, remittances sent, funding the future passages of their sisters, cousins, nieces and friends. As migration scholars have noted, 'the ties, networks, and distinct identities that are forged between sending and receiving countries through constant flows of information, ideas, money, and goods' help create social, economic and cultural structures that aid and facilitate the migration process. These ties have generally been assumed to decrease the economic social, economic and psychological costs of migration.[36] The role of migrant networks and

[32] Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 95.
[33] Whelan,'Women on the Move', 901.
[34] Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 93.
[35] Gerard Moran, 'Retaining Their Irish Identity: Marriage and the Famine Irish in Five Points, New York, in the 1850s', *New Hibernia Review*, 25/3 (2021), 111-125.
[36] Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (London, 2014), 39.

enduring familial links complicate the story of independence and autonomy. Whelan has surmised that emigration provided women with the chance to prove their value to their families, both home and abroad, as both kin and workers.[37] Diner meanwhile has stated that women's move stemmed from the belief that America was the land of opportunity; and opportunity to help them support their families in Ireland. Migration did 'not represent a search for a new identity, nor did it constitute a break with the past.'[38] The impact of familial ties on women's ability to obtain wellbeing in the US is examined throughout this thesis.

Irish women did not migrate to the US to escape or avoid marriage. Although economic motives were paramount in the migration decision, Irish women in America had a higher rate of marriage compared with their counterparts back home, suggesting a desire to marry was itself a reason to leave.[39] Using local studies, Diner has suggested that married Irish women in America 'abandoned their jobs with the same zeal and ardour with which they had rushed into them as single women', and although they commenced their childbearing years later, they often had larger numbers of children than other women.[40] Gerard Moran has documented a high level of intermarriage amongst Irish migrant women and men, characterising this as an 'important avenue' of retaining Irish culture in their new urban setting.[41] However Diner has also concluded that many Irish women in urban America actually 'exchanged their roles as wage earner and income producer to that of wife and mother with a degree of circumspection.'[42] Nolan agreed that Irish female emigrants' marital fertility was 'high' – although she does not explain what 'high' means – and associated this

[37] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 901.
[38] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, xiv.
[39] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 47.
[40] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 52-54.
[41] Moran, 'Retaining Their Irish Identity', 112.
[42] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 69.

with a revival of pre-famine practices of early and universal marriage.[43] Diner and Nolan implied that it was life as a mother and wife *within* Ireland that was unattractive to Irish women but Timothy Guinnane has suggested that Irish women in America wanted smaller families and used contraception.[44] The multifaceted roles of domestic labour, as well as the gendered ideology that underpins it, remained central to Irish womanhood.

Public Irish institutions as well as private familial relationships also crossed oceans to the US. A majority of Irish who arrived in the US during and following the famine were Catholic. The role of Irish churches, particularly Catholic, in helping immigrants to settle and prosper abroad, 'if not always to assimilate', has been a major theme in Irish diaspora studies.[45] This aid contained contradictory strands. While the church hierarchy consistently condemned emigration, individual members of the Catholic clergy were actively involved in emigration assistance schemes or even migrated themselves, to the extent that some referred to a Irish Catholic 'spiritual empire' abroad.[46] In New York, the primary destination of Irish women, the number of women religious rose from 82 in 1848 to 2,846 in 1898.[47] The contrasting individual attitudes of the clergy towards emigration serves as a reminder of the interactive and dynamic relationships between many Irish people and the church as a spiritual, political, cultural and economic entity. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Irish Catholic women, both lay and religious and home and abroad, negotiated with and within the church, to improve living conditions. Cara Delay has argued that in Ireland a

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[43] Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*, 76.

[44] Timothy Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration, and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850-1914* (Princeton NJ, 1997), p. 264. Guinnane does not use comparator groups or define a 'large family.' His work on earlier census data manuscripts indicates that his estimate may be around seven children in Ireland.

[45] Sarah Roddy, *Population, Providence and Empire: The Churches and Emigration from Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Manchester, 2014), 6.

[46] Roddy, *Population, Providence and Empire*, 6.

[47] Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920* (Chicago IL, 2006), 3.

'powerful and determined body of lay women built on traditions of female empowerment to not only help create a popular modern Catholicism but also to complicate and challenge it.'[48] Meanwhile in the US, Maureen Fitzgerald has suggested that convents were the primary means through which working-class Irish Catholic women abroad gained public power, providing women with the means to articulate and make manifest its political agendas and social vision.[49] Although the extent to which 'public power' was commensurate with total wellbeing for Irish women is questionable, Fitzgerald's work underlines the need to consider how experiences of and perceptions on Irish womanhood and Irish Catholicity converged and diverged across time and space.

Research Approach

Much valuable scholarship has thus opened up a new focus on the migration of girls and women from Ireland. We know that it happened on a scale disproportionate to other female migrations of the nineteenth century; that the famine was a disrupter; that GDP and relative male wages are insufficient explanation. So, what did explain it? Historians have pointed to education, suggested that relative marriage prospects might be part of the story, as might community, family bonds, church and polity. Studies have tended to be local, based on small numbers, and only through the lens of *either* marital status *or* marriage. What is missing is the big picture – the story *en masse* – from beginning to end, meaning from Ireland to the United States, from childhood to old age.

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[48] Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism,* p. 10; Caitríona Clear, 'The Limits of Female Autonomy, Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds), *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Dublin, 1989), 16.

[49] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 3.

When all these girls and women left Ireland, what were they leaving behind? What structures and institutions facilitated or inhibited their emigration? When they arrived in the United States, where exactly did they fit in this, their new country? And while the decision to leave might be taken over a relatively short moment in time – possibly by someone else – its consequences were felt over a lifetime. This demands we think about the lifelong experience of Irish migrant women, and the impact their move had upon their families, past, present and future.

To this end, this thesis approaches women's migratory experiences in three novel ways. First, it takes a mixed-methods approach to assess the experience of migration and quality of life. Quantitative data provides the numbers and the scale of magnitude, qualitative sources provide insight into women's agency and the power dynamics that underpin demographic, household, and economic structures. Stories go where data cannot. Second, the research considers the obtainment of wellbeing – particularly through migration – as a dynamic and ongoing feature of Irish women's lives. Understandings of migration need to extend beyond the migration journey and the initial arrival. This research adopts a life-cycle approach to address this question: as young migrants arriving in the US; wives and workers; and as widows. It also considers the lives of those who were left behind. Third, this research is multi-level. It analyses how the migratory experience is shaped by place of settlement, including the role of local socio-economic conditions such as the local labour market, social norms and expectations, and other ethnic groups. How, for example, did the experiences of Irish women in New York compare with Irish women at a national level? Or how did Irish women's experiences compare with white American women?

It achieves these objectives by focusing on the wellbeing of Irish women migrants to and in the US from approximately 1850 until 1914 which encompasses the end of the famine and the age of mass European migration to the US before the First World War. To understand how different life was in the United States, the current work is foregrounded by a consideration of life and work in Ireland (Chapter 2), before contemplating the challenge of physically relocating across the Atlantic Ocean (Chapter 3). It then draws a big picture of the Irish migrant experience in the United States by exploiting nationwide micro-census data on household structure and the economy, juxtaposing Irish immigrants with the rest of the female labour force. First, the thesis offers a national overview (Chapter 4), before delving into the key destination: New York City (Chapter 5). The rich archives of that great Metropolis allow quantitative analysis to be enriched by an array of qualitative sources, some of which allow the women to speak for themselves. Respectively, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 excavate the lived reality of the Irish immigrant in New York, as a young woman, in middle age, and when elderly. Only with that hindsight would Ireland's adventurers know whether they made a good choice.

The use of 'wellbeing' to understand migrant women's experiences takes into account the multifaceted nature of women's lives. Wellbeing is defined as the thriving and flourishing of individuals and communities; and the capability of people to live their lives in a way that they deem valuable.[50] Irish migrant women's wellbeing is measured and assessed through

[50] Own definition, based on: 'Wellbeing' https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/227050?redirectedFrom=wellbeing#eid (14 April 2020); 'The Wellbeing Institute' https://www.cambridgewellbeing.org/ (14 April 2020); 'What is Wellbeing?' https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/what-is-wellbeing/ (14 April 2020). It also builds on: OECD, *How Was Life?: Global Wellbeing Since 1820* (Paris, 2014); Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, (Paris, 2009); Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, *The Quality of Life* (Oxford, 1993); Bina Agarwal, Jane Humphries and Ingrid Robeyns (eds), *Capabilities, Freedom, Equality: Amartya Sen's Work From A Gender Perspective* (Oxford, 2007); Ingrid Robeyns, *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice: The Capability Approach Re-Examined* (Cambridge, 2017).

multiple lenses, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The key components of wellbeing are: material conditions, such as income and wealth, employment and earnings, and housing; and the wider quality of life, including physical and mental health, work-life balance, education and skills, social connections, civic engagement and governance, environmental quality, personal security and subjective wellbeing. The ability to achieve wellbeing is considered in both market and nonmarket contexts and acknowledges human diversity and inequality, stemming from race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and location through to disability and caring responsibilities.[51]

To fully appreciate Irish women's understanding and perceptions of their wellbeing, we need to consider the realities and ideologies of domesticity, the household, and the family. The household and the family are key sites of social interaction, consumption, production, and reproduction. As Silvia Federici has argued 'the reproduction of human beings is the foundation of every economic and political system.'[52] The family and the household structure an individual's daily life, and gender roles and relations are crucial to our understandings of this intimate world. The home remains socially and ideologically constructed as the domain of women: the site of her work and her worth. As women have been the primary caretakers of children and the home, historical changes in familial size and structure are 'inextricably linked to changes in the position of women.'[53] Despite the essential nature of women's domestic and reproductive labour – including childbirth, care work and household chores – this work remains undermeasured and undervalued.[54] Moreover, the household is often

[51] Ingrid Robeyns, 'Sen's Capability Approach and Gender Inequality: Selecting Relevant Capabilities,' in Agarwal, Humphries and Robeyns (eds), *Capabilities, Freedom, Equality*, 66-69.
[52] Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (New York NY, 2012), 2.
[53] Kathleen Gerson, 'Changing Family Structure and the Position of Women: A Review of the Trends,' *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 49/2 (1983), 138-144.
[54] Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*, 2.

discussed in narrow heteronormative terms rather than through the variety and reality of everyday lives. The idealised household consists of a nuclear family headed by the primary (male) breadwinner, who is supported by the primary (female) child-rearer. While this patriarchal ideal type may be far from the lived reality for many households, it has shaped experiences and understandings of social relations both within and beyond the home.[55] The heteronormative family was, and remains, fundamental to Irish society, church and the state. Adherence to gendered roles took on an explicitly political meaning in 1937 with the codification of the Irish Free State's Constitution. Article 41 identifies the family as 'the natural primary and fundamental unit of society' and 'the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the nation and the state.'[56] Arguably the Constitution simply codified the long-standing attitudes of the domestic nature of women's lives in Ireland. This approach to women's domesticity was a new legal imposition but it was also a long-standing cultural norm.

Many Irish households, both inside and outside of the country, diverged from the patriarchal, nuclear norm; and this divergence affected the wellbeing of all members of the family, particularly women. How did the lives of single women, female household heads, sisters, servants, and older women differ from those of the nuclear wife and mother? We need to understand the differing roles, relations, and attitudes within these differing households. Clare Hemmings has argued that this ideological construct of the household 'could only ever see queer as divergence, single mothers as pathology, migrant remittances as sad necessity, and single living as selfishness.'[57] Neighbours might even be included in one's definition of

[55] Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The Anti-Social Family* (London, 2015), 7-8; Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York NY, 1978), 7-8.
[56] Irish Statute Book, 'Constitution of Ireland', (updated Jan. 2020), https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d5bd8c-constitution-of-ireland/(Jan. 2021).
[57] Clare Hemmings, 'Revisiting Virality (After Eve Sedgwick)', Feminist Review Blog (26 May 2020), https://femrev.wordpress.com/2020/05/26/revisiting-virality-after-eve-sedgwick/ (June 2020).

'family.'[58] While it may be assumed that household and family are limited to those living together, many sociologists suggest that friends and neighbours can sometimes be more 'family like' or valuable to social lives than blood relations.[59] Friends and neighbours may be of particular importance – both positively and negatively – for those living in non-traditional household settings.

Understandings and experiences of wellbeing and the household shift across space and time. External developments can influence the household and women's experiences within the household, as household and family members continually interact with the outside world and operate in wider contexts, such as the neighbourhood, wider locale and country. An individual's assessment of their migration decision was subject to contextual change. When moving to a new area, social customs and norms are subject to change and development. Writing on famine-era migration to Britain, Lynn Hollen Lees has described how Irish migrants had to 'cope with major transformations in their cultural milieux, transformations of so vast an extent that accommodation could not have been easy.'[60] Women were leaving a largely rural country and making an arduous journey overseas. The emotional and psychological impact of this journey should not be underestimated. The migration may have brought new opportunities, but the scale of newness and difference must have been disorientating.

The migration of the Irish was primarily by those who had already been subject to major transformation during the famine. Although the famine has been downplayed in

[58] Jane Gray, Ruth Geraghty and David Ralph, *Family Rhythms: The Changing Textures of Family Life in Ireland* (Manchester, 2017), 11-12.
[59] Gray, Geraghty and Ralph, *Family Rhythms*, 12.
[60] Lynn Hollen Lees, 'Mid-Victorian Migration and the Irish Family Economy', *Victorian Studies*, 20/1 (1976), 43.

discussions of Ireland's depopulation between 1850 and the First World War, many of those who left the country in the mid-to-late nineteenth century had witnessed – and could remember – its devastating effects.[61] This trauma may have impacted the migratory journey, which was a 'life-defining event, that provided 'a completely new context for every aspect of migrants' lives.'[62] Human beings might be resilient but, as Bessel Van der Kolk explained, trauma can 'leave traces on our minds and emotions, on our capacity for joy and intimacy, and even on our biology and immune systems.' It also leaves traces on our histories and cultures, 'or close to home, on our families, with dark secrets being imperceptibly passed down through generations.'[63] As highlighted throughout this thesis, the physical, mental, and social repercussions of the famine were subtly evident in the experiences of migrant women over the course of their lives

Opportunities to find work and improve their material conditions were available in the US but women also encountered different (and also rapidly-changing) understandings of gender, religion, race and class. The rise of the white Protestant middle class promoted the gendered separation of spheres.[64] As male work shifted into the urban factory, the Protestant work ethic was supplemented by laissez-faire attitudes of individualism and competition.[65] Although slavery was illegal in much of the north of the US by the early nineteenth century, race still shaped the political, social and economic milieu. Gunja SenGupta has described this

[61] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, 3.
[62] OECD, *How's Life? 2017: Measuring Wellbeing* (Paris, 2017), 121.
[63] Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (London, 2015), 1.
[64] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 24.
[65] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York NY, 1983), 49-50.

as a Protestant 'white republic' headed by the individualistic, rugged and self-made white American male, and supported by his white native-born wife as mother and nurturer.[66]

Throughout the nineteenth century, the white republic and separate spheres were continuously disrupted and contested by emancipation, western expansion, industrialisation, women's suffrage, Black migration from the South, and European immigration – including that of the Irish.[67] One of the major fears of mid-nineteenth century American society was that Irish immigrants' Catholic beliefs and their poverty would corrupt and ruin the country's republican democracy.[68] Although the ideals of American Protestant womanhood were similar to that of the Irish Catholic – domesticity, piety, purity, and submissiveness – they were in tension with one another. This tension underpinned attitudes towards Irish women who, on arriving in the US found their womanhood questioned by dint of their poverty and Catholicism. The Irish experience of negotiating this new social order and settling into the urban northeast has often been told through stories of Irish men's labour movements, men's political activism and participation and male acts of violence. But important works by Deirdre Cooper Owens, Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, and April Schultz have shown how Irish women migrants also shaped discourses on race, labour, home, and American citizenship through their domestic service.[69]

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[66] Gunja SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty: The Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918* (New York NY, 2009), 11.

[67] Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race*, 12.

[68] Hidetaka Hirota, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy* (Oxford, 2017), 6.

[69] Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. (Athens GA, 2017); Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race*; April Schultz, 'The Black Mammy and the Irish Bridget: Domestic Service and the Representation of Race, 1830-1930', *Éire-Ireland* 48/3 (2013), 176-212.

Emigration was an Irish household strategy and part of the life-cycle of Irish people in the nineteenth century. Migration was a life-defining event but also a life-long process, where the impact of the migration decision could change over the course of a migrant's life. Post-famine migrants are characterised as single and able-bodied young adults, ready and eager to work in their new homes.[70] What happened to those migrants over time? For example, the stage in the life cycle, and the evolution of family and household structures all played key roles in shaping women's understandings and perceptions of their lives. A woman may spend part of her early adulthood as single, residing with non-family members, but later may marry and have children, spending some time as the spouse of the household head. How does her experience and sense of self change throughout these stages of life? And how does her wellbeing differ from that of women whose life course takes a different path, such as a woman who remains single throughout her life or is the head of her own household? Did Margaret Nagle, for example, continue to feel happy that she came to New York when her life course changed? How did she and her fellow female migrants navigate the ageing process? What was the impact of ageing on her ability to provide for herself as well as her family? Did the links to 'back home' endure as women passed through different life stages, from work to marriage to old age? Or did 'home' and wellbeing take on a new meaning?

Research Methodology: Numbers and Narratives

This research is both multi-level and mixed method. National quantitative data provide the contextual framework for the subsequent in-depth analysis of local data and archival qualitative material. The national and quantitative data includes an analysis of digitised manuscript census schedules from the US as well as published census reports from

[70] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic* History, p. 230; Yvonne Stolz and Joerg Baten, 'Brain Drain in the Age of Mass Migration: Does Relative Inequality Explain Migrant Selectivity?', *Explorations in Economic History,* 49 (2012), 212.

Ireland in the late-nineteenth century.With information on location, race, sex, marital status, health status, education and birthplace for the national population, the census provides information on multiple components of wellbeing at a macro-level, and analysing trends and patterns of household size, the role of the household head, the household's economic activity both within and outside of the domestic sphere) can give crucial insights into the everyday reality of women's lives.

The approach adopted in this thesis is multi-level and comparative in three ways. First, it compares Irish women's socio-economic characteristics with other groups, such as Black American women, white American women, other migrant groups, and Irish men.[71] Second, it considers migration across space, analysing the experiences of the Irish-born in Ireland, in the US and in New York City.[72] Steven Ruggles stated that the micro-data allows for the creation of more 'subtle, focused, and consistent measures of neighbourhood and community context.'[73] Third, it analyses the experiences of women over the life course. The final chapters investigate Irish women in different life stages: the young, aged between 15 and 29 years old; those in mid-life, aged between 30 and 44 years old; the mature, aged between 45 and 64 years old; and the elderly, aged 65 years plus. It should be noted that the comparative picture of different life stages is a cross-sectional analysis and not a panel or a cohort study. Although a cohort analysis would be useful as it would inform on the evolution

[71] The main birthplace groups used in this study are: United States; Canada and Canadian Territories; the Americas; Europe; England; Scotland; Wales; United Kingdom; Ireland; Asia; Africa; and Australasia. The United States birthplace group is also further disaggregated by race (Black and white). Not all of the categories are used in every table (as indicated) as some birthplace groups are excluded where the absolute number in the category is low. The categories may not adequately capture the diverse and complex nature of racial identity. Race, for example, could *only* be coded as: 'White', or Black/African American/Negro', or 'American Indian or Alaska Native'; or 'Chinese'; or 'Japanese.' See: 'Race' https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/RACE#description_section (July 2020).

[72] New York City includes Brooklyn throughout this thesis. New York City is referred to as 'New York' or 'NY' throughout.

[73] Steven Ruggles, 'Big Microdata for Population Research', *Demography*, 51 (2014), 293.

of individual lives, such analyses are problematic when analysing women as many changed their surname, and they are also problematic when tracking immigrants.[74] The primary census data analysed in this thesis are presented in tables in the main text; but to economise on space, some secondary data are presented in a data appendix or are available on request (as indicated in the text).

The available census enumeration forms for the US are particularly helpful for historians.[75] Also known as questionnaires or schedules, these forms underpin the published census reports, and provide a wealth of individual-level information on variables including sex, marital status, relationship to household head, household size, race, age, occupation, and birthplace – without the extra level of institutional interpretation inherent in the tabulation process. [76] The final printed census reports present amalgamated data that had been processed through multiple channels, usually from the individual to the household head who dictated the information to the enumerator, who filled out the census schedule, which was then sent to the centralised Census Bureau. When aggregating the census returns, the census-takers risked – intentionally or otherwise – misrepresenting the experiences of groups they deemed outside the norm, including multiple identity markers that exist within and between groups such as

[74] On name linking which focuses on men see: Ran Abramitzky, Leah Boustan and Katherine Eriksson, 'Europe's Tired, Poor, Huddled Masses: Self-Selection and Economic Outcomes in the Age of Mass Migration', *American Economic Review,* 102/5 (2012), 1832-1856; Ran Abramitzky, Leah Boustan and Katherine Eriksson, 'A Nation of Immigrants: Assimilation and Economic Outcomes in the Age of Mass Migration', *Journal of Political Economy,* 122/3 (2014), 467-506; Ran Abramitzky, Leah Boustan, Katherine Eriksson, James Feigenbaum, and Santiago Pérez, 'Automated Linking of Historical Data', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 59/3 (2021), 865-918. On the problems of using automated census linkage algorithms for tracking Irish immigrants see: Tyler Anbinder, Dylan Connor, Cormac Ó Gráda and Simone Wegge, "The Problem of False Positives in Automated Census Linking: Evidence from Nineteenth-Century New York's Irish Immigrants', *UCD Centre for Economic Research Working Paper Series*, WP21/14, (2021), 1-55.

[75] Census enumeration forms are not available for Ireland as they were pulped during the First World War.

[76] Matthew Sobek, 'A Century of Work: Gender, Labor Force Participation, and Occupational Attainment in the United States, 1880-1990', (PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1997), 117-118; Nancy Folbre and Marjorie Abel, 'Women's Work and Women's Households', *Social Research*, 56/3 (1989), 545-69; Susan Carter and Richard Sutch, 'Fixing the Facts: Editing of the 1880 U.S. Census of Occupations with Implications for Long-Term Labor-Force Trends and the Sociology of Official Statistics', *Historical Methods,* 29/1 (1996), 5-24.

the intersection of race, class, ethnicity, and sex. The questionnaires, however, allow historians to disentangle and understand patterns across and within populations: comparing different sub-group including by birthplace and sex.[77]

Dennis Clark used a sample from the 1880 US census to disentangle Irish women's working patterns in Philadelphia. The sample, containing 1,033 persons whose household heads were Irish-born, revealed that 'Irish women made a disadvantageous bargain in their new environment: dead-end jobs were taken in a large and impersonal labor market, and in return for long hours and assignment to low social status, wages and some degree of independence.'[78] Marilyn Cohen has also compared twentieth-century Irish census schedules with late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century US schedules in a longitudinal study of female-headed households in Gilford, County Down and Greenwich, New York. Cohen concluded that while 'the hope for a better life' was the main motivation for migrants, there is 'little evidence for an improved life since low wages heightened economic interdependence' and no 'tangible rewards as home ownerships.' Irish households abroad that were headed by Irish women were 'persistent symbols of poverty.'[79] Cohen's transnational study used Irish schedules from 1901 and 1911 which are extrapolated backwards, as only fragments of Irish census schedules remain for the years 1821 to 1851, and there are none for 1861 through to 1891.[80] The nineteenth-century published reports are (luckily) highly detailed.[81] In the next

[77] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, 128.

[78] Dennis Clark, 'Irish Women Workers and American Labor Patterns: the Philadelphia Story',in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish Worldwide, History, Heritage, Identity: Volume Four. Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), 122.

[79] Marilyn Cohen, 'The Migration Experience of Female-Headed Households: Gilford, Co. Down, to Greenwich, New York, 1880-1910', in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish Worldwide, History, Heritage, Identity: Volume Four. Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), 143.

[80] 'Census Through History' https://www.cso.ie/en/census/censusthroughhistory/ (July 2020).

[81] E. Margaret Crawford, *Counting the People: A Survey of the Irish Censuses, 1813-1911* (Dublin, 2003), 32.

chapter the census reports from 1871 until 1911 are used to explore Irish women's wellbeing within Ireland.

Global efforts to digitise census 'micro-data', which includes the information from census schedules, has facilitated broad and substantive statistical studies. This thesis uses digitised US census micro-data collected, preserved, and harmonised as part of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS USA). IPUMS USA comes under the wider IPUMS organisational umbrella, a scheme which provides census and survey data from around the world, with the aim of providing a comparative framework of socio-economic change, across time and space.[82] IPUMS USA, through its work with Ancestry.com and FamilySearch, provides access to a number of different iterations of US census microdata from 1790 until the present day.

The micro-data employed here is from the 1880 census schedules, which has been chosen for three reasons. First, the original 1880 census was one of the first taken at an individual level by professionally-trained census enumerators. Second, the coverage of the dataset is extensive.[83] The complete count is used as it provides reliable measure of the population (there is no sampling error) and, crucially, it allows meaningful disaggregation of population sub-groups, such as women and migrant groups. There are over 50 million units of observation which is a very large dataset to process, sort, and analyse. Third, the data includes several generations of Irish migrants in the US which helps to analyse the longer-term experiences of famine-era migrants, as well as those women who only arrived in the US from the 1870s onwards.

[82] 'IPUMS' https://ipums.org/ (Feb. 2020).
[83] 'Descriptions of IPUMS Samples' https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sampdesc.shtml#us1880e (Feb. 2020).

Of course, as a historical and statistical artefact and a singular snapshot in time, the census presents methodological and conceptual difficulties. The issue of recording women's work, where occupations have been measured by gendered expectations rather than economic reality, are well documented.[84] The 1880 census report omitted some women and children employed in factories, 'either through failure of the enumerator to ask the questions relating to occupation concerning such persons' or 'from the indisposition of the persons themselves or the heads of families to speak of them as in employment.'[85] Self-perception, as well as shame and stigma, meant that some women described themselves as housewives regardless of their participation in market labour. The census microdata, however, still provides an unprecedented opportunity to investigate the lives of *all enumerated* Irish women in the US. The computation of complex cross-tabulations in STATA provides insights on how identity markers such as sex, race, age, marital status, and migrant status intersect to produce different experiences. The census categories used in this thesis are not strict boundaries but provide a framework to understand the varying experiences of people in a rapidly-changing country in the age of mass migration.

This research follows Redmond's approach, who places her work explicitly 'within the historiography of Irish emigration that has utilised theoretical models and a multiplicity of source material' by 'making them centre stage.'[86] Both the published census reports and digitised census data provide a broad picture but such data provides little on dynamics and causality. In order to inform on determinants and perceptions of wellbeing, this thesis also uses parliamentary papers, newspaper articles, philanthropic studies of urban life, and

[84] Margo Anderson, 'The History of Women and the History of Statistics', *Journal of Women's History,* 4/1 (1992), 25.
[85] Folbre and Abel, 'Women's Work', 550-551.
[86] Redmond, *Moving Histories*, 5.

charitable reports. It pays particular attention to institutional records, both religious and municipal. Although told through the voice of the powerful, these records provide important information on the experiences of women who engaged with, and resided in, these institutions. By reading these documents against the grain, historians can ask new questions, and build a more complete picture – a picture not only of women's lives, but how these Irish women are essential to our understandings of nineteenth-century migration, Ireland, and America.

Letters from Irish women in the United States to their familiy and friends and family back in Ireland, provide valuable insights into the life of the letter writers. In discussing the extensive body of literature into the use of migrant letters, Fitzpatrick noted that such sources supplied:'facts, assertions, and responses to experience which cannot easily be found elsewhere, and which often provide a salutary corrective to glib generalisations from statistical aggregates.' The private provenance of letters, in contrast with travelogues or newspaper articles, meant that 'subtleties of mentalities should therefore be more often revealed.'[87] Building on Fitzpatrick's extensive scholarship, this thesis analyses the written word of Irish women in the US to shed light on the different stages of their lives, as well as their migrant journey. Lettters between and from Margaret Nagle, Bessie Fitzgerald, and Mary Brown provide an insight into their hectic life as newly-arrived domestics. Mary McHenry's correspondence indicates how familal life, both at home and abroad, added to the stress of life.

[87] David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (London, 1994), p. 25.

These letters were more than mere correspondence, they were channels of intimacy and proximity for women living far from home. They 'mattered to writers and readers because they were potentially an effective instrument for defining and modifying human relationships.'[88] The importance Irish women attached to friends, family, and kin, is especially apparent in the testimony of eldery Irish women, such as Catharine Connor and Rebecca Gray, which were reported in the letterbooks of the New York Alms House Warden. Yet, these letters indicate how the lives of many Irish women often collapsed into poverty and precarity in old age. As well as giving insights on how they portrayed their migratory experience to one another, what was not written in these letters may reveal as much as what was penned.

As a young domestic in New York, Margaret Nagle was convinced she had made the right choice in leaving home. The city was a world of opportunities. Margaret's hopes dissipated as she aged, and as the responsibilities and restictions of womanhood grew. But despite her personal struggles, she, like so many of the Irish women around her, helped to forge the modern metropolis that was New York.

[88] Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation,* 23.

Chapter 2
Women's Lives and Wellbeing in Ireland

Easter Sunday was a childhood highlight for Mary Fogarty and her sister in the 1850s. Setting off to Mass in their pretty new dresses, accessorised with a new bonnet and matching ribbon, the daughters of a middle-class Limerick farmer and his wife relished the opportunity to celebrate, worship, and socialise. As part of the burgeoning Catholic middle class, the Fogarty girls represent Ireland's change in fortune after the famine. From the 1850s, incomes rose, trade and manufacturing expanded, and welfare initiatives proliferated, including in education and public health. Institutional Catholicism spread across the country, alongside nationalist endeavours, including the establishment of the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1874, the Land League in 1879, and the Irish National League in 1882. Mary's father was a respected Catholic who 'crossed paths with many of Ireland's prominent men' and Mary proudly recalled her encounter with Charles Stewart Parnell, the Home Rule Party's leader from 1880.[1] This decade also ushered in a 'new period of women's political engagement'.[2] The Ladies' Land League was founded in 1881, while the Protestant-dominated feminist movement began to put down tentative roots in Dublin and Belfast. By the turn of the twentieth century women's representation had increased in local government, while the formation in 1900 of Inghinidhe na hÉireann, a republican women's group, suggested that nationalist women were becoming more politically active. Such formal political engagement

[1] Cara Delay, *Irish Women and The Creation of Modern Catholicism* (Manchester, 2019), 180.

[2] As Senia Pašeta has pointed out, 'the relationship between the two was both more nuanced and dynamic than has been allowed, and that opposition to women's activism should be understood in structural and cultural terms as well as in broadly political ones. The relationship should also be understood in longer historical terms than is usual as it also evolved in the context of broader political and social shifts and campaigns, some of which predated the third Home Rule crisis.' See: 'Feminist Political Thought and Activism in Revolutionary Ireland, c.1880-1918', *Transactions of the RHS,* 27 (2017), 193.

remained rare for Irish women, but they lived in a changing society where opportunities for women – especially in education and white collar work – continued to expand. Emigration rates, moreover, gradually declined over the period. An increasing number of the Irish population were comfortable enough in Ireland that they were no longer forced to leave it.

As the family sat in their pew near the front of the packed, almost overflowing' church on that Easter morning in the late 1850s, they craned their necks, looking behind at the array of local characters. One of these was old Biddy, a tragic widow who had been left behind in Ireland as her family members emigrated from Limerick. Fogarty was full of sympathy, but also understood why the widow's family members had 'deserted' her. Looking back at her own life with some contentment, Fogarty believed that other, less well-off women in rural Ireland had 'nothing to look forward to but a loveless marriage, hard work, poverty, a large family and often a husband who drank. Small wonder that when they could they have escaped to America.'[3] Although Biddy could be dismissed as a tragic character, her life served as a reminder of the frequent disparities in wellbeing between men and women within Ireland, and may offer a glimpse into not only the reason why Irish women left, but the impact of emigration on those women left behind.

The evidence for improvements in living standards remain based on aggregate data measuring national income and economic growth, which often conceal differences between gender, occupations, locations and different stages of life. Such data is dominated by market transactions, they ignore most work in the home and are thus male-orientated, pushing women's contribution and experiences in the Irish economy to the periphery. This chapter considers this period of Irish history through the lens of Irish women. By employing original

[3] Mary Carbery, *The Farm by Lough Gur: The Story of Mary Fogarty (Sissy O'Brien),* (London, 1937), 47.

Irish census reports and their data between 1851 and 1911, it considers the various dimensions of wellbeing including economic and demographic indicators including women's unpaid labour, domestic life, healthcare, and experiences with (and within) a spectrum of institutions from schools to asylums. This chapter argues that material improvements in post-famine Ireland were accompanied by changing agricultural land practices, increasing influence of Victorian domestic ideology, and the rise of institutional Catholicism. In a country where marriage and procreation were increasingly eschewed, women's wellbeing paradoxically became increasingly contingent on the fulfilment of their domestic expectations and duties. As wives and mothers, adult daughters, domestic servants, old women; women such as Biddy through to those such as Fogarty 'navigated life within an atmosphere of heightened Catholic patriarchy' to varying degrees of success.[4] Fuelled by increased education and developing communications with relatives and friend who had emigrated, Irish women's aspirations changed. If Bernadette Whelan was correct in characterising emigration as 'banishment' and 'exile' for some women, it was a positive choice made by others.[5] Women's departure from Ireland often reflected their rising expectations, which they believed could not be fulfilled in their country of birth – a country where the decision to leave was widespread, entrenched and sanctioned.

Population

Table 1 illustrates the familiar, often repeated account of Ireland's depopulation in the nineteenth century from the 1840s. The repetition is warranted. On the eve of the famine, just under 8.2 million people lived in Ireland – by 1911 it was an island of only 4.4 million. The

[4] Delay, *Irish Women and The Creation of Modern Catholicism*, 17.

[5] Bernadette Whelan, Women on the Move: A Review of the Historiography of Irish Emigration to the USA, 1750-1900', *Women's History Review,* 24/6 (2015), 901.

Irish share of the United Kingdom's population fell from one-third to less than one-tenth during the period.[6] This population decline was unmatched by any other European country. At least one million died (a conservative estimate) between 1845 and 1849, the first four years of the famine, with a similar number migrating overseas.[7] The continual decline in Ireland's population over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was primarily due to emigration, rather than the loss of life.[8] But while the propensity of the Irish population to emigrate far pre-dated the famine, the famine accelerated emigration to new heights.[9] The greatest decline followed the famine before slowing towards the end of the century: between 1851 and 1861 the population declined by 11.5 percent, but between 1901 and 1911, the decline was only 1.5 percent.[10] The rates of decline also varied by location. As shown in Table 1 it was greatest in the western province of Munster followed (in order) by Connaught, Leinster and Ulster. The decline in the female population was slightly greater than that of the male population. Although the decline did slow by 1911, the data in Table 1 shows rapid population decline in just seventy years. Moreover, by the late nineteenth century, almost every single Irish person with any level of mobility would have contemplated whether to leave or to stay in Ireland.

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[6] Timothy Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration, and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850-1914* (Princeton NJ, 1997), 3-4; Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780-1939* (Oxford, 1995), 213.

[7] Donald Akenson*, The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast, 1996), 18. This migration figure also does not include those leaving for Britain during the famine period.

[8] Guinnane argues that less than less than half of the total depopulation between 1841 and 1911 can be attributed to the famine itself. *The Vanishing Irish,* 4.

[9] See Chapter Three.

[10] Percentage points are rounded to the nearest integer throughout the text apart from the reporting of growth rates.

Table 1. Population of Ireland, 1841-1911 (decennial years)

	Male	% Change	Female	% Change	Total	% Change
Ireland						
1841	4019576		4155548		8175124	
1851	3190630	-20.62	3361755	-19.1	6552385	-19.85
1861	2837370	-11.07	2961597	-11.9	5798967	-11.5
1871	2639753	-6.96	2772624	-6.38	5412377	-6.67
1881	2533277	-4.03	2641559	-4.73	5174836	-4.39
1891	2318953	-8.46	2385797	-9.68	4704750	-9.08
1901	2200040	-5.13	2258735	-5.33	4458775	-5.23
1911	2192048	-0.36	2198171	-2.68	4390219	-1.54
1841-1911	-1827528	-45.47%	-1957377	-47.10%	-3784905	-46.30%
Leinster						
1841	963747		1009984		1973731	
1851	813537	-15.59	859201	-14.93	1672738	-15.25
1861	715005	-12.11	742630	-13.57	1457635	-12.86
1871	655114	-8.38	684337	-7.85	1339451	-8.11
1881	630038	-3.83	648951	-5.17	1278989	-4.51
1891	587847	-6.7	599913	-7.56	1187760	-7.13
1901	571809	-2.73	581020	-3.15	1152829	-2.94
1911	582967	1.95	579077	-0.33	1162044	0.8
1841-1911	-380780	-39.51%	-430907	-42.66%	-811687	-41.12%
Munster						
1841	1186190		1209971		2396161	
1851	904979	-23.71	952757	-27	1857736	-22.47
1861	744682	-17.71	768876	-23.92	1513558	-18.53
1871	686106	-7.87	707379	-8.69	1393485	-7.93
1881	659994	-3.81	671121	-5.4	1331115	-4.48
1891	587611	-10.97	584791	-14.76	1172402	-11.92
1901	540970	-7.94	535218	-9.26	1076188	-8.21
1911	526130	-2.74	509365	-5.08	1035495	-3.78
1841-1911	-660060	-55.65%	-700606	-57.90%	-1360666	-56.79%
Ulster						
1841	1161797		1224576		2386373	
1851	976312	-15.97	1035568	-15.43	2011880	-15.69
1861	923255	-5.43	990981	-4.31	1914236	-4.85
1871	879805	-4.71	953423	-3.79	1833228	-4.23
1881	836224	-4.95	906851	-4.88	1743075	-4.92
1891	781329	-6.56	838485	-7.54	1619814	-7.07
1901	763594	-2.27	819232	-2.3	1582826	-2.28
1841-1911	-398203	-34.27%	-405344	-33.10%	-803547	-33.67%
Connaught						
1841	707842		711017		1418859	
1851	495802	-29.96	514229	-27.68	1010031	-28.81
1861	454035	-8.42	459100	-10.72	913135	-9.59
1871	418728	-7.78	427485	-6.89	846213	-7.33
1881	407021	-2.8	414636	-3.01	821657	-2.9
1891	362166	-11.02	362608	-12.55	724774	-11.79
1901	323667	-10.63	323265	-10.85	646932	-10.74
1841-1911	-384175	-54.27%	-387752	-54.53%	-771927	-54.40%

Source: calculated from census data in William Vaughan and André Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), 16.

Economy

By the end of the nineteenth century, Ireland's economy had diversified, national income had grown, and nationally, wages had increased.[11] With an export-based industry, (some of) Ireland benefitted from foreign trade, growing infrastructure in banking, commerce and railways.[12] Further insights into the growth of the Irish economy are provided in Table 2 which gives estimates of the growth of the economy in different phases of economic development between 1793 and 1903. These phases, as classified by Peter Gray, show that the growth of GDP was highest in the 'era of boom' from 1793 to 1815 when the economy was boosted by high level of demand for food including exports to Britain.[13] During the period of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) the rest of the UK depended on Ireland as its 'breadbasket.'[14] The increase in grain, dairy and meat exports to England was accompanied by a fall in the domestic consumption of milk, butter and meat, especially for poor families.[15]

[11] Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, 'After the Famine: Emigration from Ireland, 1850-1913', *Journal of Economic History*, 53/3 (1993), 575-600; Jeffrey Williamson, 'The Evolution of Global Labour Markets since 1830: Background Evidence and Hypotheses', *Explorations in Economic History*, 32, (1995), 141-196; Kevin O'Rourke, 'Emigration and Living Standards since the Famine', *Journal of Population Economics*, 8/4 (1995), 407-421; Jason Begley, Frank Geary and Tom Stark, 'Convergence in the Pre-1914 Economy: What Really Happened to Wages in Ireland between 1881 and 1911?', *Cambridge Journal of Economics,* 40/1 (2016), 43-67.

[12] Louis Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972).

[13] Peter Gray, 'Economic Development in Ireland 1798-1921', Queen's University Belfast Irish History Live (Feb. 2021). https://present5.com/economic-development-in-ireland-1798-1921-prof-peter/ (Feb. 2021).

[14] Stephen Nicholas and Richard Steckel, 'Tall but Poor: Living Standards of Men and Women in Pre-famine Ireland', *Journal of European Economic History*, 26/1 (1997), 105; Joel Mokyr and Eugene Savin, 'Stagflation in Historical Perspective: The Napoleonic Wars Revisited', *Research in Economic History*, 6 (1976), 198-259.

[15] Louis Cullen, 'Population and Diet, 1600-1830', in J. M. Goldstrom and Leslie Clarkson (eds), *Irish Population, Economy and Society* (Oxford, 1981), 99-101

Table 2. Ireland: Average Annual Growth rates of GDP and GDP per capita, 1793-1903 (selective periods)

Period		Bank of England	Andersson and Lennard	
		GDP (%)	GDP (%)	GDP per capita (%)
An era of boom	1793-1815	2.13		
An era of malaise	1815-45	1.63		
An era of catastrophe	1845-52	0.98	0.65	4.09
An era of rising expectations	1852-77	0.67	0.62	1.32
An era of rural conflict	1877-1903	0.91	0.51	1.18

Sources: Ryland Thomas and Nicholas Dimsdale, 'A Millennium of UK Data', Bank of England OBRA dataset (2017), https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics/research-datasets (July 2020); and Fredrik Andersson and Jason Lennard, 'Irish GDP between the Famine and the First World War: estimates based on a dynamic factor model', *European Review of Economic History*, 23/1 (2019), 50-71.

As shown in Table 2, growth slowed after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. According to Roy Foster if 'there is a watershed year in nineteenth-century Irish social and economic history, it is not 1846 but 1815, with the agricultural disruption following the end of the French wars.'[16] Cormac Ó Gráda has conversely stated there is a 'danger of magnifying a combination of the kind of temporary dislocation that often accompanies war's end': the extended post-war crisis was 'in large part a fiction.'[17] This is consistent with the data in Table 2 which shows a small decline in the growth rate between 1815 to 1845 period compared with the 1793 to 1815 period, although the caveat about data reliability applies.

The impact of the famine on economic growth was substantial. Table 2 shows two alternative estimates which both show that the growth rate during the 1845 to 1852 period was much lower than in previous eras. Both estimates are positive but they mask the substantial negative famine shock: the Bank of England estimates indicate that GDP fell by

[16] Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (Harmondsworth, 1989), 318.
[17] Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 158-161.

36 percent between 1845 and 1847, whereas Fredrik Anderssen and Jason Lennard's estimates indicate a fall of 21 percent during this period.

Following the abatement of the famine there was a modest recovery in the Irish economy. As shown in Table 2, between 1852 and 1877 the average annual economic growth rate was estimated at 0.6 percent (Anderssen and Lennard) or 0.7 percent (Bank of England). This was also a period of economic volatility with severe economic downturns driven by poor harvests. It was a period of persistent poverty and high emigration especially from the rural west. Table 2 also shows two alternative estimates for GDP growth for the period from 1877 to 1903. Average annual economic growth rate was estimated at 0.5 percent (Anderssen and Lennard) or 0.9 percent (Bank of England). This was a period of continued volatility with a major recession between 1879 and 1881 with rural conflict and land reform being the dominant social and economic issues.

The composition of the growth of GDP will be determined by growth of inputs (labour, land and capital), and increases in productivity. Although GDP may be a useful indicator of the size of an economy it says little about the average level of prosperity as this will be influenced by the size of the population. A more appropriate indicator is GDP per capita, which is economic output per person and is calculated by dividing GDP by the size of the population.

The *growth* of GDP per capita in three sub-periods between 1845 and 1903, which is shown in Table 2, reveals three key findings. First, the growth of GDP per capita was greater than the growth of GDP in all three periods reflecting the decline in the population. Second, the growth of GDP per capita was highest during the famine period of 1846 to 1852. This

seemingly paradoxical finding was the unintended consequence of the variable impact of the famine on different demographic groups. The population of a country can be divided between those who work in the formal economy (or who can work) who add (or who can add) to GDP; and those that do not work and who are dependent on others (usually the young, the old and the infirmed) who do not add to GDP. The famine disproportionately impacted the latter group with more widespread deaths amongst those who did not directly add to GDP. The impact of the famine was very severe on the very young and the very old. Over half of all victims were children.[18] Phelim Boyle and Ó Gráda have suggested 29 percent of the excess deaths occurred in the zero to four age group, although this group comprised only 13.5 percent of the average population during the period. The percentage of excess deaths for those over 60 was also relatively high. The lowest relative share of excess deaths was amongst those of 'value', of working age between 10 and 59.[19] Furthermore, Mary Daly has suggested that women were at less risk of dying than men during the famine, as the female body was 'better able to survive food deprivation.'[20] Third, the growth of GDP per capita was lower in the two sub-periods following the famine period. This may be explained by a slowing of population decline (including a slowing emigration rate). An additional contribution to the slow growth was the 'enduring and substantial damage to the Irish economy's capital stock' through the reduced average yield of tillage.'[21] Conventional

[18] Jonny Geber and Beatrice Moring, 'Mortality among Institutionalised Children during the Great Famine in Ireland: Bioarchaeological Contextualisation of Non-adult Mortality Rates in the Kilkenny Union Workhouse, 1846–1851', *Continuity and Change*, 31/1 (2016), 101-126.

[19] Phelim Boyle and Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Fertility Trends, Excess Mortality, and the Great Irish Famine', *Demography,* 23/4 (1986), 555.

[20] Mary Daly, 'Famines and Famine Relief, 1740-2000', in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 46. See also: Parvati Trübswetter and Stephan Klasen. 'Gender Bias in Mortality in Ireland around 1870-1930' (Sept. 2017),https://eml.berkeley.edu/~webfac/cromer/e211_f07/klasen.pdf (May 2020).

[21] Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 207.

growth models indicate that a reduction in the capital stock will have an adverse impact on long-run economic growth.[22]

George Boyer, Timothy Hatton and Kevin O'Rourke have concluded that Irish real wages and per capita income increased at a 'respectable' rate between 1850 and 1913 and an 'increase in Irish living standards took place despite very slow industrialization.'[23] Ireland's income and wages not only grew, but 'caught up' or converged with those of the leading economies of the United States and Britain.[24] Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson have argued that the slowing of emigration rates by the turn of the twentieth century owed 'a good deal to the gradual rise in Irish wage rates and living standards up to 1913.'[25] But the relative wage data that Hatton and Williamson deployed is male wages in the building trades, and may not be representative of relative wages in other sectors or throughout the economy.[26] The evidence presented in Figure 1 show GDP per capita in Ireland compared to Britain and the United States and provides little evidence of convergence by the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Irish gap with Britain was broadly similar in 1911 as it was in 1861, and the Irish gap with the US was larger in 1911 than it was in 1861. There is, however, a slightly different conclusion if the focus is on GDP per worker, as opposed to GDP per capita, according to Frank Geary and Tom Stark: 'Irish labour productivity was about 55 percent of that of Great

[22] Daron Acemoglu, 'Introduction to Economic Growth,' *Journal of Economic Theory,* 147/2 (2012), 545-550.

[23] George Boyer, Timothy Hatton and Kevin O'Rourke, 'The Impact of Emigration on Real Wages in Ireland, 1850-1914', in Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson (eds) *Migration and the International Labor Market* (London, 1994), 223- 237.

[24] Jeffrey Williamson, 'Economic Convergence: Placing Post-Famine Ireland in Comparative Perspective,' *Irish Economic and Social History,* 21/1 (1994), 5-27.

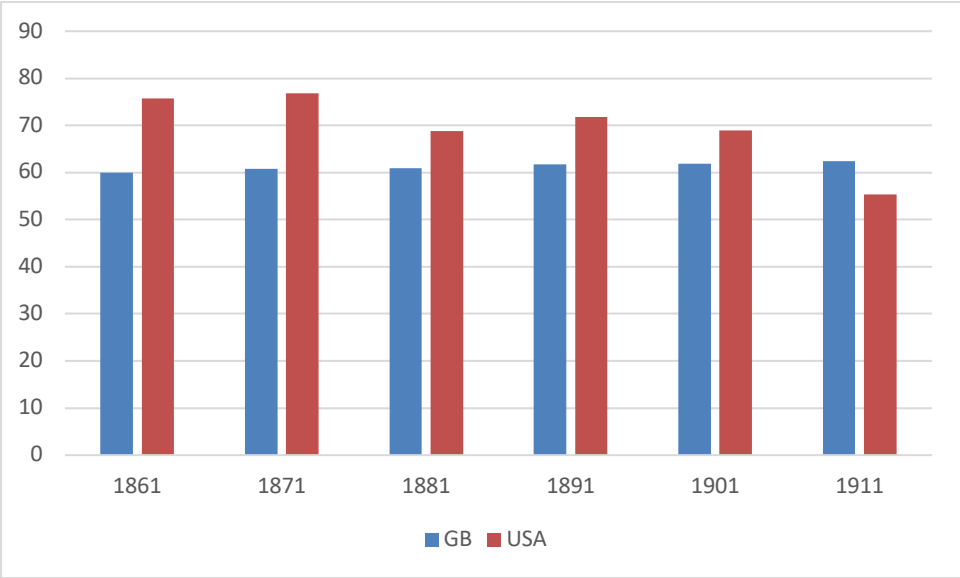
[25] Hatton and Williamson, 'After the Famine', 596. Hatton and Williamson focused on the decline in emigration rates, but Frank Geary and Tom Stark attributed improvement to capital accumulation, structural change, and the growth of total factor productivity. They also observed a persistent gap in labour productivity and GDP per capita between Ireland and its neighbours: Geary and Stark, 'Examining Ireland's Post-Famine Economic Growth Performance*', *Economic Journal,* 112/482 (2002), 932. There is also slightly different conclusion if the focus is on GDP per worker, as opposed to GDP per capita: Geary and Stark, 'Regional GDP in the UK, 1861–1911: New Estimates', *Economic History Review*, 68/1 (2015), 138.

[26] Hatton and Williamson, 'After the Famine', 575-600.

Britain in 1861, rising to around 62 percent in 1911.'[27] These contrasting conclusions may be explained by different demographic structures and different levels of labour market participation. Frank Geary and Tom Stark have attributed the relative improvement in labour productivity to capital accumulation, structural change, and the growth of total factor productivity.[28] This may suggest that the negative impact of the famine on capital accumulation was not persistent, although it may be the case that catch-up growth would have been more rapid without the destructive impact of the negative shock. There is a case for economic convergence in the post-famine period, due to unprecedented trade liberalisation, factor movements, and transport innovation. But the case for convergence in the nineteenth century should be tempered by the observation that by 1911 there remained a persistent gap in labour productivity and GDP per capita with Ireland still lagging behind the rest of the UK. Geary and Stark have concluded that the Irish post-famine economic experience 'provides a *shred of evidence* in favour of conditional convergence or, more generally, of catch-up.'[29]

[27] Geary and Stark, 'Regional GDP in the UK', 138.
[28] Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 272.
[29] Geary and Stark, 'Examining Ireland's Post-Famine Economic Growth Performance', 932. Emphasis added.

Figure 1. Ireland GDP per capita, 1861-1911, relative to GB and USA (GB=100 and USA=100)



Source: GB: Geary and Stark, 'Regional GDP in the UK', Table 5. USA: estimates based on GB/USA GDP per capita in Jutta Bolt, Marcel Timmer, and Jan Luiten van Zanden, 'GDP per capita since 1820', in OECD, *How Was Life?: Global Wellbeing Since 1820* (Paris, 2014), 57-72, benchmarked with data in Geary and Stark.
Note. The estimates for the GB are based on Geary and Starks estimates for GB minus their estimate for Ireland.

Ireland's economic growth during the nineteenth century varied across different parts of the country with stagnation in many parts. Although Belfast successfully developed a linen industry much of the rest of Ireland failed to develop in textiles.[30] Henry Patterson has argued that if food and drink are excluded, the south of Ireland remained 'virtually without industries' at the end of the nineteenth century. Outside Ulster the majority of waged workers were engaged in agricultural work.[31] The slow process of convergence and persistence of

[30] A range of explanations for this unbalanced growth have been given, including colonial dependency; inferior entrepreneurship; high energy costs and a lack of raw materials. See: Michael Hechter, 'Regional Inequality and National Integration: The Case of the British Isles', *Journal of Social History*, 5/1, (1971), 96-117; Andy Bielenberg, *Ireland and the Industrial Revolution: The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Irish Industry, 1801-1922* (London, 2009).

[31] Henry Patterson, 'The Irish Working Class and the Role of the State, 1850-2016' in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 149.

income differentials within Ireland, and between the country and the 'new world' may explain why so many of the Irish migrated abroad.[32]

Occupations

The structure of the Irish economy evolved during the nineteenth century. Louis Cullen declared that by the late nineteenth century, the country had a 'large foreign trade, its export-oriented industries, its highly developed infrastructure of banking, commerce and railways, and its foreign investment yielding a sizable income', and was 'comparable in some respects to a handful of highly developed nations.'[33] The decennial census provides further insights into Ireland's occupational structure, as 'the most complete source of information available on male and female labour force activity and occupations in Ireland during this period.'[34] The classification of women's work is, however, problematic. In particular, there is the issue of 'occupation's wife': where a wife's occupation was defined by their husband's occupation as they were presumed to be acting as an assistant to their husband.[35] This is assumed to have misallocated and inflated the enumerated female workers in the formal labour market.[36] The occupational data used here is from the 1881 census, which addressed the 'occupation's wife' issue by classifying these women as 'persons not producing' for the market economy.[37] This does not capture what was produced in the household for personal or family consumption.

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[32] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The Next World and the New World: Relief, Migration, and the Great Irish Famine', *Journal of Economic History,* 79/2 (2019), 319-355.

[33] Louis Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972), 170

[34] Jason Begley, Frank Geary, and Tom Stark, 'Occupational Structure in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century: Data Sources and Avenues of Exploration', *Cambridge Journal of Economics,* 44/1 (2020), 207.

[35] Xuesheng You, 'Women's Labour Force Participation in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales: Evidence from the 1881 Census Enumerators' Books,' *Economic History Review*, 73/1 (2020), 106-133.

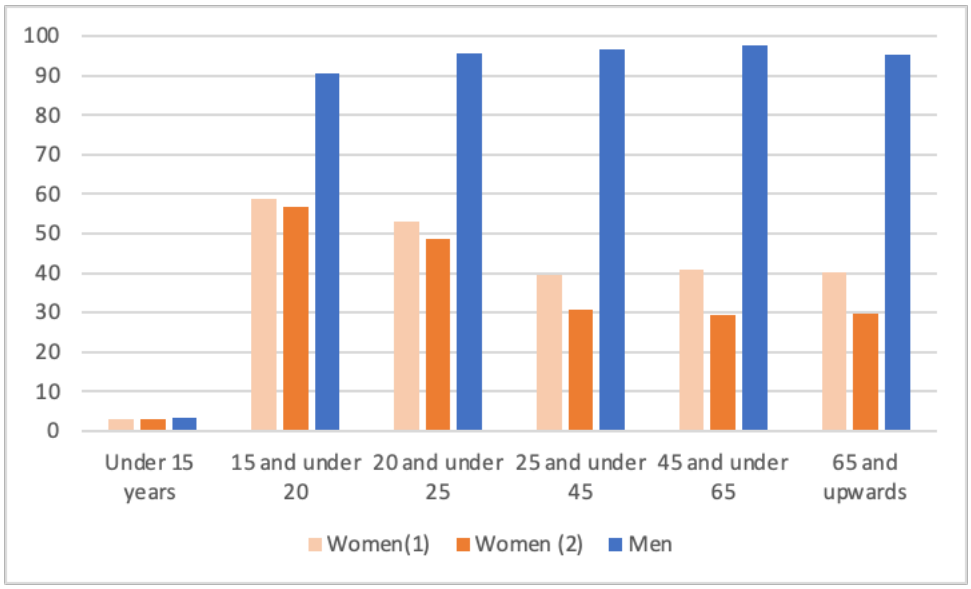
[36] Begley, Geary, and Stark, 'Occupational Structure', 214.

[37] *Parliamentary Papers* (1882), C. 3365, Census of Ireland, 1881: General Report, Maps, and Diagrams, Tables, Appendix.

The 1881 census data shows that Irish formal labour market was highly segmented by sex. Women were employed in narrow range of occupation with a high concentration in domestic service. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) is calculated using the occupations reported in the 1881 Census (to help comparison with the 1880 US data used in subsequent chapters) excluding those in the unoccupied class or not recorded as having an occupation. The data in Figure 2 presents the LFPR for both men and women in different age groups. There are two estimates for women: the first is for all women identified as enumerated in the census; the second excludes those identified as 'others engaged in service' which have been re-categorised as 'non-occupied.' According to Jason Begley, Geary and Stark, this group were primarily wives and relatives of the head of the family working as 'housekeepers' who should be categorised in the 'indefinite and non-productive class.'[38] The data shows that the overall male LFPR was consistently higher than the female LFPR across all age groups. If we focus on the women (2) data, the highest female LFPR was for those aged 15 to 20 (57 percent) with a subsequent decline in older age groups. The overall LFPR for all those aged 15 or over was 96 percent for men and 37 percent for women (women 2 data).

[38] Begley, Geary, and Stark, 'Occupational Structure', 218.

Figure 2. Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rates, Men and Women (Percentage of age category)



Source: calculated from *Parl. Pap.* (1882), C. 3365. Note: Women (1) is the LFPR based on all women identified as occupied in the 1881 Census. Women (2) is the LFPR based on all women identified as occupied in the 1881 Census except those who are identified as 'others engaged in service' who have been recategorised as 'non-occupied'.

The fragile national labour market was characterised by men increasingly undertaking waged work and women increasingly working in domestic unwaged – if not unproductive – roles.[39] Tables 3 and 4 provide data on the 'main occupations' of men and women in 1881, where these occupations have been defined as comprising at least 1 percent of the enumerated workforce. They also report the sex occupation quotient (SOQ) for women: a descriptive statistic that measures the sex balance in different occupational classes. It is calculated as the occupational class share by sex relative to the total occupation class share for both men and women. A SOQ of 1.0 shows that the occupational share of women (or men) is the same as the occupational share for both sexes; a SOQ greater than 1 indicates that the occupational share of women (or men) is greater than the occupational share for both

[39] Mary Daly, *Women and Work in Ireland* (Dublin, 1997), 5.

sexes; a SOQ less than 1 indicates that the occupational share of women (or men) is less than the occupational share for both sexes.[40]

As evidenced in Table 3, 75 percent of men worked in just 12 occupations. Over half (55 percent) of enumerated Irish male workers were in the main five agricultural occupations. The male SOQ data illustrates the sex segmentation of the formal labour market with men dominating the following occupations: farmer; agricultural labourer, general labourer, carpenter or joiner; shoemaker, bootmaker or dealer, police and soldier.[41]

[40] An alternative measure is the index of dissimilarity which has a range from zero, where there is no segregation and the percentage distributions are identical, to 100, where there is complete segregation. See Otis Duncan and Beverly Duncan, 'A Methodological Analysis of Segregation Indexes', *American Sociological Review,* 20/2 (1955), 210-217; Jane Humphries, '"The Most Free From Objection..." The Sexual Division of Labor and Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of Economic History,* 47/4 (1987), 929-949.

[41] Note the maximum male SOQ is 1.51 – thus all carpenters or joiners, police and soldiers were men.

Table 3. Main Adult Men's Occupations in Ireland, 1881

	Percent	SOQ
Farmer, grazier	24.8	1.31
Agricultural Labourer (outdoor)	12.38	1.4
Farmer's grazier's son, grandson, brother, nephew	12.31	1.51
General labourer	8.63	1.41
Farm servant (indoor)	5.55	1.25
Student	2.49	0.73
Flax and Linen- Manufacture, Dealer	1.75	0.56
Soldier	1.71	1.51
Carpenter, Joiner	1.64	1.51
Shoe, Boot-Maker, Dealer	1.61	1.43
Police	1.09	1.51
Domestic Indoor Servant	1.06	0.1
Total main occupations	75.02	
Other occupations	14.98	
Total	100.00	

Source: calculated from *Parl. Pap.* (1882), C. 3365.
Note: the sex occupation quotient (SOQ) is a descriptive statistic that measures the sex balance in different occupational classes. It is calculated as the occupational class share by sex relative to the total occupation class share for both sexes.

Women's waged work was restricted to a narrow range of occupations, as illustrated in Table 4. There are two series of data for women, the first (women 1) includes 'others engaged in service' whereas the second (women 2) excludes them as they may not be participating in the formal labour market. According to Table 4, 86 percent of women worked in 12 occupations (women 2), showing women were more concentrated in a narrower range of occupations compared to men. Domestic service was the largest occupation for women. Mona Hearn calculated that 48 percent of employed women in Ireland were in the domestic 'class', including workers in domestic service and 'other service.'[42] This is broadly consistent with the data in Table 4 which shows that 47 percent of employed women were in the

[42] Mona Hearn, *Below Stairs: Domestic Service Remembered in Dublin and Beyond, 1880-1922* (Dublin, 1993), 1.

domestic class (domestic indoor servant; washing and bathing service; and others engaged in service); although the adjusted figure is reduced to 36 percent in this class.

The female SOQ data illustrates the sex segmentation of the labour market. Women's work was in/as: service; washing and bathing service; flax and linen (manufacturer or dealer); weaver; milliner or dressmaker; shirtmaker or seamstress and general shopkeeper or dealer. The relatively high share of women working in domestic service meant many women had skills they could transfer to other labour markets, such as those in the US and Britain.

Table 4. Main Adult Women's Occupations in Ireland, 1881

	Percent		SOQ
	Women (1)	Women (2)	
Domestic indoor servant	27.91	33.86	2.76
Others engaged in service	17.59	NA	2.91
Shirtmaker, seamstress	8.65	10.49	2.95
Farmer, grazier	7.57	9.19	0.4
Flax and linen – manufacturer or dealer	5.89	7.15	1.87
Milliner, dressmaker	5.34	6.48	2.96
Student	5.19	6.29	1.52
Farm servant (indoor)	2.27	2.75	0.51
Agricultural labourer (outdoor)	1.97	2.39	0.22
General shopkeeper, dealer	1.94	2.35	1.63
Washing and bathing service	1.63	1.98	2.95
General labourer	1.18	1.43	0.19
Weaver (undefined)	1.1	1.33	2.2
Total main occupations	88.23	85.69	
Other occupations	11.77	14.31	
Total	100.00	100.00	

Source: calculated from *Parl. Pap.* (1882), C. 3365.
Notes:
Women (1) is the LFPR based on all women identified as occupied in the 1881 Census.
Women (2) is the LFPR based on all women identified as occupied in the 1881 Census except those who are identified as 'others engaged in service' who have been recategorised as 'non-occupied', see main text and John Begley et al (2020).
The sex occupation quotient (SOQ) is a descriptive statistic that measures the sex balance in different occupational classes. It is calculated as the occupational class share by sex relative to the total occupation class share for both sexes.

Industrial employment opportunities for women were limited to the north-east. Ulster was the only province where the decline in the male population was greater than the decline in the female population, reflecting how its industrialisation attracted domestic migration of women from other provinces. Despite the narrow range of opportunities and the prevalence of low wages, many women sought paid labour out of necessity. Women's work was in

demand but their labour was cheap and considered as 'unskilled', by dint of it being performed by women. As mechanisation spread, many of the jobs undertaken by women were replaced by machines as the unit cost of capital was lower than the unit cost of female labour.[43] Men, meanwhile, received higher wages for performing supervisory roles. Men's ability to organise also disrupted the employment of women, ensuring that women were excluded from unions and kept at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy.[44] Women's trade unionism did, however, take off in the linen industry in Belfast and Derry. By 1909, (only) about 5,000 of Ireland's 70,000 trade unionists were women, and about 4,000 of those were members of linen unions in the north of the country.[45] For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, women's labour organisation by women was separated from (and subsidiary to) men's trade unions, due to fears that the presence of women would undercut wage bargaining by men.

Wages

Although the growth of GDP per capita is useful to look at trends in average prosperity it does not provide insights into the distribution of income, particularly between the sexes.[46] Some historians have made broad economic arguments based on limited data sets that only include the experiences of (some) men. Hatton and Williamson based their

[43] Unit costs are the average cost of labour/capital per unit of output produced.

[44] On women's organisation see: Maria Luddy, 'Feminism' in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton NJ, 2016), 480; Maria Luddy, 'Working Women, Trade Unionism and Politics in Ireland, 1830-1945' in Fintan Lane and Donal Ó Drisceoil (eds), *Politics and the Working Class, 1830-1945* (London, 2005), 44-61.

[45] Theresa Moriarty, 'Larkin and the Women's Movement', in Donal Nevin (ed.), *James Larkin: Lion of the Fold*, (Dublin, 1998/2006), 93. See also Margaret Neill, 'Home workers in Ulster, 1850-1911' in Janice Holmes and Diane Urquhart, *Coming into the Light: The Work, Politics and Religion of Women in Ulster, 1840-1940*, Institute of Irish Studies,1994, 2-32.

[46] The 'income approach' to GDP consist of three components: income from work (wages); the return to capital (profits) and the income from the ownership of lands (rent). Although GDP per capita may be increasing, this does not mean that the income of all or even the majority of the population is increasing. Moreover, even if the wage share in national income is increasing in a growing economy, this does not mean that the *real* wages of all workers are increasing.

conclusion of improved wellbeing on an empirical analysis of male unskilled labourers' wages in the Dublin building industry; which is only appropriate if *all* wages for *all* workers closely followed the path of wages in that particular male-dominated industry.[47] In their revision of Hatton and Williamson, Begley, Geary and Stark have suggested 'the level of Irish wages is *reduced* and their rate of growth *slowed* compared to the limited sample on which earlier studies were based.[48] Wage data for women has occasionally been analysed but such data is limited in scope and applicability, such as Begley *et al's* revised estimates which include some female wages in domestic service extracted from Mona Hearn's dataset.[49] The proportion of women enumerated in service rose during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the absolute number of servants declined from 1881, service was still the second largest occupational group for women in 1911, surpassed only by the manufacturing sector. As with manufacturing, women often moved within Ireland to different town, cities or counties to take up service posts. By 1911, only 28 percent of those working in Dublin, the epicentre of domestic service, were born in Dublin city or county Dublin.[50]

Table 5 shows the ratio of Irish average money wages to average money wages in Great Britain (GB) wages in a variety of occupations in 1881 and 1881. It reveals three key insights. First, money wages were higher in the Great Britain compared to Ireland in all of the occupations identified in these years. Second, this gap varied by occupation with domestic servants having the largest gap – with Irish wages being a third of those in Great Britain in 1881. Third, there was only a small narrowing of the overall gap (the weighted average)

[47] The original wage data was published in:Jeffrey Williamson, 'The Evolution of Global Labor Markets in the First and Second World since 1830: Background Evidence and Hypotheses', *Explorations in Economic History*, 32/2 (1995), 141-196. Note Hatton and Williamson only present the data for 1850 to 1913: see Hatton and Williamson, 'After the Famine', 580 Figure 2.

[48] Begley, Geary, and Stark, 'Convergence in the Pre-1914 Atlantic Economy', 62. Emphasis added.

[49] Begley, Geary and Stark, 'Convergence in the Pre-1914 Atlantic Economy,' 43-67; Hearn, *Below Stairs.*

[50] Hearn, *Below Stairs,* 1-16.

between 1881 and 189 as ratio of Irish wages to GB wages was 0.59 in 1881 and 0.61 in 1891.

Table 5. Ratio of Irish/GB Average Money Wages, 1881 and 1911 (various occupations)

Occupation	1881	1911
Agriculture	0.67	0.69
Building & construction	0.76	0.85
Shipbuilding	0.91	0.88
Government & defence	0.84	0.62
Textiles	0.69	0.66
Clothing	0.68	0.72
Printing & books	0.74	0.7
Railways	0.66	0.74
Domestic servants	0.33	0.4
All other industries	0.76	0.78
Weighted average	0.59	0.61

Source: Begley, Geary and Stark, 'Convergence in the Pre-1914 Atlantic Economy', 57.

It should be emphasised that historical real wage data is largely based on the male wage and are subject to continual revision. As Ó Gráda has observed, 'the discussion of past living standards is too often conducted in terms of men's wages alone.' And where there are data for women, they are subject to much uncertainty. Ó Gráda has emphasised that the evidence of the female-male wage ratio – which in 'no more than tentative' and refers only to agricultural wages – shows that women's wages were only just over half (a ratio of 0.56) of those of men in 1860. Irish wages in skilled and semi-skilled work in 1914 were just below those in GB (ratio of 0.93) whereas the ratio of the wages of Irish labourers was much lower

for both men (ratio of 0.73) and particularly women (ratio of 0.69).[51] Overall, the evidence suggests that international wage convergence was slow particularly for unskilled work.

Begley, Geary and Stark have provided estimates of wages in domestic service based on the work of Mona Hearn; who noted that her data were tentative, and that they should not be taken as representative of Irish women's experiences. Hearn's data was based on the Labour Department's report on the wages of domestic servants (1899), which declared:

> the number of servants included in the returns from Ireland are not large, nor do the returns show anything like the uniformity of variation at different age periods shown in English and Scottish districts. The returns come from Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Limerick and neighbourhood, and the wages vary considerably in the different parts, being apparently higher for the same age and class of household in the north than in the south; on the other hand the distribution of servants according to age varies considerably in the different provinces, and for the whole of Ireland bears little resemblance to the distribution in England and Wales and Scotland…. Whereas in Great Britain only about 9 percent are over 45 years of age, in Ireland nearly 22 percent are over 45. [52]

Very few domestics received formal training before taking up service work.[53] The term 'domestic servant' could mean that a woman was working alongside her mistress to undertake all the domestic labour in the household; or she could be one of many servants in a country home, part of an internal hierarchy that meant that she never spoke to her employer. Most posts fell somewhere between these two extremes. Although enumerated as an 'indoor servant' in the census, a servant's tasks in rural areas may have included some agricultural work. Servant's tasks were also contingent on the familial composition and the financial situation of the employer: for example, in a large lower middle-class family with young children, a young girl may have been employed to help with housework and the children; this

[51] Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 249-250.
[52] *Parliamentary Papers* (1899), Cd. 9346, Wages of domestic servants. Board of Trade (Labour Department). Report by Miss Collet, on the money wages of indoor domestic servants, 9.
[53] Hearn, *Below Stairs*, 30.

role would become obsolete as the children aged, often with the eldest daughter acquiring the servant's role.[54]

Women in Ireland were concentrated in precarious, piece-meal and piece-rate work, often with a family in desperate need, who combined paid work with childcare and other domestic responsibilities. Laundry could be taken home, while seamstresses and shirt-makers were often on piece-rates. That so many women were enumerated in these jobs as their full-time occupation in the census reflect the economic realities of many in post-famine Ireland. Undertaking outwork, outside the factory or mill, remained dominant, despite the gradual shift to factory production at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1867, 2,000 workers were employed in factories cutting-out, laundering and packing shirts, but a further 10,000 outworkers were employed throughout Derry and Donegal. By 1902, the industry employed approximately 18,000 as factory workers, but 80,000 as outworkers, 80 percent of whom were women. Of the 13,691 women employed as dressmakers in Dublin in 1891, only 5,000 worked in factories.[55] Movement of work into factories made it difficult for women to combine work and childcare in some north-eastern areas, and childcare was often devolved to older siblings, other relatives and neighbours. [56]

The census data indicate that there was a post-famine shift in women's labour out of agriculture. Farms in pre-famine Ireland, as in most agricultural economies, were run as family enterprises, relying on women and children's labour as much as men's.[57] Edward

[54] Hearn, *Below Stairs,* 7-8.
[55] Daly, *Women and Work*, 27.
[56] Joseph Lee, 'Women and the Church since the Famine', in Margaret MacCurtain and Donnchadh Ó Corrain (eds), *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension* (Dublin, 1978), 37-45.
[57] Lynn Hollen Lees, 'Mid-Victorian Migration and the Irish Family Economy', *Victorian Studies,* 20/1 (1976), 25-43.

Wakefield stated in 1812 that Irish women were 'subjected to all the drudgery generally performed by men: setting potatoes, digging turf, and the performance of the most laborious occupations.'[58] Sharing the agricultural load was arduous work and being pushed out of the agricultural sector may have led to an improvement in women's wellbeing. Yet the economist Charles Oldham stated:

> I cannot accept the Census figure for 1911—that of an Agricultural Class numbering 703,520 persons (adults, aged 20 years and upwards), only 58,138 are Women! There are considerable districts in the West of Ireland where practically the whole agricultural work is now being done by women; the men are migratory workers, who work on farms in Great Britain in the summer, and often return there to work at mining occupations in the winter. But these women agricultural workers are probably included among the 1,104,032 adult women who appear in the Irish census as the 'Indefinite' or 'Unoccupied Class.'[59]

The data in Table 4, which shows a relatively small share of women working in agriculture (compared to men) could be interpreted as showing that women broke free from agrarian toil, but this is a statistical artefact. The census focuses on the formal labour market, as framed by the male breadwinner ideal, ignored the informal and familial nature of women's work. Many of those women classed as 'non-productive' included relatives – such as aunts and cousins – who did not receive money wages but received board and keep for their domestic labour. The reports of the Congested District Board indicated many women laboured on farms, particularly in times of hardship. It was common for women to undertake all indoor domestic labour, take charge of the household budget, and earn an income from cottage-based industries such as spinning, weaving, sewing and embroidery. They also reaped the crops while men were in Britain for the harvest.[60] Seasonal migrants were mostly

[58] Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, vol. 2 (London, 1812), 751.
[59] Charles Oldham, 'The Incidence of Emigration on Town and Country Life in Ireland', *Journal of the Statistical Inquiry Society of* Ireland, 13 (1914), 213.
[60] Ciara Breathnach, 'The Role of Women in the Economy of the West of Ireland, 1891-1923', *New Hibernia Review/ Irish Éireannach Nua,* 8/1 (2004), 82.

men, who would travel in groups to England to undertake short-term labour in construction, agriculture and service. Although some women would also temporarily move from Achill and Donegal, in general the 'Irishmen came, worked and went.'[61]

The output of women's work was increasingly traded, as women 'made the butter, spun the wool, cared for the pigs and poultry, and sold the eggs.'[62] Women's earnings remained central to families' survival especially in the west. In the Glenties district, the average family income in the 1880s and 1890s was £38/19/6 pence and half of this came from female earnings from the sale of eggs and knitted goods.[63] Even as late as the 1920s, wives and mothers remained breadwinners in the west.[64] In some communities, women continued to undertake farm work, wading into the Atlantic Sea to gather sea-weed for kelp, harvesting turf in the field - without the help of machinery, and with the added burden of domestic chores waiting for them in the farm house. Women did not simply 'disappear' from market work and economic life within Ireland. Instead their labour became an extension of their domestic role, devalued and rendered invisible as 'work.'[65]

The Home

The devaluation of women's waged labour in post-famine Ireland was similar to trends across Britain with the emergence of the Victorian domestic ideology. In carefully constructed gendered images of the perceived role of husband and wife, the husband was

[61] Caitríona Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester, 2007), 67.
[62] Lees, 'Mid-Victorian Migration', 27.
[63] Breathnach, 'The Role of Women in the Economy', 82. It is not specified whether this is annual.
[64] Breathnach, 'The Role of Women in the Economy', 90.
[65] Katie Barclay, 'Farmwives, Domesticity and Work in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Rural History,* 24/2 (2013), 156.

legally recognised as the official head of the household, while he wife was the primary homemaker and caregiver. Women's roles was constrained in post-famine Ireland, not least because Ireland was a predominantly rural country shaped by a powerful and interventionist Catholic church. In glorifying female virtue and piety, Cara Delay has suggested that Ireland's devotional revolution herded Irish women into restricted roles as wives and mothers. Leading church figures consistently denounced 'public' women. The Archbishop Edward McCabe of Dublin, for example, accused members of the Ladies' Land League of denigrating womanhood. [66]

The church was one factor, but so too was the lack of industrialization and the very different growth of a Catholic middle class and social system in rural Ireland following the famine. Changing agricultural practices, with the rise of impartible inheritance of farms and familial land, led to arranged marriages and dowries for the labouring poor, with the latter taking the form of money, household goods or even the promise of a wife's labour. The inter-generational transfer of farm and land was passed undivided to one favoured son. This son was (normally) married and took active control of the household, while 'surplus' siblings left home, or remained single and lived at home. Households were often multi-generational 'stem families', where elderly parents remained resident but relinquished control of the home.[67] If the dowry was large and a woman was considered to have domestic skills, her future security within the home was assured. One man was taken to court in 1904 for breaking off an engagement in favour of another woman, but his defence was that his new fiancée bought a

[66] Delay, *Irish Women and The Creation of Modern Catholicism*, 20.

[67] Kenneth Connell's *The Population of Ireland, 1750-1845* (Oxford, 1950), and a series of subsequent articles by the same author, promulgated the stem-family argument: 'Peasant Marriage in Ireland after the Great Famine', *Past and Present,* 12 (1957), 76-92; 'Peasant Marriage in Ireland: Its Structure and Development since the Famine', *Economic History Review,* 14/3 (1962), 502-523; and 'Catholicism and Marriage in the Century after the Famine', in Kenneth Connell (ed.), *Irish Peasant Society: Four Historical Essays*, (Oxford, 1968), 113-161. For further discussion Irish household structure, see pp. 59-63.

dowry of £800 and 'kept a nice table with plenty on it, and a large decanter of whiskey.'[68] In proving her worth, this man's new fiancée would soon be able to take control over her own household, supported by her husband and her new family.

Some historians have suggested a man was the head of the household in name only. Women's occupational opportunities in the formal labour market were narrowed, but the home offered the scope for women to find purpose, exert influence and elevate their status. Joanna Bourke's study of Irish women, economic change and housework from 1890 to 1914 is instructive here. Bourke investigated 'the interaction of female wellbeing, agricultural production, and labour' to understand the withdrawal of female labour from the formal paid labour market.[69] Placing women's agency and subjective wellbeing at the forefront, Bourke's work indicates the importance of differentiating between economic indicators (such as participation in the paid labour market and rising real wages), non-economic or social indicators (such as diet, health, education and literacy); and subjective and psychological indicators (such as status and empowerment). Bourke has argued that the idea that paid labour led to independence and status is overstated: under patriarchy, women's employment options in rural locales were always governed by local custom and the social standing of their male relatives.[70] Instead most Irish mothers stayed out of the formal labour market and remained in the home, focusing their labours on childcare, cleaning and general housework. Women, according to Bourke, perceived their domestic labour as 'a sensible strategy for reducing the risk of poverty', increasing both their consumption and that of their family

[68] Katie Barclay, 'Place and Power in Irish Farms at the End of the Nineteenth Century' *Women's History Review,* 2 21/4 (2012), 576.
[69] Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland 1890-1914* (Oxford, 1993), 2.
[70] Bourke, Husbandry to Housewifery, 266.

members.' Remaining in the home also allowed women to exercise power 'over and beyond its potential in the paid workforce and in the familial farming market.'[71]

This power took on further urgency as in some circles, women's domestic and reproductive labour became fused with nationalist sentiment: homemaking could be considered a woman's duty to both her family and to the nation. Although she generally avoided nationalist sentiment, the leader of the Irish Countrywomen's Association Ellice Pilkington did espouse the improvement of the nation in terms of health and wellbeing, declaring that it 'is quite enchanting to cook porridge in the belief that it will make bone and muscle for present and future generations.'[72] Bourke has argued that many women enthusiastically embraced the focus on their domestic responsibilities, eagerly attending state-run classes in domestic education, so much so that short courses had to be extended due to high demand and waiting lists.[73]

Given the increasing propensity of women to migrate from the west of Ireland at the turn of twentieth century, the suggestion that the rise of domesticicty 'enabled women to adopt a more creative and productive role' is unsustainable. Bourke admitted that 'not all households allowed women a creative function, but it would be foolish to assume that there was creativity in monotonous jobs for a subsistence wage.'[74] But the implication that women found creativity in some households is also difficult to accept. Women's domestic labour did not mean 'simply' cleaning and cooking. It was physically hard, consistently lonely, and often included unremunerated farm work. One might interpret women's attendance at

[71] Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 271-275.
[72] James MacPherson, '"Ireland Begins in the Home": Women, Irish National Identity, and the Domestic Sphere in the Irish Homestead, 1896-1912' *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 36/3.4 (2001), 131.
[73] Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 244.
[74] Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 275.

domestic education classes as not simply to improve their housewifery skills but as a way of escaping from their home, and a place to talk (or commiserate) with other women.[75]

Women's labour took multiple forms throughout their lives including domestic, manual, waged and reproductive. Caring for many dependents, including both older and younger members of the household, was common. Marital fertility rates were particularly high in post-famine Ireland. The 1911 Irish census asked married women how long they had been married, how many children they had borne and how many of their children had survived. Approximately half of married women had given birth to between five and nine children by the time they had been married for 20 years while a further 30 percent had 10 or more children. Irish couples had more children than comparable couples in either Scotland or England. A woman born in England who married between 25 and 29 and had been married for 20 to 25 years in 1911 had on average 3.9 children while her Scottish counterpart had 4.6. An urban Irish woman in the same position had 4.8 while a rural woman would be mother to 5.9 children.[76] The reproductive labour women endured was a relentless burden of being an Irish mother – if they survived the multiple pregnancies.

As women's domestic duties in Ireland became increasingly burdensome, emigration flourished. Although the speed and extent of Ireland's economic growth has been debated by economic historians, prosperity in Ireland was perceived by contemporaries as still lagging behind many other countries by the 1900s. Dr Kelly, Lord Bishop of Ross stated that by 1904 'Ireland was situated between two countries that perhaps reached the highest standard of living of any countries in the world… there is scarcely a family in Ireland which has not

[75] Margaret Ward, 'Book Review: Husbandry to Housewifery', *Women's History Review*, 4/4, (1995), 558.
[76] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 241-242.

relatives in England or America.'[77]As Irish people emigrated, their experiences were retold, information flowed back to Ireland, and aspirations at home were raised Some Irish wanted to leave the country to increase and improve their consumption basket – but others wanted to consume such a basket in Ireland. Dr Kelly explained how relatives were 'constantly writing home about the American working man having flesh meat four times a day; the brother at home is not contended with seeing flesh meat only at Christmas.' This desire for improved consumption was exacerbated by the flow of letters, remittances and gifts home from those abroad, which 'teaches Irish people a higher standard of living' and that here is 'more seeking after physical comforts than had been the case.' The urban poor were particularly keen, Kelly noted, to consume a more varied and expensive diet. While the rural poor remained reliant on harvesting potatoes and churning buttermilk, low-income labourers in urban centres had an increasing access to - and desire for - bacon, tea, sugar and bread, bought from the local shop.[78]

The food that many Irish people consumed in the post-famine period was more varied, tastier, and quicker to prepare than in the pre-famine period – and the latter released time for more work or leisure. But the tea was stewed and syrupy, the bread sour and sodden, and the bacon was fatty, lacking the nutrients of the pre-famine diet: 'where the population deserted potatoes, it lost the health-giving benefits of potatoes without nutritional gains from the alternatives.'[79] A meal of fatty bacon and adulterated bread may be an indicator of a poor

[77] *Parliamentary Papers* (1904) Cd. 2210, Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration Vol. II. List of Witnesses and Evidence, 414.

[78] Juliana Adelman, 'Food in Ireland since 1740', in in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 237.

[79] Height, as a proxy for nutritional status, suggests that the pre-famine Irish were tall and well fed, particularly in comparison with their English counterparts who did not rely heavily on the potato. The national pre-famine diet of potatoes and milk, which remained typical in the rural west in the second half of the nineteenth century, was highly nutritious, providing essential proteins, calories and calcium. See: Leslie Clarkson and E. Margaret Crawford, *Feast and Famine: Food and Nutrition in Ireland 1500-1920* (Oxford, 2001), 233-241. According to Ó Gráda, Dubliners did not fare so well in height, with 'little change in the mean height of Dubliners

diet to a dietician, or a purchase of an inferior good to an economist, but it may also reflect the rising expectations and aspirations of the consumer. As Kelly argued, the Irish peasantry and labouring classes 'have got to regard bread and tea as a higher and better class of food… they are not satisfied with potatoes at present.' The budgeting, buying, preparation, and serving of meals was a woman's work, and rising expectations may have led to increased pressures on women to keep up with their friends and family abroad, while providing nutritious meals for their family. On arriving back in Ireland to visit friends, the 'Returned Yank' was reputed to 'insist on being treated pretty much in the same style as they live in America,' and Kelly emphasised how Irish brothers insisted on luxurious meals.[80] Moreover, the male breadwinner may have also been a male 'bread consumer', with an unequal division of resources consumed within the home but with relatively more work (especially unpaid) shouldered by women and girls.[81] While the evidence is conjectural, it was traditional in Irish families than all the male members of the family would eat first.[82] Women remaining in Ireland may have felt the effect of the declining consumption of healthy foodstuffs more acutely than men. If emigration of their friends and relatives led to rising aspirations amongst men and women back in Ireland, it also led to rising expectations and responsibilities on women who were already overworked and undervalued.

between the 1840s and 1900s, but a modest improvement in that of rural men….The difference is probably an indication that conditions improved more in post-famine rural Ireland than in the city.' However, Ó Gráda admitted his all-male data was limited in scope and should be interpreted with caution. See: *Ireland: A New Economic History,* 105- 110; 243-248.

[80] *Parl. Pap* (1904) Cd. 2210, 414.

[81] Robert Kennedy, *The Irish: Emigration, Marriage and Fertility* (Berkeley CA, 1973), 51-65.

[82] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, 117.

Household Structure

Bourke's work is important as it provides a discussion of women's subjective wellbeing, but it also shows the importance of considering the variance of women's roles within the household. The argument is limited to wives from the rural west of Ireland. It does not take account of the many women who lived in urban environments, or were out of wedlock, or who had different relationships to the household head, or who were the de facto head of household themselves. The socio-economic changes in the second half of the nineteenth century both propagated a 'model of femininity centred on the idealized housewife and mother' but also 'restricted the possibility to marry and have a family.'[83] Marriage was disregarded or delayed as 'brothers curried for fathers' favours and daughters vied for dowries.'[84] The marital status of Irish men and women in 1851, 1881 and 1911 are shown in Tables 6 and 7. There were increasing shares of both single men and single women in the Irish population between 1851 and 1911 while the total number of the married population fell consistently. Moreover, the marriage age consitently rose. In 1871, 43 percent of all women aged 15 to 45 were married but by 1911 this had dropped to 36 percent. The average age at marriage for both sexes rose from the mid-20s in the mid-nineteenth century, to 29 years old for women and 33 years old for men in 1911.[85] Irish women in the post-famine period married at a lower rate than the European norm, and at a later age than other European women, as well as their pre-famine forbearers.

[83] Catriona Kennedy, 'Women and Gender in Modern Ireland' in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton NJ, 2016), 369-370.
[84] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, p. 136; Clear, *Social Change*, 74.
[85] Luddy and O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland,* 99-100.

Table 6. Marital Status of Adult Irish Men, 1851-1911 (selective decennial years)

	1851		1881		1911	
	No	% of total	No	% of Total	No	% of total
Single	866087	47.86	817686	50.79	850437	55.52
Married	832216	45.99	696288	43.25	589861	38.51
Widowed	111284	6.15	95810	5.95	91523	5.97
Total	1809587	100.00	1609784	100.00	1531821	100.00

Source: calculated from census data in Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics*.
Note: where totals do not sum to 100 percent this is due to rounding.

Table 7. Marital Status of Adult Irish Women, 1851-1911 (selective decennial years)

	1851		1881		1911	
	No	% of total	No	% of total	No	% of total
Single	819054	40.45	782869	44.78	751738	48.25
Married	867405	42.84	712246	40.74	601570	38.61
Widowed	338499	16.72	252951	14.47	204740	13.14
Total	2024958	100.00	1748066	100.00	1558048	100.00

Source: calculated from census data in Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics.*
Note: where totals do not sum to 100 percent this is due to rounding.

Marriage remained common in the west of Ireland throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, althought there is some evidence of its decline from 1881.[86] Timothy Guinnane attributed rising celibacy rates in the west as an explicit choice made by farming men (with celibacy assumed to indicate non-marriage). These single men viewed marriage as a purely financial transaction, so it was no longer necessary in an improving post-famine

[86] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 200-203. Joseph Lee has pointed out that the age of marriage changed less dramatically than previously thought and where it was apparent it was an outcome of the compositional effect of the decline of the rural western labouring class. Lee notes that the labouring class, as a proportion of the total population, declined from over half in 1841 to just a quarter by 1881. The surviving members of this class appear to have continued to marry at a relatively young age compared with the more elite farming class. See: 'Marriage and Population Growth in pre-Famine Ireland,' *Economic History Review*, 21/2 (1968), 285.

economy.[87] Guinnane considered rising non-marriage as a sign of economic growth, whereas Ó Gráda perceived it as a sign of poor wellbeing that afflicted men. For those women who had little prospect of land or marriage, emigration was the best path to find a husband. Ó Gráda has suggested emigration 'presumably' improved the marriage chances and choices for women remaining in Ireland.[88] The 'presumably' in this sentence is doing a lot of work. The question of women's agency is important, women were not moving to just marry – but to make other choices to improve their wider wellbeing.

Women's migration was arguably a cause of, rather than a response to, men's celibacy in the rural west. Despite the assumptions that all women wanted to marry, many may have preferred to stay single. Migration may have improved the opportunities for women to choose the route that they preferred. In contrast with Guinanne's work, Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Diana Urquhart's research has shown Ulster was the only province to experience an increase in its married population in the post-famine period, reflecting its developed economy, urbanisation and industrialisation.[89] Caitríona Clear has also pointed out that many women amongst the urban labouring class in towns and cities married young, drawing on their own resources rather than a dowry.[90] Earner-Byrne and Urquhart have also presented an alternative argument, emphasising two points. First, the north-east, with its more developed urban and industrial economy, provided the financial means for men and women to marry. Second, living and working in an urban area reinforced social interactions between men and women, many of whom were physically removed from parental influence. Internal

[87] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 199; 239.

[88] Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 249.

[89] Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Diana Urquhart, 'Gender Roles in Ireland since 1740 in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 320.

[90] In County Kilkenny's mining area of Castlecomer, for example, only 28 percent of women aged 35 to 44 years-old were single, compared with its rural neighbour Thomastown, where 37 percent of the same age group were unmarried: Clear, *Social Change,* 76.

migration broadened the opportunities to forge intimate relationships. It may have also expanded the expectations of what men and women wanted from their life partners – and in some cases, may have led many to decide that they did not want a life partner. The heaviest concentration of single women in 1881 and 1911 were in the urban south and in the largely Protestant County Dublin, and relatively high levels in Counties Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Derry.[91] Many women eschewed marriage despite being able to afford it. For some women, neither marriage nor emigration were appealing, although their ability to live comfortably within Ireland rested on the economic conditions of their family.

The Irish household structure (and intra-household life and experiences) was much more variable in the second half of the nineteenth century than the stem-family model postulated by Kenneth Connell suggests.[92] Statistical analyses of samples from the early twentieth-century censuses and fragments from the nineteenth-century censuses reveal how Irish women were in a wide variety of household structures. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant has suggested that a typical Ballyduff (County Kerry) household at the turn of the twentieth century was comprised of neither a stem nor nuclear family, but a multi-generational household with multiple siblings in the home.[93] Guinnane has argued that although multi-generational and extended-family households were more common in Ireland than in England, the decline of typical nuclear families reflected an increase in solitary and no-family households.[94] Using a national sample of 2,495 households drawn from the 1911 census, Carmel Corrigan has concluded that stem families' prevalence has 'largely been overstated'

[91] Kennedy, 'Women and Gender in Modern Ireland', 369.

[92] Where a married couple, one of their children and that child's spouse and offspring live under one roof.

[93] Donna Birdwell-Pheasant, 'Irish Households in the Early Twentieth Century: Culture, Class, and Historical Contingency', *Journal of Family History*, 18/1 (1993), 222.

[94] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, 164. Francis Carney also makes this argument in: 'Household Size and Structure in Two Areas of Ireland, 1821 and 1911', in Louis Cullen and François Furet (eds), *Ireland and France: Towards a Comparative Rural History* (Paris, 1981), 149-165.

and that nuclear households remained the dominant form of household. Extended family households, containing someone related to the conjugal family unit other than the married couple and their children (such as an aunt, sister-in-law, or mother-in-law) were also relatively high.[95] Yoshifumi Shimizu meanwhile has stated there was a 'definite shift' from the nuclear to stem family household in post-famine Ireland. This shift, however, was a gradual process, with various regional and social hierarchical factors coming into play.[96]

The post-famine marital trends and household structures were complex, and took different shapes throughout Ireland, as men and women negotiated different regional, social and economic factors to maintain or improve their individual and familial wellbeing. There was a high rate of non-marriage in Ireland but the extent to which this can be attributed to rigid patriarchal structures, as suggested by scholars Joseph Lee and Kenneth Connell, remains unclear. A high non-marriage rate does not moreover, necessarily equate to celibacy. It more likely points to a culture in which non-marital relationships and sex were hidden. By the end of the nineteenth century, unmarried mothers had become the subject of reform and institutionalisation, and remained stigmatised well into the twentieth centuries. But as Mary O'Dowd and Maria Luddy have pointed out, despite the public discourse, the birth rate for children born out of wedlock decreased over the period, continuing to be 'less than that recorded for most other European countries'; and 'for the years 1921–1923, births outside marriage amounted to 2.6 percent of all registered births in Ireland.'[97]

[95] Carmel Corrigan, 'Household Structure in Early Twentieth Century Ireland', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 3/1 (1993), 56-78

[96] Yoshifumi Shimizu (assisted by Jane Gray), *Studies of Post-1841 Irish Family Structures* (Osaka, 2014), 217-223.

[97] Luddy and O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland,* 150.

Education

Women's domestic role was reinforced by the post-famine education system.[98] The diffusion of reading and writing was the major achievement of the National School system, which existed between 1831 and 1922. It was considered more important to educate boys, under the - increasingly mistaken - assumption that girls would get married and 'never use' their education. Yet male and female literacy rates in Ireland were equally high, and from 1878 girls could sit public Intermediate Examinations on equal terms with boys from the Irish Intermediate Education Board's establishment. Dominated initially by middle-class students, children from more modest backgrounds in rural and urban Ireland soon followed suit in their numbers.[99] Primary school attendance was also made compulsory in 1892.[100] Both boys and girls in national schools were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, dictation and geography. By 1911, 88 percent of the population aged nine years and older could read and write.[101] Girls appeared to have embraced education. In western Ireland, women had higher literacy rates than men due to their propensity to attend school more regularly, for longer periods, and to achieve higher standards compared to boys.[102] Janet Nolan has argued that economic growth led to the provision of more education, in which women 'no less than men' benefited.[103] Conversely, Mathias Blum, Christopher Colvin, Laura McAtackney and Eoin McLaughlin have described an inverse causality whereby the Irish economy benefited from

[98] David Fitzpatrick, '"A Share of the Honeycomb": Education, Emigration and Irish women ', *Continuity and Change*, (1986), 218; Judith Harford and Deirdre Raftery, 'The Education of Girls Within the National System', in Deirdre Raftery and Susan Parkes (eds) *Female Education in Ireland 1700-1900* (Dublin, 2007), 36-37; Clear, *Social Change,* 43.

[99] Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland*, 49.

[100] Fitzpatrick, '"A Share of the Honeycomb", 218; Harford and Raftery, 'The Education of Girls Within the National System', 43.

[101] *Parliamentary Papers* (1912/13), Cd. 6663, Census of Ireland, 1911. General Report with Tables and Appendix, lii.

[102] Fitzpatrick, '"A Share of the Honeycomb', 218-220.

[103] Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland 1885-1920* (Lexington KY, 1989), 26-27.

the increased education including the accumulation of human capital by women.[104] An alternative perspective is that the opportunity of Irish women to acquire skills and education in the nineteenth century was often an alternative to - rather than a requirement for - entering the domestic work force. Young girls were more likely to attend school in Munster and southern Leinster, where there was little opportunity for female child waged labour.[105] No longer regarded as an integral part of the agricultural familial labour force, daughters were kept at school longer than their brothers. It was not a parental desire for their daughters to develop skills, nor was it an 'indication of their preferred status.''[106] The opportunity costs of schooling were lower for girls; when women were needed in the labour market, such as in the north-east, their education was often discarded.

As emigrants sent letters home, children and adolescents responded by learning to read, write and speak English to correspond and catch up with their friends and relatives abroad, taking heed of emigrants' advice to get their schooling before making their way abroad.[107] The 1889 Report from the Select Committee on Colonisation noted how specimen letters inscribed by children in national schools were 'invariably written to some friend either in the United States or Canada, or Australia, asking the person to send a ticket to take them out.'[108] Girls took advantage of the chance to write letters abroad. Schooling raised women's consciousness of life elsewhere, and equipped women with the necessary practical skills required to move abroad, including the ability to speak, read and write English. By the early twentieth century, literate women were more likely to migrate compared to illiterate women

[104] Mathias Blum, Christopher Colvin, Laura McAtackney, and Eoin McLaughlin, 'Women of an Uncertain Age: Quantifying Human Capital Accumulation in Rural Ireland in the Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 70/1 (2017), 219.
[105] Fitzpatrick, '"A Share of the Honeycomb"', 220.
[106] Rhodes, *Women and the Family in Post-Famine Ireland*, 231.
[107] See Chapter Three.
[108] David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921', in William Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland: Ireland under the Union 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2012), 615.

in all but eight Irish counties, while male emigration continued to be drawn from the illiterate population.[109] The letters from America (and elsewhere) aided literacy and also inculcated the option of emigration from an early age.

Educators knew that many of their female students wanted to leave the country – but many had mixed attitudes towards their student's aspirations. Some national school teachers decorated their classrooms with pictures and descriptions of foreign lands, and even illicitly obtained commission as emigration agents.[110] The Castlerosse Training School in Kerry, however, wanted their students 'to earn in Ireland the money which is so often given to English people and foreigners and not to enable them to swell the stream which is draining the life of the country.'[111] Unwittingly or otherwise, education became the training ground for women's emigration by the 1880s.

The education acquired by Irish women was persistently gendered, although it was shaded by class. Middle-class girls 'were not expected to require skills other than that of home-maker.'[112] The national school system also provided some domestic training for working-class girls. Needlework was compulsory, and some schools offered cookery and laundry work, although this depended on access to equipment.[113] There was also some training for domestic service provided in workhouses, industrial schools and reformatories, with an implicit understanding amongst institutional providers that waged work was not a feminine ideal but an economic necessity. Industrial schools also offered some remunerative

[109] Enda Delaney, 'Diaspora', in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton NJ, 2016), 499.
[110] Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921', 615-616.
[111] Hearn, *Below Stairs*, 33-34.
[112] Harford and Raftery, 'The Education of Girls Within the National System', 41-42.
[113] Jane McDermid, 'Girls at School in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', in Brendan Walsh (ed.) *Essays in the History of Irish Education* (London, 2016), p. 112.

piece-work with literary instruction limited to a few hours a week.[114] The schools, and their students, were often dismissed as inadequate by authorities or English observers. In 1889, the English social reformer Florence Davenport-Hill stated that in Ireland the 'haphazard and irregular way in which, in small unions, the so-called industrial training is conducted imparts a degree of slovenliness to their work which operates very prejudicially when the children are first sent out to service.'[115] Preconceptions and prejudice towards working-class women meant their labour would never be valued, despite its necessity for their families and for the wider Irish society.

Nuns played a pivotal role in the diffusion of education across post-famine Ireland. Convents often worked with local Poor Law Unions to teach young girls sewing, knitting, embroidery, lace-making, spinning, crochet and netting.[116] It was arguably through the establishment of such Catholic education (and accompanying employment) schemes that female influence and authority was explicitly expressed by women, particularly by convent leaders such as Nano Nagle, Mary Aikenhead, Mary Frances Teresa Ball and Catherine McAuley.[117] Nuns emerged, according to Cara Delay, as a 'potent and visible force' in post-famine Ireland, proving capable local leaders of the devotional revolution. In 1800 there were only 12 convents and 120 nuns in Ireland; by 1850, there were 1,500 nuns by 1850; by 1881 there were over 5,000; and in 1900 there were 368 convents and 8,000 nuns in the country. By 1901, nuns constituted 70 percent of all the clergy in Ireland.[118] As Caitríona Clear, stated, 'few contemporaries failed to notice these women', whose shared religious and

[114] Deirdre Raftery, 'Industry, Piety and Servitude: Schooling for the Female Poor, 1700-1900', in Deirdre Raftery and Susan Parkes (eds), *Female Education in Ireland 1700-1900* (Dublin, 2007), 24-25.
[115] Florence Davenport-Hill, *Children of the State* (London, 1889), 23-25.
[116] McDermid, 'Girls at School in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', 112.
[117] Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion, and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750- 1900* (New York NY, 1998), 74-75.
[118] Delay, *Irish Women and The Creation of Modern Catholicism*, 180.

working identity was in 'stark contrast to the general run of women workers at this time.'[119] However, as Magray has concluded, women religious' role as enforcers of the Irish Catholic ideology meant nuns themselves 'helped to create the very conditions that robbed them of their autonomy' promoting the church's idealisation of women as meek and docile.[120] Moreover, these institutions often reflected and reinforced society's rigid class-based structure, with poorer women employed as lay sisters provided with the education and the religion they lacked, but nothing more. Regardless of their virtue or holiness, it was not intended that these women become 'ladies' or choir sisters.[121] If Ireland's devotional revolution was a 'feminised transformation', it was a transformation that reinforced an unequal gender hierarchy.[122]

Health and Welfare

The expansion of schools was accompanied by the expansion of welfare institutions (lay and religious) including workhouses, hospitals, asylums and prisons.[123] In 1862, access to workhouse hospitals were extended to the non-destitute.[124] As Catherine Cox argued, the

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[119] Caitríona Clear, 'The Limits of Female Autonomy: Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds), *Women Surivivng: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th & 20th centuries* (Dublin, 1990), 15.

[120] Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*, 130.

[121] Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*, 44.

[122] Delay, *Irish Women and The Creation of Modern Catholicism*, 22.

[123] Catherine Cox, 'Health and Welfare, 1750-2000', in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 267; Pauline Prior, *Madness and Murder: Gender, Crime and Mental Disorder in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2008), 25; Elizabeth Malcolm, 'Between Habitual Drunkards and Alcoholics: Inebriate Women and Reformatories in Ireland, 1899-1919', in Margaret Preston and Maragaret Ó hÓgartaigh (eds), *Gender and Medicine in Ireland, 1700-1950* (Syracuse NY, 2012), 109.

[124] The census enumerators regularly produced data on disability and institutions: 'Showing the Number and Ages of the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, Dumb not Deaf, Idiots, Lunatics, Inmates of Workhouses, Patients in Hospitals, Inmates of Reformatories, and Prisoners, in Ireland.'. Pauline Prior has argued that for much of the second half of the nineteenth century, it was generally agreed that, like England, there was little difference between paupers and criminal lunatics: *Madness and Murder,* 39. But the commissioners of the 1871 census stated that had 'not strict conformity with the English scheme of tables been prescribed by superior authority, we should have hesitated to bring paupers and prisoners into the same category with the deaf and dumb, blind, lunatic, and sick.' It is important to remember that the census reports are not indicative of wholesale agreement

'gatekeeping and management of access to health and welfare services in lay and religious institutions exemplified various articulations of health and welfare entitlements, revealing attitudes about class, gender and confessional affiliation.'[125] Women in Ireland were not only the care-givers in (religious) institutions, but they were also inmates and patients. However the post-famine asylum population in Ireland was primarily single, male and relatively young, with most patients certified as dangerous lunatics. Women were less likely to be admitted than men and tended to have higher recovery rates.[126] In some ways, the labouring poor were able to manoeuvre institutional aid to their benefit. Women were particularly adept at negotiating with institutional authorities to support their families. Mothers were often at the forefront of the certification of men and women that led them to be incarcerated in asylums. In an argument similar to Bourke's suggestion of domestic empowerment, Cox has suggested the certification process reflects women's influence over their household and their ability to participate 'in the power nexus with state and medical authorities.'[127]

The navigating of welfare provision by Irish women did not simply reflect individual agency, it was also as an extension of their domestic responsibilities - and one that could be particularly burdensome during times of familial crisis. Eve Worth and Laura Paterson have suggested the concept of 'organisational labour' – 'the mental processes of always knowing which tasks must be done and when, managing the logistics involved, and the effort required in being conscious of, and responsible for, successfully co-ordinating competing demands — even before commencing the tasks themselves'[128] As with Irish women in post-famine

with the categories and catch-all statements. *Parliamentary Papers.* (1872), C. 1377, Census of Ireland, 1871. Part III. General Report, with Illustrative Maps and Diagrams, Summary Tables, and Appendix, 42. .

[125] Cox, 'Health and Welfare, 1750-2000', 267.

[126] Mark Finnane, *Insanity and the Insane in Post-Famine Ireland* (London, 1981), 131.

[127] Catherine Cox, *Negotiating Insanity in the Southeast of Ireland, 1820-1900 (*Manchester, 2012), 152-153.

[128] Eve Worth and Laura Paterson, '"How is She Going to Manage with the Children?" Organizational Labour, Working and Mothering in Britain, c. 1960-1990', *Past & Present,* 246/46 (2020), 318- 319.

Ireland, British women from the 1960s undertook their organisational labour with a 'complex, bureaucratic social security system which involved time and emotional effort, and was particularly onerous for lone mothers.[129] The emotional effort, alongside the stigma and shame of turning to institutions counteracted any sense of power. In certificating a male relative, that Irish woman would be blamed for his mental ill-health. Moreover, if women were less likely to be committed to asylums, this was because they were needed at home. When they were admitted to an asylum, the root of their anxiety in post-famine Ireland was reported: 'the inability to maintain appropriate standards of female respectability' which depended more on 'not disgracing oneself or one's family' than on economic status.' If their rates of 'recovery' were higher, it was often as women patients were 'more easily subdued if violent' while domestic violence permeated women's testimony for admitting relatives.[130] During the famine, women's admissions to institutions increased: as 'familial support mechanisms disintegrated', women's vulnerability was exacerbated.[131] Women's wellbeing – as far as the authorities were concerned – was less a matter of the woman's own health than her ability to function for the benefit of others.

Many ninteenth-century contemporaries emphasised both direct and indirect links between institutionalisation and emigration. Charles Hack Tuke suggested that high rates of institutionalisation were due to similar factors that led to emigration, such as poverty and economic stress following the famine.[132] Tuke argued emigration also had an indirect effect on incarceration in asylums, as the departure of emigrants often produced a vacuum in families' economic and emotional support mechanisms, causing mental strain on those left

[129] Worth and Paterson, '"How is She Going to Manage with the Children?", 340.
[130] Cox, *Negotiating Insanity*, 122.
[131] Cox, *Negotiating Insanity*, 137.
[132] Cox, *Negotiating Insanity*, 58- 59.

behind. Testimonies of men and women during the asylum certification process indicated that many men and women were distraught at the departure of their loved ones, similar to the pain of a bereavement. For some non-migrants in their twenties, this was exacerbated by the feelings of jealousy and loneliness at not being the ones to leave. One woman's 'malady was aggravated when some of the family went to America', *resulting in feelings of both loss of loved ones and disappointment in herself.*[133] To not emigrate was, for some women, a failure that was emotionally distressful.

Irish women's physical and mental health was particularly precarious during the second half of the nineteenth century. Some measures indicate that women's overall health declined. Although life expectancy increased during the nineteenth century, women's mortality rates were high, relative to both Irish men and other women in Europe.[134] It was only in the 1930s that Irish women caught up with their European counterparts and had a higher life expectancy than men. Although causal factors are subject to debate, the high excess female mortality has been linked to Ireland's agricultural sector, emigration rates, and unequal access to resources.[135] The prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) amongst Irish women indicates that women were uniquely exposed to ill health, perhaps due to intra-household inequalities. Unlike Britain and the rest of western Europe, tuberculosis cases rose in Ireland from the 1860s, and young girls were particularly vulnerable.[136] There was a high transmission of the disease in poorly ventilated spaces, so the rise of female school attendance, industrial work in factories, crowded housing, indoor domestic labour, have been

[133] Cox, *Negotiating Insanity,* 122-123. Emphasis added.

[134] Trübswetter and Klasen, 'Gender Bias in Mortality in Ireland', 7. Table 7 shows the life expectancy at birth in years for the decennial years between 1871 and 1911 and indicates that women tended to live slightly longer than men. Overall, Irish male life expectancy rose from 49.6 years in 1871 to 53.6 years in 1911; female life expectancy rose from 50.9 years in 1871 to 54.1 years in 1911. Table 7 indicates that Irish men tended to have a longer life expectancy than men from England and Wales in the period between 1871 and 1911.

[135] Trübswetter and Klasen, 'Gender Bias'; Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, 119.

[136] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 116.

posited as reasons for the high incidence in young women.[137] The vast majority of the sick were nursed at home by women of the house. In spite of women's exclusion from the medical profession, 'the majority of day-today medical decisions were paradoxically made by women in the nineteenth century.'[138] Care of the sick was laborious, adding to the already heavy domestic workload, with tasks such as providing separate sleeping accommodation, the constant changing of bed linen and utensils, as well as the cooking of nutritious food. Women themselves were often reluctant to enter the hospital if they had TB, as they were deeply concerned about how it would impact the running of their households, particularly if they were the main wage-earner.[139]

The needs of individual households and the local labour market interacted to significantly impact Irish women's health over their life course. David Meredith and Deborah Oxley compared health in industrial Paisley with the service economy of Wandsworth in mid-nineteenth century London. Their evidence of the body mass indices (BMIs) of Irish and English-born women of working-age in both towns reveals the importance of local economic conditions for the allocation of household resources. Paisley, with its female-dominated labour market, had relatively healthy working women with BMIs of 24; whereas Irish and English-born women in Wandsworth had a relatively low body mass, with BMIs of 22.[140] Meredith and Oxley observed, however, that Irish women had an earlier onset of a lifelong decline in body mass compared to English-born women and 'Irish women appear more vulnerable over time' in both areas. This 'may hint at a different household dynamic,' as also implied by the above discussion on diet, which tied Irish women's access to resources to their

[137] Greta Jones, 'Women and Tuberculosis in Ireland', in Margaret H. Preston and Margaret Ó hÓgataigh (eds), *Gender and Medicine in Ireland* (Syracuse NY, 2012), 33-48.
[138] Jones, 'Women and Tuberculosis', 39.
[139] Jones, 'Women and Tuberculosis', 43-45.
[140] For most able-bodied adults, a healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 24.

work, and the (potential) expectation that Irish women would withdraw from the formal labour market early.[141] Oxley's study of pre-famine Ulster supports this argument, as it was the location where women undertook regular waged labour but also 'enjoyed the highest biological wellbeing in Ireland, and their nutritional living standard improved over time', measured in stature.[142] Overall, the evidence shows that Irish women's physical wellbeing was contingent on their 'worth' in the marketplace, as well as intra-household relations.

The lack of evidence on women's mortality rates in the post-famine period is indicative of the lack of concern about women's poor wellbeing. As Greta Jones stated, except 'for the diseases of childbirth, authorities made few attempts in the nineteenth century to create a statistical picture of women's health or treat it as a separate focus of investigation.'[143] Even with the case of nineteenth-century infant and maternal mortality, which were commonly monitored due to anxieties regarding population decline and women's fertility, historical analysis is sparse.[144] There was some growing concern around the impact of industrial labour on women's health by the 1890s, due to the failure of infant mortality rates to decline as fast as other mortality indices.[145] Maternal mortality, meanwhile, was often inaccurately recorded for reasons ranging from operational difficulties of implementing registration procedures through to selective interpretations of the distinction between deaths

[141] David Meredith and Deborah Oxley, 'Blood and Bone: Body Mass, Gender and Health Inequality in Nineteenth-Century British Families', *History of the Family,* 2/2.2, (2015), 216.

[142] Deborah Oxley, 'Living Standards of Women in Prefamine Ireland', *Social Science History*, 28/2, (2004), 292. For more general discussion on intra-household and inter-generational health inequalities see: Sara Horrell and Deborah Oxley, 'Bargaining for Basics? Inferring Decision Making in Nineteenth-Century British Households from Expenditure, Diet, Stature, and Death', *European Review of Economic History,* 17/2 (2013), 147-170; Sara Horrell, Jane Humphries, and Hans-Joachim Voth, *Stature and Relative Deprivation: Fatherless Children in Early Industrial Britain* (Cambridge, 1998); Stephen Nicholas and Deborah Oxley, 'The Living Standards of Women during the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review,* 46/4 (1993), 723-749.

[143] Jones, 'Women and Tuberculosis', 34.

[144] Ciara Breathnach and Brian Gurrin, 'Maternal Mortality, Dublin 1864-1905, *Social History of Medicine*, 31/1 (2018), 80.

[145] Jones, 'Women and Tuberculosis in Ireland', 34.

in and *of* childbirth. Ciara Breathnach and Brian Gurrin have suggested that maternal death rates, both within and outside of institutions, are much higher than has been recorded from 1864 through to 1902.[146]

'Outside the Norm'

It is essential to differentiate between ideological assumptions and the lived realities of family life. It is also important to consider how the former may impact the latter. Despite declining marriage rates, women's wellbeing was contingent on their status as wives and mothers. Bourke has admitted having children (in wedlock) was a 'crucial determinant' of women's welfare. Motherhood was the key to wellbeing.[147] However, women's roles as sisters, aunts, cousins within the home, as well as older female household heads were increasingly complex yet their status increasingly diminished in post-famine Ireland.

Many women who deviated from their expected role as wives and mothers could improve their wellbeing by moving to urban centres and entering the formal labour market. In Tullylish, County Down, the employment and residency patterns of female-headed households deviated markedly from the more conventional patterns of male-headed or widow-headed households.[148] Female-headed households resided in areas where (paid) female employment and affordable housing were available. All household members had to undertake paid labour as the wages of women were significantly lower than that of men. Children in female-headed households were often less likely to be educated than those in male-headed households, as they were often kept at home to assist with outwork or to start

[146] Breathnach and Gurrin, 'Maternal Mortality', 79-105.
[147] Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 269- 274.
[148] Marilyn Cohen, 'Survival Strategies in Female-Headed Households: Linen Workers in Tullylish, County Down, 1901', *Journal of Family History,* 17/3 (1992), 315.

working outside the home as soon as (legally) possible.[149] Meanwhile in Dublin, 'simple family households were a dominant family form' (with a mother, father and children) and 'this implies that the family norms in line with the principle of the nuclear family system constituted one of the most effective family strategies to achieve wellbeing in urban life.'[150]

Ruth McManus has demonstrated that lodging with others was common within Dublin in the early twentieth century. While men made up the bulk of the city's lodger/boarder population in 1911, there was also a significant proportion of lone women across the social and occupational scales and age groups. These included young single women working as servants in the city; middle-aged widows; and single women with little means who sought 'genteel' accommodation as paying guests. Many widows in Dublin were boarding and lodging house-keepers as this was considered to be a 'safe, respectable means of earning a living which could, where necessary, be combined with raising a family.[151]

Although relocation to urban areas offered employment opportunities, it often led to new threats to the wellbeing of women. Germs and infection spread as Irish men, women and children increasingly mixed together, in shops, streets, churches, offices, hospitals and schools. Poor ventilation saw respiratory and pulmonary illness take over from smallpox, typhus and scarlatina as the major health concerns.[152] Debates and discussions around the causes of venereal disease, and the subsequent Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1880s reveal how, as in other parts of the United Kingdom, concerns for physical health and social purity

[149] Cohen, 'Survival Strategies', 313-314.
[150] Yoshifumi Shimizu (assisted by Jane Gray), *Studies of Post-1841 Irish Family Structures* (Osaka, 2014), 217-223.
[151] Ruth McManus, 'Dublin's Lodger Phenomenon in the Early Twentieth Century', *Irish Economic History,* 45/1, (2018), 4.
[152] Clear, *Social Change*, 103.

were conflated. While it was acknowledged that it was possible for husbands to give the disease to their wives, it was 'the body of the prostitute that became identified as the source of venereal disease.'[153]

The emigration of young single men and women exacerbated a sense of crisis, the fear that those 'left behind' were the weakest in society. As late as 1904, Dr Kelly stated that only 'the old people and the weaklings remain behind in Ireland… the present flow of emigration, though smaller in volume, has a much more serious and deleterious effect on the physical condition of the population of the country.'[154] The attendant physician at Clonmel asylum described emigration in terms of a 'brawn drain' it deprived 'the country of its bone and sinew' while another doctor at Waterford asylum declared that emigration had resulted in 'the removal of the fittest' members of Irish society.[155] The combination of famine, emigration, fertility and mortality resulted in an ageing of the Irish population throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, with an increase in those aged (or at least enumerated as) 65 and over.[156] That the ageing population in Ireland were 'weak' should be qualified. The mortality data indicate that Irish mortality was similar to other countries at the time: life expectancy was approximately the same or higher than that in England and Wales, the US, and higher than that in Germany. For the period 1821 to 1841, the life expectancy for men and women

[153] Maria Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800-1940,* (Cambridge, 2007), 139; Elizabeth Malcolm, '"Troops of Largely Diseased Women": VD, The Contagious Diseases Acts and Moral Policing in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History,* 26 (1999), 1-14.

[154] *Parl. Pap* (1904) Cd. 2210, 413,

[155] Cox, *Negotiating Insanity*, 59.

[156] See Tables 3 and 4, which show the age structure of those 'left behind', between 1851 and 1911 with the population disaggregated by sex. Similar proportions often and women can be found in all these age groups, in each census year from 1851 to 1911, reflecting (in part) the equal numbers of men and women leaving the country.

was recorded as an average of 38 years; by 1851 this had risen to approximately 50, remaining constant until the first decade of the 1900s.[157]

At the turn of the twentieth century, unmarried and elderly women remained the most vulnerable group within Ireland.[158] Widowhood, and the economic uncertainty it brought with it, was a growing prospect for many women. Older women have often been depicted as trying to reduce this uncertainty by wielding (too much) emotional authority and power over their children - often restricting the life choices of their own sons. The son was often portrayed as patient, quiet and respectful, while the husband and father, as the household head, were land-motivated patricians. Employment in service was plagued by age discrimination with women aged forty and over finding it difficult to find work in the formal labour market – but not as difficult as their counterparts in Great Britain.[159] The Labour Department's investigation into the wages of domestics, led by Clara Collet, found that as servants aged, and 'wanted more than a very small wage she was dismissed and replaced by another young girl.'[160] Collet, however, found that the age distribution of servants in Ireland bore 'little resemblance' to the distribution in England, Wales and Scotland: 'whereas in Great Britain only about nine percent are over 45 years of age, in Ireland nearly 22 percent are over 45.' In Connaught, for example, a quarter of all servants were over the age of 45. Collet suggested this may be because the 'process of elimination of the unfit and infirm does not seem to go on in Ireland with the same completeness as in England', and perhaps 'capable servants are more inclined to stay on with mistresses to whom they are accustomed,

[157] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 111-113; John Fitzgerald, 'Irish Demography since 1740', in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 15.
[158] Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 269- 274.
[159] Hearn, *Below Stairs*, 40.
[160] *Parl. Pap.* (1899), Cd. 9346, 15.

without much thought whether they could earn higher wages elsewhere.'[161] Women's labour was cheapened by the presumption that women's careers spans were shorter than those of men.

The process of institutionalisation had, by the turn of the twentieth century, punished women who had not fulfilled the expectations of their sex. Former domestic servants were disproportionately found in workhouses and lunatic asylums, as well as homes for the aged and infirm.[162] Throughout the 1890s and 1900s, the press and medical literature gave credence to the perception that drunkenness was prevalent amongst such women. Four reformatories in Waterford, Wexford, Ennis and Belfast were set up at the turn of the century specifically to target and confine 'inebriate' women, who were likely to do 'physical and moral damage to their children and to the men with whom they consorted.' Yet the numbers *prosecuted* for drunkenness failed to match the perception It is notable that most women committed to the Wexford and Waterford reformatories were middle-aged, single or widowed. Inmates in Ennis meanwhile, were also middle-aged, but were married and from urban areas. One-third of women in Ennis between 1906 and 1907 were committed for 'neglecting their children owing to habitual drunkenness; another third had committed an assault; and the final third had been sentenced for either larceny or attempted suicide.'[163]

Many former domestics turned to char-work if they were not able to stay in service. In late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Dublin, for example, most servants were girls in their teens from the country who resided in their employer's homes. Those who performed

[161] *Parl. Pap* (1899), Cd. 9346, 9.
[162] Hearn, *Below Stairs*, 91.
[163] Malcolm, 'Between Habitual Drunkards and Alcoholics',120-121.

the most basic cleaning duties in the city - charring in another person's dwelling or a place of business - were older working-class widows and single women.[164]

As they aged, many women had increasingly limited access to basic resources. Jane and Mary Williams were unmarried and aged around 50 years old when The *Freeman's Journal* 1875 reported that both women were found dead in the single room they shared in an overcrowded and unsanitary tenement building in Dublin. The women were described as working 'a wretched livelihood as charwomen… Their labour was wearing and perpetual, and "scour, scour, scour" might fitly have been the chorus of their work-song.'[165] Their devastating circumstances illustrates how poor women who fell outside the ideal of married life were particularly vulnerable and could not always achieve self-sufficiency, owing to the low value assigned to their labour.

> The house is a four-stored [sic] one, and in the back drawing room the two women lived… No bed, no fire, no table, no chair, half a window frame, a few garments in rags, two wooden boxes full of old boots, a couple of cups on a rusty tray - and one has a perfect inventory of the furniture of this den. In the centre of the room, with the head touching the wall, lay at full length, on the hard boards, the emaciated remains of Jane Williams.[166]

Conclusions

This chapter has considered the life of women in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century – a life that many Irish women chose to leave. On the eve of the First World War, Ireland was a very different country from what it had been 60 years earlier. The population was smaller, but the economy had grown, wages were higher and jobs were more varied. But the Irish economy was far from a Panglossian ideal – especially for women. Women in

[164] Ciarán McCabe, 'Charwomen and Dublin's secondary labour force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *Social History,* 45/2 (2020), 193.
[165] McCabe, 'Charwomen', 193; 214.
[166] McCabe, 'Charwomen', 214-215.

Ireland in the late nineteenth century had rising aspirations but these aspirations were increasingly unfulfilled as women had limited opportunities within the country. Rising aspirations were fuelled by economic growth and increasing levels of education but the opportunities to realise these aspirations were constrained and limited. Furthermore, by the 1880s 'education and emigration tended to converge, becoming complementary rather than alternative routes of escape for Irish women … daughters entered the alien world far better prepared than their predecessors.''[167]

Women worked in a narrow range of occupations which they were expected to relinquish on marriage, except rural women, who were expected to continue to toil on family farms. For many, a reasonable quality of life (or for some, basic survival) was dependent on marriage and the prospect of becoming the matriarch of a household. Yet marriage rates were comparatively low and took place at a relatively late age. Marriage and the shift into full-time housework may have helped to fulfil the aspirations of some women as it afforded them power beyond the realm of the market economy. Others, however, felt hampered by a society that stressed women's domestic duties as wives and mothers – duties that involved hard physical and emotional labour. For those that desired a husband and a family, the pathways to marriage were difficult and uncertain especially as the rise of a patriarchal and land system generated intrafamilial tensions and encouraged delayed marriages.

Women's agency was constrained by structural forces, mediated by cultural and religious, social and economic norms, and influenced by personal and familial circumstances which collided to shape women's life choices. And for many women this led them to leave Ireland. The aspirations of women were fed by emigration, which was also a channel to

[167] Fitzpatrick, '"A Share of the Honeycomb"', 231-232.

realise such aspirations. As Irish people emigrated, experiences and information flowed back to Ireland, much suggesting that life was better abroad; and with limited opportunities at home, emigration was perceived by many as a means of achieving a better life. Many women in Ireland 'developed an image of life in America for women characterised by higher status, greater freedoms, employment opportunities and economic independence.'[168] For many Irish women, with burdensome domestic responsibilities and limited opportunities in the formal labour market, emigration seemed a route to achieve a better and life - but the following chapters show that the emigration route proved to be difficult and challenging for many women.

[168] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 910-911.

Chapter 3
Journeying to the United States

Mary Brown felt relieved when she reached the American shore in 1858. She had spent the six-week journey from Liverpool to New York confined to her dormitory with sea-sickness, 'attended by the doctor all the time.'[1] Mary was one of a growing number of young Irish women who made the journey from their homeland to Castle Garden, the main port of New York, battling through the crowds, hoping to find their already-settled friends and relatives. Fortunately, her aunt and brother greeted her with 'all sorts of kindness.'[2] On their way to their tenement building, it is likely that Mary and her relatives would have rushed through Battery Park which surrounded Castle Garden. Teeming with market stalls and fruit sellers, Mary would have heard the familiar brogues from home amongst the clamour of American accents, as young Irish domestics perused the produce and older Irish women flogged their wares. New York might have been very different to Ireland, but it was, in many ways, an Irish city in the 1850s. The existence and nature of Irish communities abroad complicates the suggestion that women's emigration was an 'escape' from Irish society.[3] Chain migration has often been characterised as essential to the transplantation of young women from their Irish homeland to their new American home, ensuring that Irish women, despite their youth and single status, could migrate 'hazard free' in the post-famine period.[4] Many young women would-be migrants were financially supported through remittances sent

[1] Mary Brown to sister, 11 Mar. 1858, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[2] Mary Brown, 11 Mar.
[3] Bernadette Whelan, 'Women on the Move: A Review of the Historiography of Irish Emigration to the USA, 1750-1900', *Women's History Review,* 24/6 (2015), 900.
[4] Anne O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls": The Migration Process of Late-Nineteenth-Century Irish Women', *Éire-Ireland,* 35/3&4 (2000), 102.

home, often in the form of prepaid passenger tickets for future emigrants.[5] These tickets often arrived home with letters explaining how to navigate the journey and what to expect overseas, where friends and family awaited to help them settle into their new accommodation, workplaces, and lives. Janet Nolan, Ide O'Carroll, Donald Akenson and Rita Rhodes all suggested that the chain mechanism was the 'all important catalyst' in women's decision to emigrate to the US.[6]

This chapter argues that migration was undertaken by women through a series of negotiations with their families and with institutions, at an individual, national, and transnational level. Irish women left home aided by a combination of familial, state and philanthropic emigration schemes, although the latter two became particularly important during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The women who used these schemes were not all young, nor all single, nor travelled 'hazard free' during the post-famine period. Rising immigration rates and corresponding immigration controls, combined with the city's industrial development, meant New York's port was very different by the turn of the twentieth century, not least as Castle Garden was renamed Ellis Island, and taken under federal control. While Mary Brown arrived on 'slow steamers and windjammers', from the late nineteenth century migrants disembarked from 'monstrous turbine lines', coming into contact with numerous other men and women from across the world.[7] The perception of the hazards faced by Irish migrants were gendered. In making the crossing, Irish women encountered consistent criticism from their families, the Irish media and the Catholic church.

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[5] Timothy Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration, and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850-1914* (Princeton NJ, 1997), 110.

[6] O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls"', 102; Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885–1920* (Lexington KY, 1989); Ide O'Carroll, *Models for Movers: Irish Women's Emigration to America* (Dublin, 1990); Donald Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Toronto, 1993); Rita Rhodes, *Women and the Family in Post-Famine Ireland: Status and Opportunity* (New York NY, 1992).

[7] '"Aunt Jane," a Battery Park Landmark', *NYT* (15 Apr. 1906), 8.

There was, moreover, the threat of physical assaults during the journey. But despite the menaces, it was a journey that they wanted to take.

Trends, Patterns, and Mechanisms

Pre-famine Migration 1780-1845

Historians have produced multiple estimates of Ireland's emigration rates between 1780 and 1845. Kenneth Connell estimated that between 1780 and 1845 approximately 1.75 million people left the country.[8] Kevin Kenny has suggested that between 1783 and 1815, approximately 150,000 Irish migrants settled in North America, accelerating to between 800,000 and 1 million arrivals from 1815 and 1845.[9] Joel Mokyr meanwhile has argued that at least 1.5 million emigrated between 1815 and 1845 with an average annual outflow of approximately 0.7 percent of the population.[10] Caitríona Clear has provided a conservative estimate of 'about a million people' emigrating between 1815 and 1845, noting this is a probably an underestimate.[11] Donald Akenson has stated that despite 'heroic efforts at correcting the Irish emigration data… we are at a loss for the pre-Famine period.'[12] It is, however, clear that emigration has consistently been part of Ireland's demographic history which peaked in the nineteenth century.

Women did not leave Ireland in the same numbers as men before the 1840s. Those that did leave were often the wife in a childless adult couple or the mother in a family

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[8] Kenneth Connell, *The Population of Ireland, 1750-1845* (Oxford, 1950), 27.

[9] Kevin Kenny, 'Irish Emigration in a Comparative Perspective', in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 406-408.

[10] Joel Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800-1850* (London, 1985), 230; Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish*, 81.

[11] Caitríona Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester, 2007), 57. See also: David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921: Studies in Irish Economic and Social History* (Dublin, 1984); and Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, 18.

[12] Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, 55.

group.[13] Seasonal migration was common, and thousands of men crossed the Irish Sea to work in harvesting which, Timothy Guinnane has concluded, 'probably paved the way for the Irish navvy, famous for his work on railroads, docks, and other construction projects.'[14] In terms of transatlantic migration, Cormac Ó Gráda suggested that male emigrants outnumbered female by more than two to one at the turn of nineteenth century, with an even higher ratio by the 1830s amongst unaccompanied emigrants.[15] Akenson gave an 'educated guess' that unmarried women of adult age comprised 'somewhat less than one-half' of the pre-famine outflow of Irish women.[16] Overall, in the pre-famine period, Irish women were not migrating to the US in the same numbers as men, but Charlotte Erickson has shown they were more migratory than European, English, Scottish and Welsh women.[17] Even families with young sons were more inclined to emigrate than those with young daughters. Moreover, while women were less likely to have made the transatlantic voyage alone compared with Irish men, they were two and a half times more likely to be travelling alone or with companions who were not relatives compared with British women migrants.[18]

The decision to migrate was driven by the limited opportunities for women in Ireland. Erickson argued that the young Irish women were leaving their country 'before they had returned any of the cost of their upbringing to their society' and before seeking work within Ireland. Erickson suggested that Irish women's propensity to move was linked to their inability to find a suitable marriage partner or to gain employment in service in Ireland.

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[13] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780-1939* (Oxford, 1995), 75.

[14] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 102-103. Guinnane does note that there were some women who also migrated but does not provide the number.

[15] Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History*, 74.

[16] Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, 166.

[17] Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration*, 7; Charlotte Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the USA in 1841: Part I. Emigration from the British Isles', *Population Studies*, 43/3 (1990), 360.

[18] Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles', 360-361.

Individual circumstance including psychological and personal factors, contacts and information, 'were probably more important in governing who went and when.'[19]

Many pre-famine 'migrants meandered rather than rushed towards the promised land.'[20] This movement, however, was to become path dependent as it enabled three main propagating mechanisms that would foster future migration. First, it led to the establishment of migration networks which helped in both the migration and settlement processes. Second, information flows enabled potential migrants to assess their prospects in a new home. Third, it entrenched migration behaviour within Irish society. Moving to a new country was not an act of exceptionalism but became increasingly common and encouraged.

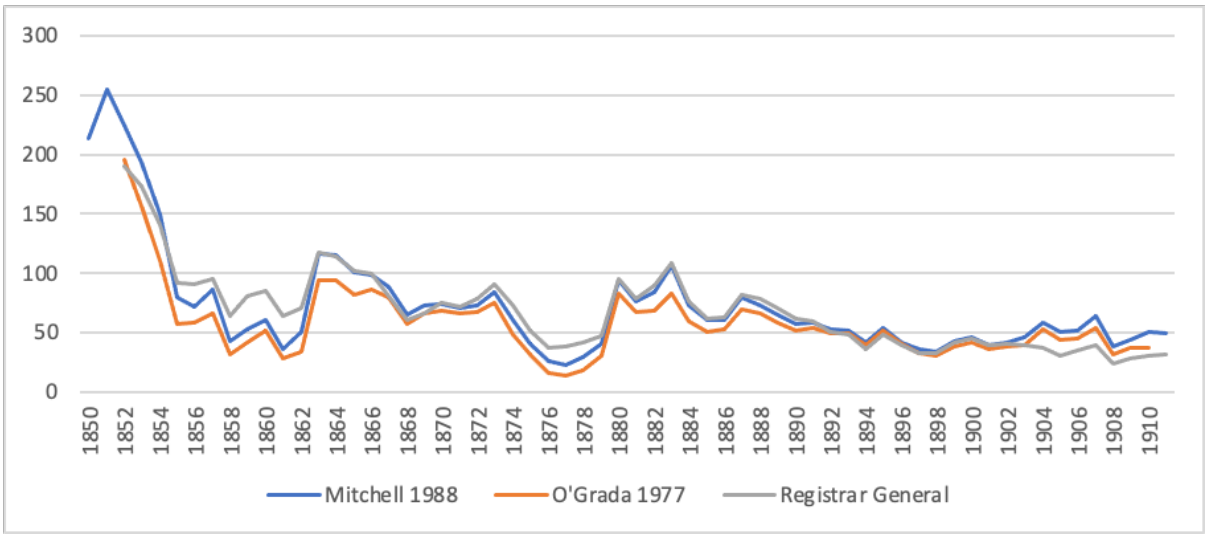
Famine Migration 1845-1855

The famine pushed Irish emigration to unprecedented levels. The famine saw an acceleration of emigration from all counties, including from areas and groups that had relatively low level of emigration from 1815 to 1845, such as families from the west. It is estimated that 1,000,000 Irish men, women and children arrived in the United States in the wake of the famine as emigration accelerated from 1845 to 1849.[21] The total emigration rate during these years was more than in the previous two and a half centuries combined.[22] Figure 3 shows estimates of emigration rates from 1851 to 1911. Although there are small variations, the main trends are similar in the three series from 1852. Emigration peaked in 1851 according to data from the Emigration Commissioners as reported in Brian Mitchell.[23] Between 1846 and 1855 (when emigration rates slowed to pre-famine levels) around 2.1

[19] Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles', 360- 367.
[20] Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration,* 23.
[21] Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, 18.
[22] See Figure 1 for the post-1850 decline. See also: Kenny, 'Irish Emigration', 409-410.
[23] Brian Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, (Cambridge, 1988).

million people left the country: 1.5 million to the US, over 300,000 to Canada, 315,000 to Britain, and tens of thousands to Australia and New Zealand.[24]

Figure 3. Emigration from Ireland (number, '000), 1851-1911 (various estimates)



Sources: Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*; Cormac Ó Gráda, 'A Note on Nineteenth-century Irish Emigration Statistics', *Population Studies*, 29/1, (1975), 143-149; *Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems 1948-1954*: reports, Ireland. (Dublin, 1955); Ryland Thomas and Nicholas Dimsdale, 'A Millennium of UK Data', Bank of England OBRA dataset (2017), https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics/research-datasets (July 2020).

The Irish were the single largest migrant group in the United States in the 1840s, comprising 45 percent of all migrants.[25] Table 8 shows the number of the Irish born living in Ireland and abroad in decennial years from 1851 to 1911. In 1851, 23 percent of the Irish-born were living abroad and this rose to 39 percent by 1891. Table 8 also shows that the United States was the country with highest share of Irish-born outside Ireland. In 1851, 50 percent of the Irish born abroad were in the United States and this rose to 65 percent in 1871.[26]

[24] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 900.
[25] Kenny, 'Irish Emigration', 410.
[26] As a share of those living in the USA, Canada, Britain and Australia.

Table 8 Irish born living in Ireland and abroad, 1851-1911 (decennial years)

	Irish-born										
Year	Ireland	USA	Canada	Australia	Great Britain			Total (outside Ireland: main countries)[1]	Population of Ireland (including non-Irish)	All Irish-born	Irish abroad as a share of all Irish-born (%)
					England and Wales	Scotland	Total				
1851	6502	962	227	na	520	207	727	1916	6552	8418	22.76
1861	5721	1611	286	na	602	204	806	2703	5799	8424	32.09
1871	5307	1856	223	na	567	208	775	2854	5412	8161	34.97
1881	5062	1855	186	213	562	219	781	3035	5175	8097	37.48
1891	4581	1872	149	227	458	195	653	2901	4705	7482	38.77
1901	4327	1615	102	184	427	205	632	2533	4459	6860	36.92
1911	4233	1352	93	139	375	175	550	2134	4290	6367	33.52

Source: *Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems,* 1948-1954: reports, Ireland. (Dublin, 1955)
Notes

1. Total outside Ireland includes USA, Canada, Great Britain and Australia (1881-1911)
2. na is not available

Post-famine Migration 1855- c.1922

By the second half of the nineteenth century, emigration was, alongside depopulation more generally, an integral feature of Irish society at the individual, familial and societal levels. Clear argued that post-famine migration can be categorised into two phases. The first, between 1850 and 1875, was characterised by high emigration from Antrim, Limerick, Cork, Kerry, Clare and Tipperary. In the second, from 1880 until 1922, people were still leaving from the midlands and Munster, but they were now joined by men and women from Connaught.[27] The five highest 'sending' counties from 1871 to 1891 were: Kerry, Longford, Leitrim, Clare and Sligo.[28] Throughout the post-famine period, west coast migrants (including those from Connaught) tended to move to the US while Ulster migrants tended to move to Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

In the post-famine period, emigrants were increasingly young and single, compared with those leaving in the pre-famine period. Clear characterised phase one emigrants as 'labourer-servant emigrants who set off singly or in family groups', leaving little behind. Phase two emigrants travelled alone, but were often leaving behind a house and land, parents and sibling, particularly those from the west.[29] The census commissioners of 1881 (reporting 1871 data) stated that more than two-thirds of the emigrants from the previous decade were aged between 20 and 45; 18 percent were aged between 10 and 19; 10 percent were under 10; and just 5 percent were aged 45 or older.[30] The census reports indicate that between 1881 and

[27] Clear, *Social Change*, 60.

[28] *Parliamentary Papers* (1892) Cd. 6780, Census of Ireland, 1891. Part II. General Report, with Illustrative Maps and Diagrams, Tables, and Appendix, 74.

[29] Clear, *Social Change*, 60.

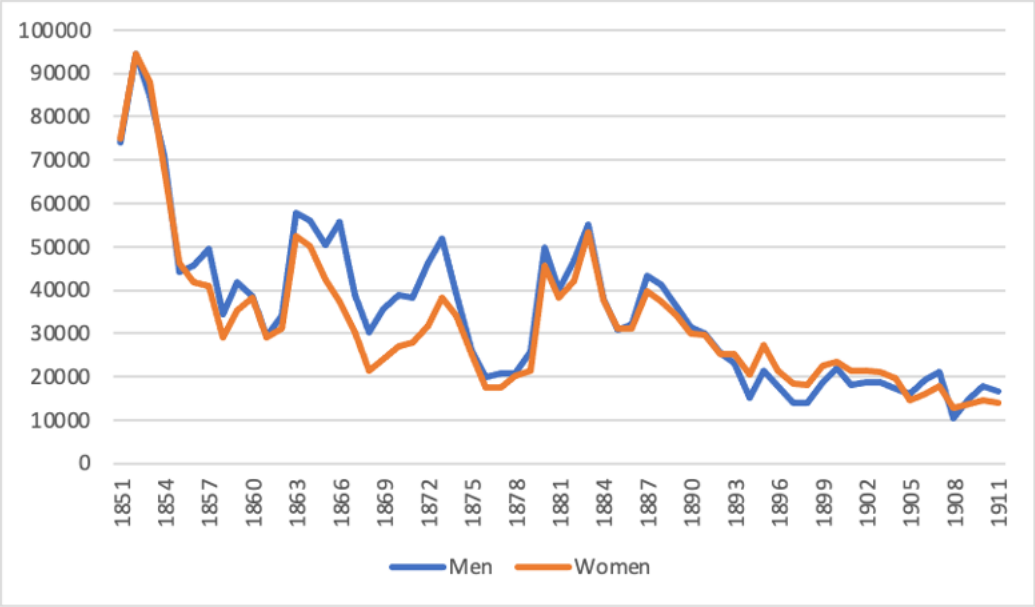
[30] *Parliamentary Papers* (1882) Cd. 3365, Census of Ireland, 1881. Part II. General report, with Illustrative Maps and Diagrams, Tables, and Appendix, 75.

1890, migrants were leaving at younger ages: 61 percent were aged between 10 and 19 while just under a quarter were between 10 and 19 years old.[31]

Men outnumbered women throughout much of Clear's 'phase one', but the share of women increased in 'phase two'. Between 1871 and 1881, the ratio of Irish female migrants to Irish male migrants rose from 0.82 to 0.95; and increased further to 1.15 between 1891 and 1901. In the period between 1891 and 1901, 231,956 women left Ireland which was 30,386 more than men. Women were increasingly leaving from the west of Ireland with many migrating to the United States. The female/male emigration ratio for those leaving ports in County Mayo between 1876-85 was 1.2, rising to 1.75 between 1886-1905.[32]

[31] *Parl. Pap* (1892) Cd. 6780, 73-74.
[32] Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, 173.

Figure 4. Male and Female Emigration from Ireland (‘000), 1851-1911



Source: calculated from census data. agricultural statistics and enterprise returns reported in William Vaughan and André Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), 268.

The Migration Decision

Orthodox economics explains migration as the outcome of rational actors making optimising decisions to improve their welfare. The origins of such explanations can be traced to Andrew Roy’s analysis of the distribution of earnings.[33] Roy explained the optimising choice of ‘workers’ selecting between either fishing or hunting determined by: the distribution of skills and abilities; the correlations among these skills in the population; the technologies for applying these skills; and consumer demand for different goods. When applied to migration, a Roy model suggests that ‘prospective migrants possessing skills that are highly valued in the destination economy can expect the highest return to migration and are thus most likely to move.’[34] In such models, ‘highly valued’ is usually measured in terms

[33] Andrew Roy, ‘Some Thoughts on the Distribution of Earnings’, *Oxford Economic Papers*, 3/2 (1951), 135–146.

[34] Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan, ‘Immigration in American Economic History’, *Journal of Economic Literature,* 55/4 (2017), 1312.

of the real wage. Furthermore, if the destination country offers higher real wages for high-skill workers compared to the sending country, the migrant flow will be *positively selected* – that is emigrants will have higher skills than those left behind. Conversely, if the destination country offers lower real wages for skilled workers compared to the sending country, the migrant flow will be *negatively selected* – that is emigrants will have lower skills than those left behind.

Many contemporaries assumed a process of positive selection as the famine led to many of Ireland's 'best men' leaving (a 'brain drain).[35] This has been subsequently refuted by many empirical studies which make the case for negative selection (a 'brawn drain'). There are three main problems that face robust empirical analysis. First, data reliability. Much of the emigration data is based on occupations that appeared in passenger lists, reflected migrants' aspirations, rather than reality, and may also be subject to transcription and reporting errors. Second, change over time. The processes of positive and negative selection may have shifted during the long-period of Irish emigration, Third, the missing women. Many of the studies have focussed on men either because women 'did not matter' or because of a lack of data – or because of both.

The data in Table 9 (assembled by Ó Gráda) suggests a relatively high share of Irish emigrants in 1841 were labourers and servants compared with the occupational structure in Ireland: suggesting negative selection. However, it also shows a relatively high share of Irish emigrants in 1841 were artisans compared with the occupational structure in Ireland:

[35] Royal Commission on Labour, *The Agricultural Labourer, Assistant Commissioners' Reports on the Agricultural Labourer,* Vol. 4. (London, 1893), 49.

suggesting positive selection.[36] Perhaps both processes were in play at the same time, although it should be emphasised that Ó Gráda stressed that the data should be interpreted with caution. Table 10 provides data for the occupation of Irish emigrants from 1820 to 1853, as assembled by Raymond Cohn from various sources, who concluded that 'the average skill level of the immigrant stream over the antebellum period definitely declined' for Ireland.[37] The data in Table 10 show the dominance of labourers and servants in Irish emigration to the United States. The primary focus was on male migrants with limited analysis of women. A tentative insight can be drawn by comparing rows 6 and 7 which includes male and female migrants with rows 10 and 11 which just includes male migrants during broadly similar periods between 1835 and 1893. Overall, the data for men shows lower socio-economic status compared with the data for men and women combined. This may reflect the different occupational profiles of men and women in the pre-famine and immediate post-famine periods – perhaps suggesting the negative selection of men compared to positive selection of women. This conclusion is tentative as the data for men and women come from a different source than that of the data for men only.[38]

[36] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Across the Briny Ocean: Some Thoughts on Irish Emigration to America 1800-1850', in Thomas Devine and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and Scotland, 1600-1850: Parallels and Contrasts in Economic and Social Development* (Edinburgh, 1893), 124: Table 4.

[37] Raymond Cohn, *Mass Migration under Sail: European Immigration to the Antebellum United States* (Cambridge, 2009), 110.

[38] The data for men and women is from Ó Gráda, 'Across the Briny Ocean', 127; Table 6B. The data for men only is from Raymond Cohn, 'Occupational Evidence on the Causes of Immigration to the United States, 1836-1853', *Explorations in Economic History*, 32/3 (1995), 394, Figure 2.

Table 9. Occupations of Irish Emigrants to Boston and New York, compared to Occupations in the Irish Census Data 1841 (Percentages)

Occupations	Boston		New York		Census 1841	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labourers/Servants	62.7	78.6	60.5	63.3	55.4	33.7
Textile workers	3.5	11.1	7	24.4	7.1	59.3
Farmers	10.4	0.5	15.7	9.2	20.7	1.9
Other Artisans	20.5	8.1	13.3	2.3	10.5	0.7
White Collar	2.7	1	3.6	0.8	4.9	3.4
Other	0.2	0.7			1.5	0.4

Source: Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Across the Briny Ocean', 124, Table 4.

Table 10. Occupations of Irish Emigrants 1820–1853 (Percentages)

Row		White Collar	Artisans and Craftsmen	Industrial Workers	Farmers	Unskilled
1	Men					
2	1820	21	21		37	21
3	1851	2	11		8	79
4	Men and Women					
5	1820–1834	4.7	16.9	13.5	16.9	48
6	1835–1846	3.2	13	10.8	12.5	60.4
7	1847–1848	2.7	12.8	13.1	11.2	60.2
8	Men					
9	1846–1851	5.1	5.7	4.2	10.5	74.3
10	1836–1845	1.1	9.7	2	10.3	76.9
11	1846–1853	1.7	13.8	1.3	8.4	74.8

Source: Raymond Cohn, *Mass Migration under Sail,* 109, Table 5.4.
Note: artisans and craftsman are combined with industrial workers for men in 1820 and 1851.

Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan argued that Irish migrants to the US during the pre-famine and famine period were negatively selected as they 'held lower- paid occupations than men who remained at home and were more likely to report a round-numbered age; such

age heaping is often used as a proxy for a lack of numeracy.'[39] Dylan Connor similarly found evidence of negative selection in the early twentieth century as 'emigrants and their fathers were more likely to be illiterate and lower skilled than their counterparts staying in Ireland.'[40] Conversely, Gaia Narciso, Battista Severgnini and Gayane Vardanyan found evidence of positive selection, as 'literacy is positively correlated with the probability of migrating to the US.'[41] It should be noted that Abramitzky and Boustan referred only to male emigration and Connor's study is restricted to Irish men in the US between 1901 and 1911. Narciso *et al* included both men and women in their study, which may have an impact on their results which indicate positive selection, although it not possible to identify this from their empirical analysis. Women are simply identified as a dummy variable in their 'decision to migrate' equation.

Economic models focus on the importance of relative wages as the key driver of migration. According to Abramitzky and Boustan, 'the size of the migration flow increases with the relative wage and employment rates in the destination country, as well as with the size of the migrant network, suggests that prospective migrants are aware of and responsive to economic conditions.'[42] The supporting evidence in the case of Ireland is the work of Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson which focuses on male wages in the building trades.[43] But their analysis also shows that migration is not solely driven by relative wages, other factors such as demographic shocks, the assistance of friends and relatives and the rate

[39] Abramitzky and Boustan, 'Immigration in American Economic History', 1312.
[40] Dylan Connor, 'The Cream of the Crop? Geography, Networks, and Irish Migrant Selection in the Age of Mass Migration', *Journal of Economic History,* 79/1 (2019), 169
[41] Gaia Narciso, Battista Severgnini and Gayane Vardanyan, 'The Long-run Impact of Historical Shocks on the Decision to Migrate: Evidence from the Irish Migration', CReAM Discussion Paper Series 2003, Department of Economics, University College London (2020), 13.
[42] Abramitzky and Boustan, 'Immigration in American Economic History', 1322.
[43] Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, 'After the Famine: Emigration from Ireland, 1850-1913', *Journal of Economic History*, 53/3 (1993), 575-600. See Chapter Two.

of migration in the past all had a significant effect on emigration rates. In this analysis, it is stressed that women migrated to the US to achieve a better quality of life and this may have included, but was not restricted to, relative wages. Other aspects of the quality of life included access to employment, the prospects of marriage and the scope for individual agency. Moreover, migration enabled by the exchange of knowledge about new prospective homes, the transfer of remittances to prospective migrants and the use of formal and informal networks, which were facilitated by past migration.

Akenson had characterised Irish women emigrants to the US as 'young, unmarried and unskilled', from the poorest, least economically and socially modernized parts of Ireland.'[44] Fitzpatrick's discussion of the links between education and emigration suggests that the expansion of schools, literacy and numeracy provided the knowledge and acumen that helped women to leave home.[45] Thus, emigration could, paradoxically, have been encouraged by improved wellbeing (in terms of human capital) in Ireland.

Mechanisms of Women's Post-famine Migration

The persistence of Irish emigration after the famine has been explained by the importance of networks that promoted chain emigration. Anne O'Connell has defined chain emigration as an 'unbroken passage' in 'which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants.'[46] Much of the empirical literature on chain migration has focused on the path dependent properties of emigration or

[44] Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, 173.
[45] David Fitzpatrick, '"A Share of the Honeycomb": Education, Emigration and Irish women', *Continuity and Change*, (1986), 217-234.
[46] O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls,", 102.

by identifying networks through name linkages between migrants in different periods. Path dependence has been highlighted by Hatton and Williamson, who estimated that for every 1000 previous migrants an additional 41 migrants were attracted annually.[47] Connor argued that networks eased the cost constraints on moving and were relatively more important for emigration from poorer communities in Ireland.[48] Furthermore, Narciso *et al* found that migration networks had a statistically significant impact on the rate of Irish emigration.[49] Although the insights from the above econometric studies are useful, they have limitations. First, they identify the presence of 'networks' though name-linking, which assumes that those with similar surnames are engaged in some form of positive network activity, but they do not identify such activity. Second, name-linking is a male-focussed empirical exercise that tends to omit women as most changed their surname on marriage. Third, regression analysis with migration as the dependent variable and a name-linked generated measure as one of the independent variables, reveals little about how networks worked and how they fostered social relationships.

The power of networks is that they provided information about the destination country, access to financial capital to fund emigration, and help in settling into a new country. A 'primary social relationship' included communication and correspondence via letter and testimonials, the transfer of knowledge about both place of origin and settlement from newspapers, broadsheets, and other print mediums. Furthermore, remittances were importantly for would-be migrants: between 1848 and 1887, emigrants sent home £34 million to the United Kingdom - and at least two-fifths was in the form of prepaid passenger tickets

[47] Hatton and Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration*.
[48] Connor, 'The Cream of the Crop?', 167.
[49] Narciso, Severgnini and Vardanyan, 'The Long-run Impact of Historical Shocks', 16.

for future emigrants.[50] As the emigration decision was strongly influenced by the encouragement and aid received from previous migrants, this drove the movement of young adults of each generation from home country to host country.[51]

Fitzpatrick argued that the importance of the emigrant letter has been underestimated, in favour of focusing on prepaid passenger fares. While the fares provided the financial means to travel, the emigrant letter provided essential information to influence the decision to migrate. Filled with details of everyday life of the Irish abroad, and 'the letter from a distant relative, whether received in Ireland, Britain, America, or Australia, was a token of solidarity and an instrument of reassurance, confirming the durability of long-established familial groups.' Letters were information - and information mattered - making a tangible impact on decision-making where writers 'often selected facts and expressed sentiments purposefully rather than sentimentally, knowing the probable consequences of their advice for recipients.'[52] O'Connell has argued that:

> analysts of women's increased centrality in the migration process have concluded that a female network or chain mechanism structured the transfer from the area of origin to the area of settlement - and that, as well as providing financial assistance and moral support for siblings and relatives, *this network was often the all-important catalyst in the decision to emigrate*.[53]

The migrant decision process developed into a cycle of cumulative causation as the encouragement and aid from previous migrants, encouraged the next wave of migrants who provided information for subsequent waves.[54]

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[50] Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish,* 110. See Chapter Six.
[51] Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration,* 21.
[52] David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (London, 1994), 24.
[53] O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls"', 102. Emphasis added.
[54] Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration*, 21.

Assisted Migration Schemes

In her study of Irish women's migration to Britain in the twentieth century, Jennifer Redmond has noted that many scholars focus on women's 'compulsory migrations as paupers and convicted criminals, their independent migration to seek new opportunities, and their connectedness to families at home, often being the ones to send tickets and moneys to relatives in Ireland.'[55] These different forms of migration overlapped and intersected over the course of the late nineteenth century. Women left home through a combination of state and philanthropic schemes, alongside familial aid. State-funded emigration schemes often provided the initial impetus for women to move. The Poor Law boards assisted over 80,000 Irish paupers to the US in the late nineteenth century, including impoverished and unrespectable women.[56] This assistance, Dympna McLoughlin has suggested, often took an almost punitive form, where these women were removed from the workhouse as 'superfluous deadweights.'[57] Through assisting the emigration of these women, the Poor Law Guardians deported women who had threatened their local community by draining it of financial resources, through their sex work, intemperance, poverty, or motherhood out of wedlock.[58] The Guardians, however, carefully chose potential emigrants on the basis of 'character' that would suit the receiving nation. This selection had precedence, as Ó Gráda's work on assisted schemes for famine-era orphans has shown, there is always 'selection within selection.'[59] The young women sent from Irish workhouses to Australia between October 1848 and July 1850 were more literate and 'well-behaved' than those left behind. Women were selected from the

[55] Jennifer Redmond, *Moving Histories: Irish Women's Emigration to Britain from Independence to Republic* (Liverpool, 2018), 19.
[56] Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Abingdon, 2000), 139.
[57] Dympna McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights: the Emigration of Nineteenth-Century Irish Pauper Women', in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History Heritage, Identity. Volume Four: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), 66-88.
[58] McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights', 84.
[59] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The Next World and the New World: Relief, Migration, and the Great Irish Famine', *Journal of Economic History,* 79/2 (2019), 344.

South County Dublin Workhouse to be sent to Quebec in 1863 on the basis of: their length of residency in the workhouse; their health and ability to work and bear children, domestic abilities; and character. The ideal candidate was an unmarried young woman between 14 and 30 years old, with cooking, cleaning and general housekeeping abilities, but who was no longer 'involved in prostitution or any type of sexual alliances outside of marriage. [60]

There were other selection criteria. Candidates were more likely to be selected if they had relatives or kin inside the workhouse, whom the women could later assist in emigrating. Remittances sent to workhouse inmates in South County Dublin Workhouse from abroad between 1848 and 1867 indicate that mothers and wives most commonly left the country and sent money home to their children and husbands. Moreover, a crucial selection criterion of workhouse women was their length of residency in the workhouse. The longer they had been in the workhouse, the more likely they were sponsored to emigrate; women who had been in the workhouse for over two years were likely to remain permanently reliant on indoor relief.[61] Other young women, Ó Gráda has shown, were selected due to their 'boisterous' and dominating nature.[62] The Guardians, however, could not help their more problematic inmates to migrate, due to fears that the receiving countries could (and would) reject the incomers, sending them back to Ireland to swell its pauper ranks once more.

The selection criteria suggests that the state-assisted emigration schemes were not simply 'shovelling' any, and all, women out of Ireland's workhouses.[63] Although the Guardians arguably abdicated responsibility for women's wellbeing, in other ways the state

[60] McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights', 79-80.
[61] McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights', 76-81.
[62] Ó Gráda, 'The Next World and the New World', 345.
[63] McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights', 78.

was ensuring that those sent abroad were women who were most likely to settle and adapt, often marrying and living long lives abroad.[64] After all, these women were also expected to be able to provide for their family members who remained in Ireland.

The rise in women's emigration rates was directly linked to the rise of philanthropic emigration schemes. The period 1879 to 1882 in particular, was one of widespread destitution in Ireland and the west was especially impacted by potato crop failure and the reduction in seasonal migration remittances from Britain. Gerard Moran has described a 'near famine situation' — compounded in the west by overcrowding and the unviable structure of land holdings — in the part of the country where 'the population had difficulties surviving at the best of times.'[65] Alongside Ireland-based initiatives such as the establishment of the Congested District Boards and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, emigration, funded by poor law unions (i.e. the state) and private philanthropists, was viewed as a solution to the crisis in the west of the country.[66] The philanthropists Vere Foster and James Hack Tuke financed approximately 30,000 individuals to migrate from western Ireland to the United States in the 1880s, issuing travel vouchers worth up to £2 per emigrant.[67] Moran has argued that the legacy of the famine and concern about the quality of land was crucial in the philanthropists' development of assisted emigration schemes throughout the 1880s. Both Foster and Tuke, who had been involved in providing relief during the mid-century famine, feared that the average land holding on the western seaboard was incapable of maintaining the average family. Having witnessed the famine's devastation to the coast

[64] Ó Gráda, 'The Next World and the New World', 345.
[65] Moran, 'State Aided Emigration from Ireland to Canada in the 1880s', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies,* 20/2 (1994), 2.
[66] Moran, 'State Aided Emigration', 5.
[67] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 139.

and its community, the philanthropists believed that their intervention through private emigration schemes was the only solution.[68]

The philanthropists' desire to assist the poverty-stricken west was combined with a commitment to population control.[69] It is no surprise that unmarried young women, and not men, were specifically targeted by assistance schemes. Writing to the *New York Herald* in 1880, Foster proposed an emigration fund (£2 for each young man or woman aged between 18 and 35) allocated in the proportions two women to one man.[70] Foster funded women's emigration for two reasons. First, Foster assumed men were 'better able to provide for themselves' abroad as they earned higher wages.[71] Second, women were the greatest cause of poverty, 'perpetuating and increasing the present evil' by marrying and raising a large family.[72] The fact that marriage and childbirth was encouraged in Irish Catholic society was ignored. Foster, similar to the state schemes, only sponsored a woman on account of 'her poverty, good character and industrious habits.' Unmarried and young women's ability to move from impoverished areas of Ireland was largely contingent on their 'respectability', which depended on their reputation in their local community. When in their new country, these women were expected to earn money and send remittances home, taking 'the remaining members of her family out of poverty' and raising 'the condition of the poorest families in the poorest districts of Ireland.'[73] If women were responsible for the production and reproduction of poverty within Ireland, they were also responsible for its alleviation.

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[68] Moran, 'State Aided Emigration', 3.
[69] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 906.
[70] Ruth-Ann Harris, '"Where the Poor Man is Not Crushed Down to Exalt the Aristocrat": Vere Foster's Programmes of Assisted Emigration in the Aftermath of the Irish Famine' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History Heritage, Identity. Volume Six: The Meaning of the Famine* (London, 1997),183.
[71] Harris, '"Where the Poor Man is Not Crushed Down"', 183.
[72] Haley Kilgallon, 'Vere Foster's Irish Female Emigration Fund', History Hub http://historyhub.ie/vere-fosters-irish-female-emigration-fund (Dec. 2020).
[73] Harris, '"Where the Poor Man is Not Crushed Down"', 173.

Foster and Tuke were inundated with applications from young women from the west. One emigration agent described typical applicants as girls of the 'most exemplary character *who are anxious to emigrate* in order to assist their parents and other members of this family at home and eventually take others out from this Country.' Whilst supporting the applications of western women to emigrate, one Catholic priest described them as 'birds of passage' and no one in the parish had 'interest of control over them.'[74] Women were desperate and determined to leave Ireland.

Despite the Catholic church's lament about women leaving Ireland, individual clergymen in both Ireland and the US provided aid to migrants. Catholic priests acted as contact points, giving references for women applying on assisted emigration schemes, and even published guidebooks for migrants.[75] Another priest, Peter Ward of the mountainous and remote Partry parish in County Mayo, wrote to Archbishop Murray of Dublin in the spring and summer of 1849 asking for help for his parishioners who were still suffering more than two years after the authorities in London had declared the famine over. Ward stated that 1,900 of his parishioners had died and more than 700 families 'wander about, without food, clothing or shelter.' He was sent just £1 in aid. As Ward observed, 'death awaits many' people, so in the face of another famine the parish sought to send women abroad.[76] Women's need to leave Ireland was understood and sanctioned by church and individual clergy. By leaving home, these women were able to look after these famine-stricken communities at

[74] Harris, '"Where the Poor Man is Not Crushed Down"', 187-188. Emphasis added.
[75] Sarah Roddy, '"The Emigrants' Friend"?: Guides for Irish Emigrants by Clergy Men c. 1830-1882, in Ciara Breathnach and Catherine Lawless (eds), *Visual, Material and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), 247-257.
[76] Ó Gráda, 'The Next World and the New World', 321.

home, while priests and parents could be assured they would not watch their parishioners die of starvation.

This sanction crossed the seas with the Catholic clergy. Under the direction of Father Thomas Riordan, and encouraged by the Catholic writer and philanthropist Charlotte O'Brien (author of 'Horrors of an Emigrant Ship'), the New York-based Mission of our Lady of the Rosary for the Protection of Irish Immigrant Girls ('the Mission') was established in 1883. It was another sponsor that helped impoverished young women from the west of Ireland to move and settle in New York. Its records are an important source that are used in the remainder of this thesis.

An Escape for Unmarried Mothers?

Married women also made the journey to the United States throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, sometimes with children but often alone. None of those identified in the Mission's ledger books were travelling with male partners, suggesting they might have been abandoned or widowed.[77] One grandmother, approximately fifty years old, arrived from Tipperary with her three young granddaughters and teenage son, with the intention of moving in with another one of her sons who had previously emigrated to New York. But she had lost his address, forgotten the name of his locality, proclaiming 'I wish I never had left Nenagh, in ould Tipperary.' She was fortunate, however, to be met at the port by 'an acclimatized friend' who had already arrived in New York.[78] Some older women, both single and married, arrived alone and successfully sought aid from the Mission, despite the Mission's remit of solely

[77] The Mission ledger books for 1883-1954 consulted can be found at: 'Irish Mission at Watson House: the Battery Heritage Foundation.' https://archives.irishmissionatwatsonhouse.org/ (Jan. 2020). The selection consulted and referenced throughout here are from 1883 to 1910.
[78] 'An Hour in Castle Garden', *New York Tribune* (25 Jul. 1867), 2.

providing aid for immigrant girls. Mary McCarten (Dublin), Bea Mulligan (Roscommon) and Marg Boyd (Roscommon) all arrived in their thirties, alone, and went to the Mission for aid. Other women in the Mission's records included fifty-four-year-old Mrs Hickey from Tipperary, accompanied by her adult daughter, while the widowed sixty-year-old Mrs Hokey from Clare and fifty-year old Mary O'Driscoll from Cork arrived alone.[79] Even in their old(er) age, women were determined to leave Ireland, and determined to get to America.

The stigma associated with being 'out of the norm' drove many women out of Ireland. Unmarried mothers and their children were consistently characterised as immoral 'drains' not only on the state but on wider Irish society throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[80] The Poor Law Enquiry of the 1830s hardened attitudes, declaring that women with illegitimate children were 'looked on as degraded persons... [a] young man of the lowest class would feel degraded by marrying a woman who had an illegitimate child by another', and a 'small farmer would refuse a match with a bastard.'[81] An English emigrant, writing on his 1866 passage to New York for the *NYT*, described how many Irish women arrived 'from the mother country in the family way' in order to escape shame.[82] Women's familial duties were key to their decision to leave Ireland in the post-famine period: for some this decision was born out of a sense of respectability and responsibility, for others it was driven by shame and stigma. Writing on the devastating case of Ann Lovett's death in 1984, Maria Luddy stated that 'Lovett's unacknowledged pregnancy and lonely death echoed the plight of thousands of Irish women, who for decades had been forced to hide their pregnancies,

[79] Mission ledger books.
[80] Maria Luddy, 'Unmarried Mothers in Ireland, 1880-1973', *Women's History Review,* 20/1 (2011), 109-126.
[81] Maria Luddy and Mary O'Dowd *Marriage in Ireland, 1660-1925* (Cambridge, 2020), 150
[82] 'Castle Garden', *NYT,* (23 Dec. 1866), 8.

abandon their babies, or emigrate to hide their "shame."'[83] These decades lengthened to centuries.

Preparing to Leave

The migration journey was arduous for many women. Women travelled to ports along rough terrain and walked miles to the nearest railway station.[84] Arriving at the ports of departure, they were often unaware of the long delays that were characteristic of the passenger trade, and sometimes they lacked the money for room and board necessary for the indeterminate wait at Cobh, County Cork or Liverpool; in lodging houses that were often not fit for purpose. An observer writing in the *Cork Examiner* in June 1881 described the arrival of would-be emigrants at the Great Southern and Western train station in Cork.

> There commenced a regular stamped[e], some girls rushing wildly with terror in their looks… evidently labouring under the idea that they were about being left behind. Some tried to drag heavy boxes, but finding they were not able to keep pace with the others, abandoned all their earthly goods and ran as if for life. the carriages were so crowded that several old women not so active as the rest, were for a considerable time hanging on by the doors unable to get in… We must remember that these people are, perhaps, for the first time away from home, and all familiar associations. They are timid and easily frightened, and the thought of being separated from those they know, and being left behind… has a terror that must be experienced to be understood.[85]

Many girls, the *Examiner* suggested, would turn around for home because of anxiety. Its description of the women 'labouring' might have been written in jest, but it is appropriate.

[83] Luddy, 'Unmarried Mothers', 109. Ann Lovett was a 15-year-old schoolgirl who died giving birth to a stillborn baby beside a grotto in County Longford. Her death played a huge role in subsequent debates on the stigma surrounding unmarried mothers.

[84] During the famine, the main ports of departure for the United States were Liverpool and Glasgow. From the late 1850s however, major British shipping companies would also call at Cobh in Cork and Moville near Derry.

[85] O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls"', 111-112.

Women from the workhouse may have been better-equipped and prepared for the journey abroad than the 'reputable' women assisted by Foster and Tuke. In response to high demand for assistance, Foster was only able to provide women with small sums of money and little else.[86] This resulted in thousands of young women leaving home ill-prepared. While some young women were provided with prepaid passage tickets and guidance, many others did not have essentials, such as the 'ocean outfit', which comprised of a mattress, pillow, pannikin and cutlery, and cost six shillings per adult.[87] Workhouses, on the other hand, often provided women with the passage fare, clothing and provisions for the journey, as well as landing money for the emigration agent to aid them on arrival. Each of the women selected to leave the Dublin South Workhouse for Quebec in the early 1860s was provided with: 1 bonnet, 2 caps, 2 shifts, 2 towels, 1 handtowel, 1 pair of scissors, 1 prayerbook, 1 cape, 2 dresses, 3 pairs of stockings, 1 bag, 1 hairbrush, needles and thread, reading book, 1 shawl, 1 petticoat, 2 aprons, a cap and marine soap.[88] The workhouse provided these banished women with the resources to provide for their physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs during their journey. Individual clergymen also provided advice to migrants.[89] The Reverend Alexander Peyton of Blarney and Whitechurch in Cork published pamphlets advising on the shortest and least expensive route to the US, currency exchange, provisions for the journey, safety on board ship and arrival at the port, and how to travel and secure employment once in the US.[90]

The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported many instances where 'young men and boys, who wished to go to a certain place and were without the necessary funds to pay for the passage had secreted themselves among the cargo and waited until the vessel was well out to

[86] Harris, '"Where the Poor Man is Not Crushed Down"', 184.
[87] O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls"', 106
[88] McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights', 82.
[89] Roddy, '"The Emigrants' Friend"?' 247-257.
[90] Whelan, 'Women on the Move', 905.

sea before discovering themselves.' But Molly - an 'energetic', 'self-reliant' and 'independent spirit'- was the first case of a 'girl travelling in that manner', arriving in New York with just the clothes she wore and 4 cents. Molly described how following the death of her parents, she had worked as a domestic in a boarding-house for £4 a year in Cobh where she would have been surrounded by emigrants readying themselves for their trip aboard. She stated that although the boarding-house keeper treated her kindly, he never raised her wages so '"when I heard from three friends who sailed for America and who secured employment in nice families at $12, $14, and $13 a month, I said to myself: America's the place for me."'Molly snuck on board a ship without a ticket, having heard one of the boarders discuss their travel plans with the keeper; and she had yelled to her brother, "Good-bye Tim; goodbye old Ireland. I'll come back when I'm rich!"'[91] Even if Molly's journey was not as smooth-sailing as she described, her story shows how keen many women were to leave Ireland to better themselves in the United States.

The best-prepared women were those whose friends and relatives had made the trip before them and could write with advice, tailoring it for their family's personal needs. Writing in 1850, Margaret McCarthy informed her family she was sending her last remittance of 20 dollars, 'until I see you all here.' McCarthy stressed the importance of bringing good clothing, but reassured her sisters that her own silk dress, bonnet, and veil would fit them. She reminded her mother to bring her bed clothes, kettle, oven and 'do not forget the smoothing irons.'[92] McCarthy also advised her mother and sisters to engage with the ship's captain and the cook, and perhaps bring the crew a little whiskey. Women's packing lists for their journey abroad emphasised the permanency of their crossing. They were packing all

[91] 'Only A Stowaway: A Bright Little Irish Girl's Trip to America', *San Francisco Chronicle* (6 Nov 1887), 6.
[92] Margaret McCarthy to family, 22 Sept. 1850, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

'their earthly goods' to provide the foundations for their new lives abroad. McCarthy's letter provides detail on what it meant to be prepared if you were an Irish woman. She emphasised the importance of appearance for her younger sisters and that her mother should bring domestic appliances. What it meant to be 'prepared', to cross seas and to enter a different world, changed over time and the life-course for women. Young women needed to be presentable and attractive, while older women needed to ensure their domestic skills were up to scratch. The journey also provided women with the opportunity to act as couriers between friends and family at home and abroad. The Mission recorded 25 year-old May Allen staying at the home before travelling to stay with her brother in Chicago, but her journey also included a detour to Stephen Riordan on Madison Avenue to deliver a parcel, while another new arrival passed on letters from friends in Ireland to those abroad.[93] These small acts remind us of the importance of migrants remaining connected to their home country.

On Board

McCarthy closed her letter with a caution; her mother and sisters should 'not be frightened, take courage and be determined and bold in your undertaking as the first two or three days will be the worst to you and mind whatever happens on board keep your own temper, do not speak angry or hasty.'[94] Margaret tried to prepare her family for the unsanitary and unsafe conditions on board. The *NYT* described the state of Irish passengers as 'filthy and verminous' with clothes that required a 'process of purification and fumigation, and so prevent the spread of the pestiferousness of the old.'[95] One English traveller believed that his fellow travellers were fortunate not to have cholera as suffered by many others who had

[93] Mission ledger books.
[94] Margaret McCarthy.
[95] 'Castle Garden'.

travelled before them. There was also considerable theft and 'nothing was safe out of your sight or hands for a minute from the marauders and pilferers.'[96] The migration journey was a major threat to women's probity and safety.

As the proportion of women leaving Ireland increased during the second half of the nineteenth century, so did concerns about the conditions aboard ships.[97] Philanthropists, the state and relatives in Ireland all worried about the moral peril of women travelling in overcrowded cabins filled with strangers. These concerns were exacerbated by an1881 article, 'Horrors of an Emigrant Ship', written by writer and philanthropist Charlotte O'Brien and published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. O'Brien's observations caused furore and jeopardised Foster's assistance scheme. One of Foster's emigration agents described how 'particular the Irish are in respect to sending their daughters on the best regulated steamships.'[98] Familial respectability - and perhaps control and intervention - was vital for women's emigration abroad. The state also responded to O'Brien's article, establishing a parliamentary inquiry in the same year. One witness described how, with no stewardesses or matron on board, young single women were particularly at risk from 'male passengers, especially those who were "half stupefied by sea-sickness" or a little drunk from taking whiskey.' Margaret's advice to give whiskey for the crew as a way to ensure their own safety may have unwittingly contributed to the problem. While it was considered proper for single women to receive some privacy on-board, and women were supposed to get separate quarters from men, the Inquiry heard that this was denied to mothers and children under twelve years of age.'[99] The Inquiry

[96] 'Castle Garden'.

[97] This is in spite of the rapid reduction in travel time. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it took five to six weeks to cross the Atlantic. By the mid-1860s, 80 percent of Irish emigrants were travelling to North America by steam and almost 100 percent after 1870, cutting down crossing time. By 1900, the journey took just ten to twelve days as migrants travelled on 500 feet long, iron and steel steamships driven by screw propellers. See: Kenny, *The American Irish,*139.

[98] Harris, '"Where the Poor Man is Not Crushed Down"', 186-187.

[99] O'Connell, '"Take Care of the Immigrant Girls"', 118-119.

concluded that there should be provision and maintenance of water-closets, lavatories, and ladderways, as well as the employment of an 'experienced' matron.[100]

These suggestions were only minor improvements and the Inquiry ultimately concluded that men and women *did* keep separate quarters, and 'single women do not sleep in the presence of single men, or in the same enclosed room as married men.' The Assistant Secretary to the Marine Department singled out Irish women's exemplary behaviour and that 'on board ship [they] do as a rule respect themselves, and guard jealously the honour and credit of their sex.'[101] Other observers found it 'remarkable' that Irish men and women behaved with 'decorum, which was not even infringed upon when one fine night they held a sort of sea-carnival or dance on the after deck', no mean feat, 'composed as they were of such motley material.'[102] The debates on the conditions on-board migrant ships reflected the contemporary sexual double standard as well as state attitudes towards the Irish working class. It was 'remarkable' that Irish men and women behaved well below deck as they were considered incapable of 'proper' behaviour. Irish working-class women were treated as innocent and naïve, 'not marked by crime or even intemperance', but also as deviant and promiscuous, lying about their marital status to share a bed with their male travelling partner, 'in the midst of hundreds of young women who are compelled to live in his presence day and night.'[103] Irish migrant women needed to be protected but others needed to be protected from Irish women.

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[100] *Parliamentary Papers* (1881), Cd. 2995, Reports with regard to the Accommodation and Treatment of Emigrants on Atlantic Steamships, 15-16.
[101] *Parl. Pap.* (1881), Cd. 2995, 15-16.
[102] 'Castle Garden'.
[103] *Parl. Pap.* (1881), Cd. 2995, 12.

Many women and men socialised on their journey and met like-minded men and women. Molly, the 'stowaway', admitted that she had been quickly discovered in her hiding place onboard but was subsequently found space to rest and sleep; she was 'treated as well as any saloon passenger on the steamer' during the rest of the voyage.[104] Women were able to forge friendships and connections on the journey, and it is likely sexual activity out of wedlock did occur. Arrivals to the Mission's accommodation sometimes came in pairs, having met on ship.

Annie O'Donnell left her native Galway for America in October 1898, aged eighteen, travelling to Philadelphia to join her sisters. It was on board the 'old tramp steamer, the *Adria,* that O'Donnell met 22-year-old Jim Phelan, a farmer from Kilkenny.[105] Despite going their separate ways on arrival at Philadelphia's Union Station, their time spent together over the course of the two-week journey certainly left an impression on both of them. In 1901, O'Donnell received a letter from Phelan, both suprising and delighting her: 'Your letter which I received only this morning more than surprised me. I thought you certainly had forgeotten me by this time… When I got off in Pittsburgh on that day we parted, I didn't thank you for your kindness to me on board the *Adria.*' They went onto exchange letter after letter in rapid succession, reminiscing on their journey, wondering if they will ever meet in person again: 'My last recollection of you, and it was a jolly one, was when you were coming along the the deck with the tea things and holding on for dear life to the rope! But never mind if we don't meet here. Perhaps we would on another *Adria*. I still hold on to that little cross.'[106] O'Donnell and Phelan exchanged letters over the next three years, as both sought

[104] 'Only A Stowaway'.
[105] Maureen Murphy, introduction to *Your Fondest Annie: Letters from Annie O'Donnell to James P. Phelan, 1901-1904* by Annie O'Donnell (Dublin, 2005), 7.
[106] Annie O'Donnell, *Your Fondest Annie,* 35-27.

work and attempted to settle into a new way of life, with the memory of their time onboard sustaining their correspondence – and their ability to cope with living in a new world. In a letter dated October 28 1903, O'Donnell wrote about their arrival in Philadelphia: 'Five years ago tonight I guess you remember. Don't you ever wish we were on that same old spot but homeward bound? Your ever welcome letter reached mine in good time and brought hopes of possible visit from you.'[107] O'Donnell and Phelan did manage to meet again. They married in 1904.

If some on-board social interactions produced long-lasting and life-affirming relationships, others were violent and predatory with incidences of sexual assault. On arrival in New York on June 12th 1898, 20-year-old Nora Leddy from Clare reported to local Catholic immigration agents that an 'attempted assault [was] made upon her on board the ship.'[108]As discussed by Maureen Fitzgerald, the largely male Irish media 'wrote frequently of the high incidence of rape onboard passenger ships while simultaneously denying that Irish women fell victim to such risks.'[109] Implicit in this denial was the assumption that Irish men could not be perpetrators of sexual crime. For some women, trauma prefaced their arrival in New York and their new life. One mother on-board the same ship as the *NYT* reporter, left Ireland with her young baby (the implication is she was a single mother) but the child died at sea from a fever.

> The poor child had to be thrown overboard, she, poor mother, being left, like Rachel, weeping for her child and would not be comforted because it was no more. It is indeed a sad thing to have to hide one's offspring in the grave on land, but there is something about death and burial in the cold canvas windingsheet at sea, in a fathomless grave, yet harder and more galling.[110]

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[107] O'Donnell, *Your Fondest Annie,* 114.
[108] Mission ledger books.
[109] Maureen Fitzgerald*, Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920* (Chicago IL, 2006), 68-69.
[110] 'Castle Garden'.

Castle Garden

During the second half of the nineteenth century Irish women were able to alleviate (some of) the shock and confusion of arriving in their new country by receiving aid from New York port authorities. Before the 1850s there was no immigrant processing centre in New York: the shipping company presented manifests to the Collector of Customs and the immigrants made a Customs declaration before heading on their way. The Irish immigrants, left to their own devices, 'simply arrived off the boat onto the streets of Manhattan, with no sense of where they were, where they might go or how they might get there.'[111] The establishment of the processing centre at Castle Garden resulted in the presence of US officials who were supposed to offer offered 'advice and information of the best and most reliable kind', such as where to exchange money, how to find accommodation, obtain employment, and purchase railway tickets.[112] This advice was, however, not always easily given or warmly received. The construction of New York's centre for processing and assisting new arrivals was a direct response to the arrival of famine-era migrants. It was born not out of a concern for migrant welfare, but concern that the impoverished arrivals would become 'burdens' on the American welfare system. Arrivals from workhouse emigration schemes across Europe (particularly Ireland) during the late nineteenth century exacerbated this perception. In June 1881, the New York Superintendent of the Poor called for the introduction of controls of pauper migration to the city and sought and a commitment from Dublin's Local Government Board that they would not send 25 workhouse inmates to the city.[113] New York's immigration policy developed 'in tandem with other public policies for

[111] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 104.
[112] 'Castle Garden'.
[113] Gerard Moran, 'Escape from Hunger: The Trials and Tribulations of the Irish State-Aided Emigrants in North America in the 1880s', *Studia Hibernica,* 29 (1995-1997), 108.

poverty regulation that made paupers social outcasts.'[114] Tuke's emigration scheme started one year later in 1882, and workhouse inmates were excluded from selection. Migration policies abroad also ostracised paupers back in Ireland as well as the migrants. From 1882 the reception (or clearing) of immigrants was jointly handled by state and federal governments, with federal immigration controls slowly building on the policies of New York and Massachusetts.[115] The experience of famine migration to New York was an important determinant of the subsequent national response to migration.

By the time its successor Ellis Island opened in 1892, Castle Garden had processed over 8 million migrants becoming a symbol of US immigration history.[116] More than 4,000 men, women, and children arrived on just six steamships on one day in April 1887, producing a 'confused combination of tongues' in the rotunda of Castle Garden.[117] This symbol of immigration was also the origin of the Yiddish slang term *Kessellgarden*, which came 'to be used as a noun to describe confusion and chaos.'[118] Foreign arrivals were also targets of pick pockets and con artists. One emigration official stated that foreign arrivals were robbed, abused by the attendants and officers, and that the arrivals process was a 'mere farce and a shameful disgrace upon the American people.'[119] Many Irish women were therefore reluctant to approach American officials for any type of aid, some refusing any offers of aid declaring 'they make regular fools of them in Castle Garden when they know they are "greenhorns."'[120]

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[114] Hidetaka Hirota, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy* (Oxford, 2017), 6-7.
[115] Hirota, *Expelling the Poor*, 5.
[116] Hirota, *Expelling the Poor*, 205.
[117] 'Over Four Thousand Immigrants: One Day's Arrival at Castle Garden', *New York Tribune* (10 April 1887), 9.
[118] Raphael Patai and Hayah Bar-Itzhak, *Encyclopaedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions* (New York NY, 2013), 141.
[119] 'Castle Garden Affairs: The Institution Strongly Denounced by a Witness', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, (1 Sept. 1887), 3.
[120] TLRW, AIA.077

Women were not only subject to petty crime and swindling. Reports of abduction and assault of women at Castle Garden were abundant. The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote in May 1887, of '*another* case showing how immigrant foreigners are taken to ruin after arrival' where a 'pretty young Irish girl' had arrived in New York from Cork and been abducted from the barge office, drugged in the city, and 'subjected to terrible treatment at the hands of an unknown man.'[121] Just three months later the *Hartford Courant* reported on a 16-year-old 'pretty Irish girl' who had got lost on arrival and 'had not been heard of since.'[122] Women arrivals were subject to a system specifically designed to 'process' and control Irish men, with little consideration for their sex.

If Irish women were not able to rely on municipal immigration officials to guide their initial arrival at the port, they did have recourse to the Catholic church. Priests in Ireland advised women to avoid state employment bureaux 'as the wicked and profligate have there an opportunity of selecting the unsuspecting victim of their depravity', diverting Irish women from the correct 'oaths of honour, virtue, happiness and religion.'[123] The fear of proselytism was at the heart of the church's work with women emigrants. [124]

The Mission set up its own processing centre - based in a large property some 500 metres across Battery Park from Castle Garden - specifically to protect Irish immigrant girls landing in New York City from the 'untrustworthy and sometimes evil people in the port area

[121] 'An Immigrant Girl: Abducted and Driven to Insanity', *San Francisco Chronicle,* (26 May 1890), 1. Emphasis added.
[122] 'The Dangers of Castle Garden: A Pretty Irish Girl Lost in New York', *Hartford Courant* (14 Jul. 1887), 8.
[123] Whelan, 905.
[124] Jennifer Redmond has posited a similar argument in the context of Irish women in twentieth-century Britain, and the fears amongst the Irish Catholic clergy of a 'leakage'of Irish women losing their faith abroad. See: *Moving Histories: Irish Women's Emigration to Britain from Independence to Republic* (Manchester, 2018), 141-158.

who preyed on their innocence.'[125] At the end of each day, from 1885 until 1912, at the Immigration Commissioner would turn over to a Mission priest all newly-arrived Irish women who were yet to meet any friends or family. These women were taken to Watson House, where friends and relatives of the women could call until 10.00pm. Women were only discharged to their care after first being interviewed by the priest and, if a male relative arrived, he had to provide satisfactory evidence he was the woman's father, uncle or brother.[126] No fees were charged to any women in the home, regardless the length of their stay.[127] As well as accommodation, Watson House was also home to an on-site chapel, as it was important to provide for spiritual needs.

Irish migrants were important source of information for prospective migrants, writing letters home filled with information about the difficulties at Castle Garden and how to meet friends and relatives at the port. Many women arrived in New York as self-assured and confident in their decision making. One refused help or offers of work or accommodation, as she was confident her friend Bridget Power was on her way to meet her.[128] The *Tribune* reported how, when an elderly gentleman travelled from Connecticut to Castle Garden to look for a servant to employ, he received push-back. The women were sceptical about his motives and did not want to travel with him. One woman confidently informed the gentleman that she was 'in the habit of living in the *highest* of families and wouldn't go to Kunecktikut [sic] for the world.'[129] Perhaps she was waiting for a better offer as she had read the reports of how 'strong, healthy girls and young women, *principally Irish*, [who] succeed' in 'obtaining

[125] Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (New York NY, 2009), 96.
[126] 'The Work of the Mission', Archives of the Archdiocese of New York Digital Collections http://omeka.archnyarchives.org/exhibits/show/missiongirls/work (January 2021).
[127] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget,* 96.
[128] TLRW, AIA.077
[129] 'An Hour in Castle Garden'.

situations as housemaids, nursemaids, milliners, sewing-machine hands and dressmakers, and in a few days bid adieu' to Castle Garden.'[130] Women who had knowledge about their destination and had friendships abroad were able to exercise some agency and choice about their migration decisions. In Molly's case, her success was attributed to her personality and confidence. She was apparently fearless on arrival – '"here I am going to seek my fortune, safe in Castle Garden"' – and it was only two hours later that she left the port, having secured a situation with a with a lady for $12 a month. Molly's new employer was apparently attracted by Molly's 'plucky and shrewd face, and after learning her story, employed her at once.'[131]

Molly was introduced to her new employer by an Irish woman living in New York. If Castle Garden and its surroundings was filled with risks and threats, it was also filled with people willing and able to offer advice and guidance on where to seek shelter, accommodation, food, and work. Many of these people were familiar faces to the men and women disembarking the boat from Liverpool or Cobh. The *NYT* reported, 'immigrants coming into this port have wondered eagerly and often anxiously what the first inhabitant would be like and what the first inhabitant would say… the realization has been an aged Irishwoman, with a kindly, weather-browned face beneath an old bonnet.'[132] From the 1860s, the Battery at the southern tip of Manhattan, just metres from the port, was full of food and drinks stands. Shoppers could buy everything, from peanuts to apples to lemonade, and they were served by 'aged but vituperative Irish women of masculine frames, with bleary eyes, tawdry garments, and faces lined with the wrinkles of hardship.'[133] It was these Irish women whom many new arrivals first encountered when they left the port's processing centre at

[130] 'Castle Garden'. Emphasis added.
[131] 'Only A Stowaway.'
[132] '"Aunt Jane," a Battery Park Landmark', *NYT* (15 Apr. 1906), 8.
[133] '"Aunt Jane,"'.

Castle Garden; it was from them that they bought the 'delicacies of the season' to slake their thirst and sate their hunger. It was women such as Jane Noonan who by 1906 had spent some 40 years not only selling her wares, but also giving directions to nearby hostels and lodgings, offering a comforting word to nervous arrivals, making recommendations of places of work and who to approach (and who to avoid). Migrant women would cross the Atlantic and, in some ways, would find it just like home. The concept of chain migration needs to include the presence of Irish men and particularly women in the streets, the familiar accents ringing through the air, and the awareness that in the past women had arrived in similar states. Castle Garden and its surroundings was more than just the drop-off point for women, it was an important site of interaction between old and new migrants.

Migrant Networks

The ability to rely on friends and family was not always available. 'Established' emigrants' circumstances often changed and some could no longer afford to put their relatives up or simply could not find the new arrivals in the swelling crowds of *kesselgarden*. Some women resided in the Mission's Watson House despite having family nearby, such as 16-year old Hanna Deegan, who resided at the Mission from Limerick, while her father and brother lived elsewhere in the city, while Melin McGreeney lodged there while her sister and mother lived in Staten Island. Delia Dempsey meanwhile arrived in New York in 1897 from Kilkenny to find out her friend Bridget Lynch could no longer have her to stay. Fortunately, Delia was able to stay with the Irish Superintendent of the Labour Bureau.[134]

[134] Mission ledger books.

The stigma of being an unmarried mother also travelled with Irish women to America. Although the numbers of Irish women who travelled abroad as unmarried mothers cannot be known, institutional records provide a shred of evidence into the pressures some of these women overcame on arrival. On a scrap piece of paper, tucked at the back of the Mission's ledger books, described the experience of Bridget Coyne, who arrived in New York in February 1901. Despite being initially greeted and taken to stay with her cousin, Bridget was immediately dismissed to Watson House. Staff at the Mission had a police officer escort Bridget to the local Maternity Hospital, before bringing her back to stay in the home. Arriving both unmarried and pregnant in New York, Bridget was refused help by her cousin so she had to turn to the Mission.[135] The presence of relatives abroad may have prevented women from lying about their marital status. In other circumstances women may have been able to start their lives anew while retaining their respectability, perhaps by claiming to be widowed and looking to meet a new husband.

Irish Catholic institutions abroad did (reluctantly) provide aid to those in need, who were considered to be 'disreputable' women. The Mission was crucial for many young women, providing bed and board but there were hidden costs. Refuges for unmarried mothers in Ireland often took on a maternal but punitive role, and any individual expression of personality or sexuality was denied to women.[136] The Mission also held its residents to strict standards, with different 'types' of immigrant women separated from one another.[137] Despite needing aid, women often quickly left Irish refuges due to the overt surveillance of their

[135] Mission ledger books.

[136] Maria Luddy, 'Prostitution and Rescue Work in Nineteenth-century Ireland' in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds) *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Dublin, 1989), 77.

[137] Virginia Crossman, 'Viewing Women, Family and Sexuality Through the Prism of the Irish Poor Laws', *Women's History Review*, 15/4 (2006), 547. (Similar to the case in Ireland)

activities.[138] It is notable that the Mission's archival website continues the circumspect nineteenth-century narrative of its residents being young and alone girls in acute need of its protection. Moreover, at the time of writing, the Archives of the Archdiocese of New York are closed which limit our understanding of the activities of the Mission. What is clear, however, is that Irish women who arrived in the United States navigated through different networks including those that were formal, informal, familial and institutional.

Irish women who had settled in New York were sometimes asked to leave the port when they were looking for their family and friends who had arrived. One woman, carrying her baby, was looking for a new woman arrival, but with her 'red hair and freckled face' was dismissed by immigration officers, sent away as a 'drunken, besotted specimen of the race.'[139] The officers' treatment of this woman, stigmatised as a single mother, is reminiscent of similar tropes in Ireland on (single) motherhood and what is was to be a respectable woman, exacerbated by her Irishness. American officials also feared that pregnant Irish women and unmarried Irish mothers would place additional pressure on state hospitals and institutions.[140] Another letter to New York's Foundling Hospital, in 1882 was written on behalf of a new Irish mother, 'not yet a year in this country.' Based in Bridgepoint Connecticut, the mother's local government board declared they were 'not bound to provide for her or the child until a year after her arrival in this country. They say that the Emigration Society is responsible.'[141] Pregnant and single Irish women in need were shunted from one institution to the next, and their migrant status made this easy to do.[142]

[138] Luddy, 'Prostitution and Rescue Work', 77.
[139] 'An Hour in Castle Garden'.
[140] 'Castle Garden'.
[141] Thomas J. Lynnatt to Sister Mary Irene, 28 Dec. 1882, NYHS, MS 347, Vol. 67.
[142] Irish motherhood and institutional aid is discussed in further detail in Chapter Seven.

Having relatives and friends already settled in their destination of choice was not always perceived as a help by new arrivals. At first reading, the letters between Margaret Nagle, a young woman from Cork who arrived in New York in the 1860s, and her cousin Bessie Fitzgerald (who already lived in New York) suggest the importance of family networks abroad, and how young women relied on one another. Fitzgerald directed her cousin where to go for medicine, how to write (or dictate) letters and send them to Ireland, as well as providing guidance on accommodation and jobs. Fitzgerald's confidence in knowing the 'dos and don'ts' of New York was matched only by her anxiety for her newly-arrived family member. She wrote 'Please don't fail to write up to me if there is anything to prevent your coming up as I am very anxious to hear from you.'[143] Despite some assumptions that family aid was always forthcoming and appreciated, Nagle did not appreciate her cousin's input and found that she had 'not been of very much assistance to me so far.'[144] Nagle wrote to her father that their family abroad was 'not to be relied upon and sometimes do more harm than good.'[145] Emigration sometimes heightened pre-existing familial tensions back home. John Nagle replied that Margaret 'did well not to trouble yourself by enquiring about friends… Your uncle and family are well but does not care about anyone else nor never asked about you since you left home… they consider their own business plenty and no more.'[146] He did, however, proffer some gentle advice: 'I hope you will not mind Bessie Fitzgerald or that you will be led by anyone but mind yourself.'[147] Family conflict could be passed not only down generations, but also across oceans.

[143] Bessie Fitzgerald to Margaret Nagle, 15 Aug. 1866, TLRW, AIA.077.
[144] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 21 Aug. 1866, TLRW, AIA.077.
[145] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 18 Feb. 1867, TLRW, AIA.077.
[146] John Nagle to Margaret Nagle, 17 Sept. 1867, TLRW, AIA.077.
[147] John Nagle to Margaret Nagle, 2 Dec. 1866, TLRW, AIA.077.

Conclusions

Women's ability to leave Ireland was contingent on individual circumstances, familial need, and institutional intervention. As Nagle wrote to her father, huge numbers of women travelled to New York City having been assisted by philanthropic and state emigration schemes. These schemes reveal the complex attitudes towards young women in post-famine Ireland. Young single women's labour was recognised as essential for familial wellbeing, but their presence within the home in Ireland was not always welcome. By moving abroad, many young and single women were paradoxically able to fulfil their obligations to their family who remained at home in Ireland. Yet it is clear that older women, married women, pregnant single women, unmarried mothers also undertook the stressful, laborious journey abroad. Many negotiated with friends and family, as well as institutions in both Ireland and the US, to help them on their journey and to settle into their new country.

A couple of weeks after her arrival in New York City, Mary Brown was still feeling the side effects from her arduous, stomach-churning journey. It was to Brown's great relief that her aunt had the space, time, and resources, to take Brown in and to nurse her back to full health so that she was fit enough to begin to her job search. Mary Brown relished the chance to connect with her family abroad, while providing for those back home. Other young Irish women were not so enthusiastic about the assistance that they were offered. Margaret Nagle remained staunchly independent. Her family abroad more of a hindrance than a help. She was desperate to 'get along as well without them or the help of relatives as thousands of others have to do who come here.'[148] Her situation shows that chain migration did not simply comprise of information and prepaid passenger fares to help women cross overseas, but could

[148] Margaret Nagle, 21 Aug.

also include the dissemination of Irish values and the continuation of family tensions. The difference in attitudes of Brown and Nagle to their relatives abroad is a reminder of the variable nature of friendships and attitudes to the presence of fellow Irish men and women abroad.

Chapter 4
Irish Women in the 1880 US Census

This chapter presents the national-level demographic, household, and occupational structure of Irish women, using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS USA) of the 1880 US census.[1] The 1880 database is one of the first to contain the complete population of the United States, providing a reliable measure of the population which is not subject to sampling error.[2] This chapter uses 'big data' and employs the census data of 50 million individuals residing in the United States disaggregated into groups.[3] This allows a nuanced analysis of demographic, household and occupational structure both within and between different population sub-groups, such as by sex and by birthplace. This empirical analysis deploys a comparative approach examining the characteristics of different groups, according to their migrant status, to assess similarities and differences between the Irish women and others. It also takes race into consideration. The chapter analyses national level data, to provide a contextual framework of Irish women's working and living conditions, and the subsequent chapters focus on New York.

[1] Referred to as 'IPUMS' throughout. IPUMS USA is part of the wider IPUMS organisational structure which provides census and survey data from around the world, with the fundamental aim to provide a comparative framework of socio-economic change, across time and space. IPUMS USA, through its work with Ancestry.com and FamilySearch, provides access to a number of different iterations of US census microdata, from 1790 until the present day. Individual-level microdata is available from 1850 to 1940. This research uses a dataset based on the microdata from the 1880 census schedule. For more information see: IPUMS' https://ipums.org/ (Feb. 2020).

[2] Sub-groups include: Irish; White American; Black American; Canadian; South, Central American and Caribbean; Canadian and North American; European; English; Welsh; Scottish; Asian; African; Australian; and abroad/unknown. The Asian; African; Australian; and abroad/unknown groups are relatively small and are excluded from the tables and figures.

[3] There is not one precise definition of 'big data', it refers to large data sets that are analysed to reveal patterns and trends

Population

According to the 1880 census, 50,139,890 people resided in the United States in 1880, with an almost equal split between men (51 percent) and women (49 percent). Approximately one in 25 of the population had been born in Ireland. As shown in Table 11, 1,852,769 Irish people resided in the United States in 1880, comprising 4 percent of the total population. The Irish were the third largest birthplace group in the United States, following those born in the US (88 percent) and those born in mainland Europe (5 percent).[4] Of those born in the US, 36,838,35 were white American, while 6,558,112 were Black. No other single country seeded more people in the US than Ireland. Out of all the birthplace groups, including American and foreign-born, the Irish were the only group which comprised proportionately more females than males.[5] As shown in Table 11, 52 percent (965,243) of the Irish were female whereas 48 percent were male (887,526). Irish women comprised just under 4 percent of the total female population: the third largest group after American and European women.[6]

[4] These observations are based on how the migrant groups are categorised, and if the European group was further disaggregated by countries in Europe in 1880 then the Irish would have been the largest group overseas. In this thesis percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

[5] When disaggregated by race, women comprise 50.5 percent of Black Americans.

[6] 'American-born' here is taken to mean born in the United States.

Table 11. US Population by Birthplace, 1880

Birthplace	Male	% of male total	% of birthplace total	Female	% of female total	% of birthplace total	Total
United States - White	18,601,277	72.93	50.49	18,237,058	74.03	49.51	36,838,335
United States - Black	3,243,501	12.72	49.46	3,314,611	13.46	50.54	6,558,112
United States - Other	32,935	0.13	36.38	31,416	0.13	34.70	64,351
America Caribbean	51,319	0.20	56.68	39,215	0.16	43.32	90,534
Canada -- North America	382,773	1.50	53.42	333,811	1.36	46.58	716,584
Ireland	887,526	3.48	47.90	965,243	3.92	52.10	1,852,769
Europe	1,684,338	6.60	56.52	1,295,988	5.26	43.48	2,980,326
England	372,426	1.46	56.03	292,317	1.19	43.97	664,743
Scotland	95,882	0.38	56.16	74,844	0.30	43.84	170,726
Wales	46,225	0.18	55.32	37,340	0.15	44.68	83,565
United Kingdom (Other)	227	0.00	55.10	185	0.00	44.90	412
Asia	102,028	0.40	94.56	5,866	0.02	5.44	107,894
Africa	1,288	0.01	56.97	973	0.00	43.03	2,261
Australasia	2,482	0.01	51.27	2,359	0.01	48.73	4,841
Unknown	2,530	0.01	57.02	1,907	0.01	42.98	4,437
Total	25,506,757	100.00		24,633,133	100.00		50,139,890

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Age Structure

In order to analyse the different life stages of Irish women, individuals have been grouped into five different age sub-groups: 14 and younger; 15 to 29; 30 to 44; 35 to 64; and 65 and older.[7] Tables 12 and 13 show the age structure of males and females disaggregated by birthplace. The majority of the total population in 1880 can be found in the first two age groups, with migrant groups unsurprisingly having a relatively small share in the youngest

[7] People aged fifteen and over are defined as an adult for the purpose of this thesis. There was no legal definition of the age of majority and no federal law against child labour throughout the nineteenth century. The age of 15 has been chosen by considering a number of different sources including the work of Charlotte Erickson and Claudia Goldin, who both use comparable datasets on migrants and women's occupational structure in the late-nineteenth century US, and define a working adult as aged 15 plus. The 1880 US Census reports disaggregates the population and working age groups into four categories: all ages; 10 to 15; 16 to 59; 60 and over. By the turn of the century, twenty-four states had minimum age limits for manufacturing of around 14 in Massachusetts. The first federal child labour bill was introduced in 1906 and sought to outlaw the interstate transport of products produced by children who were 14 years old and under. Later chapters will go into more detail concerning age groups. See: Michael Schuman, 'History of Child Labor in the United States-Part 2: The Reform Movement', *Monthly Labor Review,* U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, (2017), B1.

age category.[8] Approximately 98 percent of those aged 14 and younger were born in the United States. For the Irish, both men and women were concentrated in older age groups: approximately 38 percent of the total Irish population in the United States were in the 30 to 44 age group; and 34 percent of the Irish were aged 45 to 64. The age profile of Irish migrants reflects the evolution of the stock and flow of migration in the nineteenth century. The flow of Irish emigrants after the famine consisted of single, young adults although this did slow over time. As discussed in Chapter Three, most famine migrants left in the late 1840s and early 1850s so a 20-year-old emigrant in 1850 would be 50 years old in 1880.

Tables 12 and 13 show the age structure of males and females (respectively) for the main comparator groups in 1880. In general, those in the international migrant groups were in the older age categories. Additionally, there was a greater share of Irish women in the 15 to 29 age category (20 percent) compared with the share of Irish men in this category (16 percent). This is consistent with the suggestion that women tended to leave Ireland at an earlier age. Table 14 shows the age distribution of emigrants from Irish ports between 1852 and 1900.[9] In all the periods there were proportionally more women migrants aged under 25 compared to men aged under 25. Furthermore, this difference increased from 1852 up until 1890, and was particularly pronounced in the 15 to 29 age group.

[8] 'Migrant groups' here focuses on first-generation migrants for the scope of this thesis.

[9] The age categories in Table 14 are those from Donald Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Toronto, 1993), 44l and are not all strictly comparable with those in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 12 Age Structure of Males, 1880, by Birthplace

	Age 0-14			Age 15-29			Age 30-44			Age 45-64			Age 65+			
Birthplace	No	% of age total	% of birthplace total	No	% of age total	% of birthplace total	No	% of age total	% of birthplace total	No	% of age total	% of birthplace total	No	% of age total	% of birthplace total	Total
United States - White	7,967,514	82.26	42.83	5,377,370	75.41	28.91	2,773,597	61.51	14.91	1,909,958	57.78	10.27	572,838	65.42	3.08	18,601,277
United States - Black	1,486,183	15.34	45.82	873,876	12.26	26.94	451,338	10.01	13.92	343,334	10.39	10.59	88,770	10.14	2.74	3,243,501
United States - Other	12,685	0.13	38.52	9,322	0.13	28.30	6,056	0.13	18.39	3,760	0.11	11.42	1,112	0.13	3.38	32,935
America - Caribbean	7,161	0.07	13.95	16,258	0.23	31.68	16,283	0.36	31.73	10,077	0.30	19.64	1,540	0.18	3.00	51,319
Canada - North America	53,339	0.55	13.93	148,499	2.08	38.80	111,516	2.47	29.13	58,855	1.78	15.38	10,564	1.21	2.76	382,773
Ireland	18,207	0.19	2.05	144,032	2.02	16.23	341,478	7.57	38.48	314,322	9.51	35.42	69,487	7.94	7.83	887,526
Europe	100,947	1.04	5.99	396,921	5.57	23.57	593,009	13.15	35.21	499,871	15.12	29.68	93,590	10.69	5.56	1,684,338
England	27,242	0.28	7.31	85,482	1.20	22.95	123,246	2.73	33.09	110,315	3.34	29.62	26,141	2.99	7.02	372,426
Scotland	6,385	0.07	6.66	20,314	0.28	21.19	33,091	0.73	34.51	28,766	0.87	30.00	7,326	0.84	7.64	95,882
Wales	3,778	0.04	8.17	10,855	0.15	23.48	15,413	0.34	33.34	13,137	0.40	28.42	3,042	0.35	6.58	46,225
United Kingdom (Other)	19	0.00	8.37	43	0.00	18.94	77	0.00	33.92	69	0.00	30.40	19	0.00	8.37	227
Asia	1,264	0.01	1.24	45,366	0.64	44.46	42,182	0.94	41.34	12,568	0.38	12.32	648	0.07	0.64	102,028
Africa	114	0.00	8.85	256	0.00	19.88	298	0.01	23.14	225	0.01	17.47	395	0.05	30.67	1,288
Australasia	567	0.01	22.84	1,157	0.02	46.62	610	0.01	24.58	129	0.00	5.20	19	0.00	0.77	2,482
Unknown	384	0.00	15.18	811	0.01	32.06	776	0.02	30.67	462	0.01	18.26	97	0.01	3.83	2,530
Total	9,685,789	100.00	37.97	7,130,562	100.00	27.96	4,508,970	100.00	17.68	3,305,848	100.00	12.96	875,588	100.00	3.43	25,506,757

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table 13 Age Structure of Females, 1880, by Birthplace

		Age			Age			Age			Age			Age		
Birthplace	0-14	% of age total	% of birthplace total	15-29	% of age total	% of birthplace total	30-44	% of age total	% of birthplace total	45-64	% of age total	% of birthplace total	65+	% of age total	% of birthplace total	Total
United States - White	7,724,168	82.01	42.35	5,332,129	75.79	29.24	2,777,014	64.32	15.23	1,824,406	60.83	10.00	579,341	67.20	3.18	18,237,058
United States - Black	1,468,145	15.59	44.29	933,602	13.27	28.17	506,607	11.73	15.28	317,350	10.58	9.57	88,907	10.31	2.68	3,314,611
United States - Other	11,849	0.13	37.72	9,070	0.13	28.87	6,025	0.14	19.18	3,334	0.11	10.61	1,138	0.13	0.03	31,416
America - Caribbean	6,659	0.07	16.98	13,218	0.19	33.71	11,887	0.28	30.31	6,151	0.21	15.69	1,300	0.15	3.32	39,215
Canada - North America	53,048	0.56	15.89	134,204	1.91	40.20	88,953	2.06	26.65	47,975	1.60	14.37	9,631	1.12	2.89	333,811
Ireland	18,246	0.19	1.89	195,192	2.77	20.22	362,796	8.40	37.59	317,375	10.58	32.88	71,634	8.31	7.42	965,243
Europe	98,114	1.04	7.57	313,328	4.45	24.18	435,739	10.09	33.62	369,418	12.32	28.50	79,389	9.21	6.13	1,295,988
England	27,079	0.29	9.26	72,627	1.03	24.85	90,619	2.10	31.00	80,589	2.69	27.57	21,403	2.48	7.32	292,317
Scotland	6,278	0.07	8.39	17,467	0.25	23.34	23,233	0.54	31.04	21,582	0.72	28.84	6,284	0.73	8.40	74,844
Wales	3,711	0.04	9.94	9,503	0.14	25.45	11,374	0.26	30.46	10,073	0.34	26.98	2,679	0.31	7.17	37,340
United Kingdom (Other)	19	0.00	10.27	59	0.00	31.89	50	0.00	27.03	49	0.00	26.49	8	0.00	4.32	185
Asia	713	0.01	12.15	2,770	0.04	47.22	1,925	0.04	32.82	392	0.01	6.68	66	0.01	1.13	5,866
Africa	93	0.00	9.56	272	0.00	27.95	165	0.00	16.96	157	0.01	16.14	286	0.03	29.39	973
Australasia	582	0.01	24.67	1,125	0.02	47.69	553	0.01	23.44	89	0.00	3.77	10	0.00	0.42	2,359
Unknown	394	0.00	20.66	650	0.01	34.08	526	0.01	0.00	292	0.01	15.31	45	0.01	0.00	1,907
Total	9,419,098	100.00	38.24	7,035,216	100.00	28.56	4,317,466	100.00	17.53	2,999,232	100.00	12.18	862,121	100.00	45208.23	24,633,133

Source: IPUMS dataset

Table 14. Age Distribution of Emigrants from Irish Ports, 1852-1900 (percentages, male and female)

Period	0-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-54	55 and over	NS	Total
Males								
1852-54	22.6	14.7	28.1	21.2	12.2	1.1	0.1	100
1861-70	13.7	8.4	33.7	29.1	9.9	0.9	4.3	100
1871-80	13.5	10.2	31.7	31.4	11.8	1.3	0.1	100
1881-90	13.7	15.0	38.3	22.1	9.5	1.3	0.1	100
1891-1900	8.5	11.0	41.6	29.6	7.9	1.4	0	100
Females								
1852-54	22.0	18.8	28.4	16.8	12.6	1.3	0.1	100
1861-70	16.1	13.1	34.0	20.2	10.9	1.2	4.5	100
1871-80	15.7	17.8	33.8	21.2	10.0	1.4	0.1	100
1881-90	13.9	26.0	35.5	14.8	8.5	1.2	0.1	100
1891-1900	7.3	22.1	44.1	18.7	6.7	1.1	0	100

Source: Donald Akenson, The Irish Diaspora: A Primer (Toronto, 1993), 44l; Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems, 1948-1954 (Dublin, 1955), Table 91,122.
Note: NS is non-specified

Household Structure

While confusion remains over the nature of Irish households, both at home and abroad, the census data provides a detailed picture of Irish women's homes in the US and the environment in which they carried out their everyday lives. The below places individual women into the context of their family, household, and birthplace group. The empirical analysis considers: marital status; relationship to household; the number of own children they lived with; the size of the families with/in which they resided; and the types of 'group quarters' they resided in.

Marital Status

As shown in Table 15, the majority of all women aged 15 and over living in the US in 1880 were married: 55 percent were married with spouse present and two percent were married with spouse absent. For Irish women aged 15 and over, 56 percent were married with spouse present and two percent were married with spouse absent. This was significantly higher than the overall marriage rate in Ireland, as show in Table 7, 41 percent of Irish women were married in 1881 (the Irish census did not identify whether spouses were present or absent). There were, however, major differences in the proportions of widows and single women between the Irish women in the US and the population as a whole. As shown in Table 15, 19 percent of Irish women in the US were enumerated as widows; compared with 11 percent in the total population (as show in Table 7, 14 percent of Irish women in Ireland were enumerated as widows). The Irish had the highest proportion of widows of all birthplace groups, apart from the small contingent of African-born women. Irish women were also less likely to be single (referred to as 'never married' in the census) than all women: 22 percent of Irish women were enumerated as never married, compared with 31 percent of all women. In comparison, 45 percent of Irish women (aged 15 and over) in Ireland were single – double the proportion in the US (see Chapter Two, Table 7). Furthermore, 41 percent of Irish women in Ireland were married and 14 percent were widowed in 1880. Overall, the evidence suggests that marriage was a more likely outcome for Irish women in the US compared to Irish women in Ireland.

These variations in marital status, in part reflect the contrasting demographic structures as there were relatively fewer younger Irish women compared to the population as a whole. To account for this, a disaggregation into age groups shows that the largest group of

Irish married women (spouse present), were aged between 30 to 44 years of age (which was also higher than the other comparator groups).[10] Young Irish women aged between 15 and 29, however, were more likely to be single. Table 16 shows the number of female widows in the different age categories of the major migrant and non-migrant groups. Old(er) age and widowhood went hand in hand for women of all backgrounds. Almost 60 percent of women aged 65 or older and one quarter of women aged between 45 and 64 were widowed. It is also notable that a higher proportion of relatively young Irish women were enumerated as widows compared to the other comparator group (with the notable exception of Black American women); for example, 30 percent of women aged between 45 and 64 were widows.

Irish men were also more likely to be married than all men: over 60 percent of all Irish men were married with spouse present, compared with just over 50 percent of all men. They were also more likely to be enumerated as widowers (7 percent) compared to all men (4 percent) although this was a much smaller proportion compared to Irish women. Irish men were also much less likely to be single or never married than all men. As shown in Table 15, 26 percent of Irish men were single, compared with 40 percent of all men.

[10] Data table not reported but available on request.

Table 15. Marital Status in 1880, All and Irish

	All						
Marital status	Male	% of male total	% of male and female	Female	% of female total	% of male and female	Total
Married, spouse present	8432664	53.30	50.00	8431108	55.42	50.00	16863772
Married, spouse absent	391701	2.48	54.79	323213	2.12	45.21	714914
Divorced	35439	0.22	37.05	60212	0.40	62.95	95651
Widowed	608042	3.84	26.03	1728040	11.36	73.97	2336082
Never married/single	6353390	40.16	57.63	4671758	30.71	42.37	11025148
Total	15821236	100.00		15214331	100.00		31035567

	Irish-born						
Marital status	Male	% of male total	% of male and female	Female	% of female total	% of male and female	Total
Married, spouse present	552827	63.59	51.12	528665	55.83	48.88	1081492
Married, spouse absent	27738	3.19	55.11	22594	2.39	44.89	50332
Divorced	1283	0.15	43.51	1666	0.18	56.49	2949
Widowed	58192	6.69	24.19	182400	19.26	75.81	240592
Never married/single	229279	26.37	52.00	211672	22.35	48.00	440951
Total	869319	100.00		946997	100.00		1816316

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table 16. Female Widows in 1880, by Birthplace and Age Category

	Age Groups							
	15-29		30-44		45-64		65+	
	No	% of age total	No	% of age total	No	% of age total	No	% of age total
ALL	106,798	1.52	360,637	8.35	754,831	25.17	505774	58.66
American	97,306	1.55	282,114	8.58	545,130	25.41	389,282	58.16
White American	60,583	1.14	207,037	7.46	435,535	23.87	328,941	56.78
Black American	36,479	3.91	74,516	14.71	108,675	34.24	59,623	67.06
North American/Canadian	1,411	1.05	5,813	6.53	9,785	20.4	5,337	55.41
American Caribbean	1,411	1.05	5,813	6.53	9,785	20.4	5,337	55.41
Irish	2,892	1.48	37,237	10.26	94,910	29.9	47,361	66.12
European	3272	1.04	24756	16.54	76481	20.7	45117	56.83
English	1072	1.48	6481	7.15	18345	22.76	12136	56.7
Scottish	245	1.4	1857	7.99	5477	25.38	3821	60.81
Welsh	97	1.02	635	5.58	2120	21.05	1506	56.22

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Relationship to Household Head

The relationship to household head is an important factor when considering household structure, as it places an individual in the context of their familial and household interrelationships (including, but not restricted to, marital status) and, as such, all ages are considered here. The majority (54 percent) of all Irish women were enumerated as the *spouse* of the head of the household and 14 percent as the *household heads*, which was relatively high compared with all women (see Appendix Table B1). Furthermore, the data on relationship to household head disaggregated by marital status, shows that the vast majority of women (in all groups) who were aged 15 or more were classified as a spouse or as child.[11] As discussed above, widowhood was highly prevalent in the lives of Irish and Black

[11] Data table not reported but available on request.

American women and this led many to being in charge of their own home. The data on relationship to household head disaggregated by marital status shows that a large majority of female household heads (85 percent) were widows. It should also be noted that 19 percent of Irish women were classified as 'non-relatives'- again the highest of all comparator groups – probably reflecting the occupation of many Irish women as live-in servants (see Table B1 and discussion in Chapter Six).

The data discussed here reflects the differing age structures of the differing comparator groups, including, for example, the propensity of Irish women to be older than white American women. It is, however, also consistent with previous historical analyses. Hasia Diner has suggested that widowhood and male desertion of families led to Irish female headed-households becoming a 'strikingly common' feature in American society.[12] The question of why this was so common and the implications for women's wellbeing are addressed in Chapter Eight.

Family Size

Although the majority of all individuals in the US lived with family members, Irish men and women were more likely to be in single-person family units compared with the total population (see Appendix Table B3) – it should be noted they may have been living with other people who were not members of their family.[13] Approximately 22 percent of Irish men were in single-person family units compared with 17 percent of all men. More strikingly, as shown in Table B3, Irish women (20 percent) were twice as likely to live in a single-person family unit compared with all women. Further evidence is provided in Table 17 which shows

[12] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983), 45.

[13] The IPUMS variable FAMSIZE counts the number of own family members residing with each individual, including the person her/himself. Persons not living with others related to them by blood, marriage, or adoption are coded '1'.

that the propensity of Irish women to live in a single-family-units was higher compared to the other comparator groups: approximately three quarters of Irish single-family-units were comprised of single women who had not been married. The data in Table 17 shows that single women from migrant groups were more likely to live without relatives compared to the non-migrant groups. Furthermore, single Irish women had a higher propensity to live without relatives compared to all other groups. Overall, 66 percent of Irish single women lived without relatives compared to: 38 percent of single Canadian-born women; 45 percent of single European-born women; and 30 percent of single English-born women. Irish women were more likely to live away from the support and comfort of their blood relations; a suggestion consistent with the evidence of a relatively high share or Irish women who were boarders, lodgers, or live-in servants.[14] Being single might however have some benefits, due to lack of dependents.

[14] See Chapter Six.

Table 17 Women in single person family units by marital status and migrant group, 1880

	Married, spouse absent			Divorced			Widowed			Never married			Total	
	No	% of marital status	% of independent females	No	% of marital status	% of independent females	No	% of marital status	% of independent females	No	% of marital status	% of independent females	No	% of all females
ALL	85748	26.53	6.20	13558	22.52	0.98	306276	17.72	22.16	976536	20.90	70.65	1382121	9.08
American	62722	23.88	6.24	11454	21.68	1.14	223971	17.05	22.28	707291	17.12	70.35	1005441	8.12
White American	43235	22.26	5.45	8956	21.25	1.13	158768	15.38	20.00	582967	16.11	73.43	793926	7.55
Black American	19157	28.43	9.15	2478	23.45	1.18	64684	23.16	30.89	123059	24.20	58.77	209380	11.34
North American / Canadian	2244	30.82	5.74	270	30.58	0.69	4343	19.44	11.11	32220	37.57	82.45	39077	13.92
American Caribbean	473	34.28	12.87	42	26.09	1.14	1194	23.13	32.50	1965	28.81	53.48	3674	11.29
Irish	10375	45.92	5.44	601	36.07	0.32	41035	22.50	21.51	138766	65.56	72.74	190777	20.15
European	6208	34.01	5.90	834	24.65	0.79	24167	16.15	22.98	73938	44.44	70.32	105147	8.78
English	2239	29.87	8.97	253	26.58	1.01	8190	21.53	32.82	14273	30.28	57.19	24955	9.41
Scottish	640	33.46	8.43	62	30.39	0.82	2274	19.95	29.95	4616	35.55	60.80	7592	11.07
Welsh	198	25.22	7.38	28	30.11	1.04	810	18.59	30.20	1646	30.40	61.37	2682	7.98

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Number of Children

Whether women lived with their own children provides two insights. First, it provides an indicator of how many women may have been living alone without other family members. It is not a perfect indicator as some women may have been living with members of their extended family. Second, for those women living with their own children, it provides insights on the size of their families. A large share of Irish women (38 percent) did not live with any children who were their own in 1880 (see Appendix Table B4).[15] It should be noted that this is slightly lower than the percentage for all women. The proportion of women who did not live with their own children varied according to migrant status. As shown in Table 18, the migrant groups from Europe, Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales had smaller proportions of women aged 15 and over who did not live with (their own) children compared with the non-migrantgroups (white and Black American) and migrants from the Americas. Furthermore, migrants from Europe, Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales tended to have more children compared with the non-migrant groups (white and Black American) and migrants from the Americas. As shown in Table 19, approximately 10 percent of Irish women were living with six or more of their own children. This is similar to the proportion of European and Welsh women – and higher than the proportions of non-migrant women - living with six or more of their own children.

[15] The IPUMS variable NCHILD counts the number of own children (of any age or marital status) residing with each individual. NCHILD includes step-children and adopted children as well as biological children. Persons with no children present are coded "0."

Table 18. Women and Men Not Living with Own Children (by Birthplace, 1880)

	Male		Female		Total	
	No	% of male	No	% of female	No	% of total
ALL	8564478	54.13	6796742	44.67	15361220	49.50
American	7023187	56.59	5831642	47.11	12854829	51.85
White American	6061652	57.00	5034964	47.89	11096616	52.47
Black American	948967	54.00	787468	42.65	1736435	48.18
North American/Canadian	185572	56.33	123872	44.12	309444	50.71
American Caribbean	26405	59.80	13507	41.49	39912	52.03
Irish	361528	41.59	357135	37.71	718663	39.57
European	650662	41.09	333774	27.86	984436	35.40
English	155966	45.18	96449	36.36	252415	41.35
Scottish	40901	45.70	23892	34.85	64793	40.99
Welsh	18450	43.47	10364	30.82	28814	37.88

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table 19. Women and Men Living with Six Plus of Own Children (by Birthplace, 1880) (percentage)

	Male	Female	All
ALL	5.89	6.38	6.13
American	5.13	5.62	5.37
White American	4.74	5.24	4.99
Black American	7.54	7.76	7.65
North American/Canadian	6.40	7.87	7.08
American Caribbean	4.78	6.55	5.53
Irish	10.66	9.70	10.16
European	9.23	10.89	9.95
English	6.57	7.24	6.86
Scottish	7.82	8.80	8.25
Welsh	8.45	10.40	9.31

Source: IPUMS dataset.

The data, disaggregated by marital status, shows that 81 percent of all households with children had a mother with spouse present and 15 percent of all households with children had a widowed mother.[16] Overall, 72 percent of all widowed women were living with one of more of their children. For Irish women, 75 percent of all households with children had a mother with spouse present and 22 percent of all households with children had a widowed mother - the latter is the highest share of all the comparator groups. Furthermore, 85 percent of Irish widowed women were living with one of more of their children, indicating the importance of understanding the dynamics and dependencies of households with widows. The comparator groups with the highest share of households with children with a mother with the spouse absent were Black American and American-Caribbean. Additionally, Black American women had the highest share of households with children with a mother who was single. There were very few households with children where the mother was divorced – unsurprisingly so, given the low level of divorce at the time - and this share was particularly low amongst Irish women, potentially reflecting the high number of Catholics in this group.

Household Type

The housing type variable indicates whether a person lived in a household or in a 'group quarters' which IPUMS defines as household units with '10 or more individuals unrelated to the householder' residing within', such as institutions (for example hospitals, asylums, and workhouses), rooming houses, and military barracks.[17] The vast majority of Irish men and women lived in 'non-group quarters' and this was slightly lower compared with all men and all women (see Appendix Table B5).

[16] Data table not reported but available on request.

[17] 'GQ' https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/variables/GQ#comparability_section (Dec. 2019).

Table 20 provides further evidence on the residence in selective institutions by different comparator groups. As shown in Table 20, there was a relatively high proportion of Irish men and women in correctional institutions compared to most other birthplace groups. A notable exception was the incarceration rate of Black American men which was more than three times greater than the rate for white American men. Irish men and women were more likely to be resident in mental institutions and institutions for the elderly, handicapped, and poor compared to all other migrant and non-migrant groups.[18] In particular, Irish women in the older age groups were, more likely to be found in correctional facilities compared with the other birthplace groups. This mirrors a broader pattern, where Irish men and women were also more likely to be resident in institutions in other countries of settlement. For instance, there was a relatively high number of Irish women, particularly older widows, in Lancashire's asylums in the late nineteenth century. And, once admitted, were unlikely to leave.[19]

Irish men were more likely to be resident in rooming houses compared to most other groups – for instance, they were more than twice as likely to be resident in such lodgings compared to American men. The migrant group with the highest propensity to be resident in rooming houses were men from Canada. The two female migrant groups with the highest propensity to be resident in rooming houses were Canadian-born and Irish women.

[18] Data not reported in the tables but available on request.

[19] Catherine Cox, Hilary Marland and Sarah York, 'Emaciated, Exhausted, and Excited: the Bodies and Minds of the Irish in Late Nineteenth-century Lancashire Asylums' *Journal of Social History* , 46/2 (2012), 507-511.

Table 20 Residence in selected institutional types (IT) in 1880 (aged 15+), by birthplace

	Correctional institutions				Mental institutions				Institutions for the elderly, handicapped, and poor				Rooming house			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No	% of male	No	% of female	No	% of male	No	% of female	No	% of male	No	% of female	No	% of male	No	% of female
ALL	43,317	0.27	4,557	0.03	14,740	0.09	14,098	0.09	30,724	0.19	30,804	0.20	370,783	2.34	138,884	0.91
American	35609	0.29	3234	0.03	10071	0.08	9455	0.08	16962	0.14	20275	0.16	228138	1.84	98226	0.79
White American	22432	0.21	2122	0.02	9363	0.09	8776	0.08	15175	0.14	18302	0.17	213456	2.01	90868	0.86
Black American	13108	0.75	1101	0.06	603	0.03	593	0.03	1774	0.10	1959	0.11	14292	0.81	7137	0.39
North American/Canadian	775	0.24	95	0.03	232	0.07	232	0.08	397	0.12	523	0.19	24545	7.45	6511	2.32
American Caribbean	299	0.68	11	0.03	50	0.11	23	0.07	29	0.07	53	0.16	1280	2.90	334	1.03
Irish	2853	0.33	858	0.09	1809	0.21	2588	0.27	7006	0.81	6594	0.70	37446	4.31	19604	2.07
European	2207	0.14	196	0.02	1942	0.12	1422	0.12	4806	0.30	2264	0.19	49404	3.12	9345	0.78
English	971	0.28	110	0.04	424	0.12	260	0.10	1085	0.31	780	0.29	12587	3.65	3253	1.23
Scottish	238	0.27	40	0.06	92	0.10	77	0.11	315	0.35	223	0.33	4268	4.77	971	1.42
Welsh	56	0.13	7	0.02	47	0.11	25	0.07	82	0.19	77	0.23	897	2.11	199	0.59

Source: IPUMS dataset

The data disaggregated by age group shows that Irish women aged between 15 and 29 years old had a relatively high propensity to be resident in rooming houses.[20] Overall, in this age category, migrants from overseas were more likely to be resident in rooming houses compared to other groups. Furthermore, five percent of the female Irish in this age category were resident in rooming houses – the highest of any of the comparator groups. Similarly, Irish men aged between 15 and 29 years old were more likely to be resident in rooming houses compared to other age groups with migrants from overseas were more likely to be resident in these institutions compared to the non-migrant groups. Overall, 11 percent of Canadian men and 9 percent of Irish men in this age category were resident in rooming houses.

The Labour Market

Two factors are key when assessing the experiences of Irish women in the formal labour market. First, to what extent did Irish women participate in the formal labour market and how did this compare to other women in the United States? Second, what type of formal work did Irish women undertake - and was this different from other women?

Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPRs)

The labour force participation rate (LFPR) of women is discussed here in terms of those considered 'gainfully employed' or 'occupied', and thus enumerated in the census as part of paid labour market.[21] Figure 5 shows the enumerated LFPR for women over the age of

[20] Data table not reported but available on request.

[21] Dora Costa, 'From Mill Town to Board Room: The Rise of Women's Paid Labor', *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 14/4 (2000), 103. Measuring women's participation in the late nineteenth century labour force is fraught with methodological and conceptual difficulties. In his work on the early IPUMS datasets, Matthew Sobek noted that 'the data for women most accurately reflect paid market labour outside the home while under-representing to a degree both paid and unpaid market labour in the home.' See: Matthew Sobek, 'A Century of Work: Gender, Labor Force Participation, and Occupational Attainment in the United States, 1880-1990' (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 1997), 117-118.

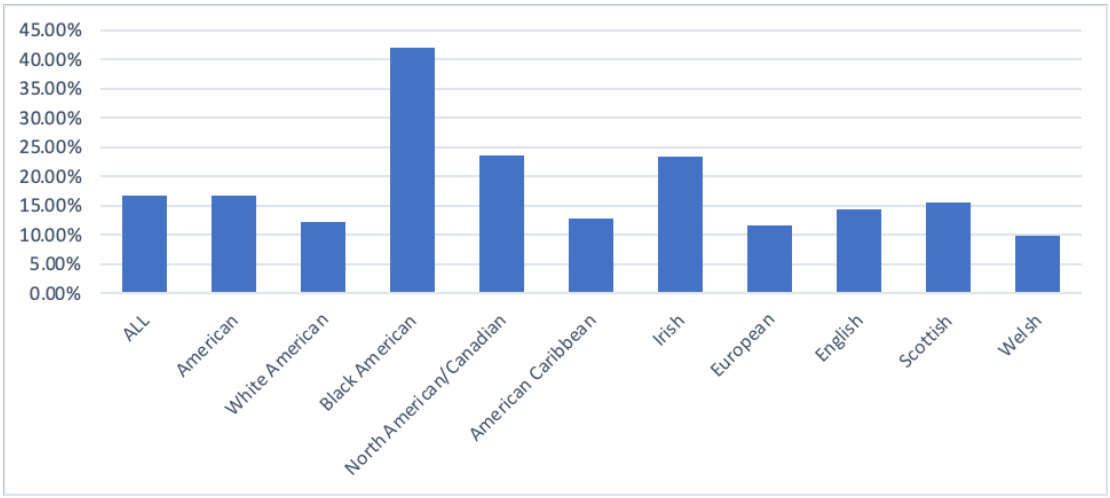
15 disaggregated by all the main comparator groups using the 1880 census data. For all women, the LFPR was 17 percent, which is broadly consistent with other calculations. Dora Costa estimated that 15 to 16 percent of women were in the formal labour force in 1870 and 1880, based on a sample from the IPUMS data combined with Claudia Goldin's dataset extrapolated from published census reports. According to Costa, the LFPR only increased marginally during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and only reached 26 percent in 1930.[22]

Figure 5 shows that the all-women LFPR masks major variations between the different comparator groups. If familial need and the primacy afforded to domestic labour shaped the timing of entry and departure of women into the paid labour force, this was heavily underpinned by racial distinctions and divisions. Alice Kessler-Harris has pointed out that in order to understand female labour, historians must 'examine first elements common to all women, then describe variations among particular communities around the periphery, placing class, race, and ethnicity within a changing tapestry of expanding opportunities and shifting household need.'[23] Using a sample of census manuscript questionnaires from 1870 and 1880, Goldin has shown that Black women had a much higher LFPR compared with white women.[24] Goldin's data focused on racial division and did not differentiate between birthplaces or migrant status. Figure 5 shows that 42 percent of Black women were enumerated as occupied, the largest LFPR of all the women's groups. Almost one quarter of both Irish and Canadian-born women were in the enumerated labour force, whereas just 12

[22] Costa, 'From Mill Town to Board Room', pp. 103-104. See also: Claudia Goldin, 'The Quiet Revolution that Transformed Women's Employment, Education, and Family', *AEA Papers and Proceedings,* 96/2 (2006), 4.
[23] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work* (Oxford, 2003), 108-109.
[24] Claudia Goldin, 'Female Labor Force Participation: The Origin of Black and White Differences, 1870-1880', *Journal of Economic History,* 37/1 (1977), 87-108.

percent of white women were in the paid labour force. Race - and the discrimination and inequality that comes with it - is crucial to understandings women's work.[25]

Figure 5. Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rate, 1880 (All and Comparator Groups)

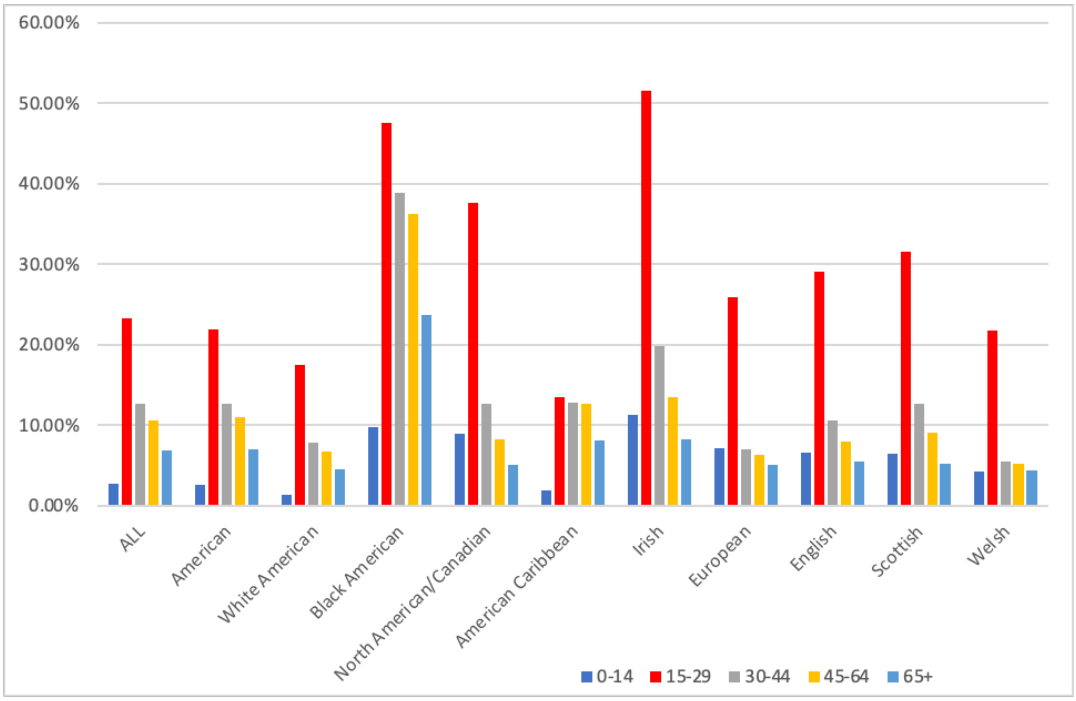


Source: IPUMS dataset.

Women's participation in the formal labour market was heavily influenced by their age and marital status. Figure 6, which shows the enumerated LFPR disaggregated by age, indicates three significant patterns by age and migrant status. First, the Irish had the highest LFPR (52 percent) in the 15 to 29 age group compared to all other comparator groups. Second, Black American women had the highest LFPR in the older age categories. Third, although the percentage of females under the age of 15 working in the formal labour market was small, the Irish had the largest share. Irish girls were primarily working in domestic service or as cotton-mill operatives.

[25] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work,* 108-109; Sobek, 'A Century of Work', 188.

Figure 6. Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rate by Age Category, 1880 (All and Comparator Groups)



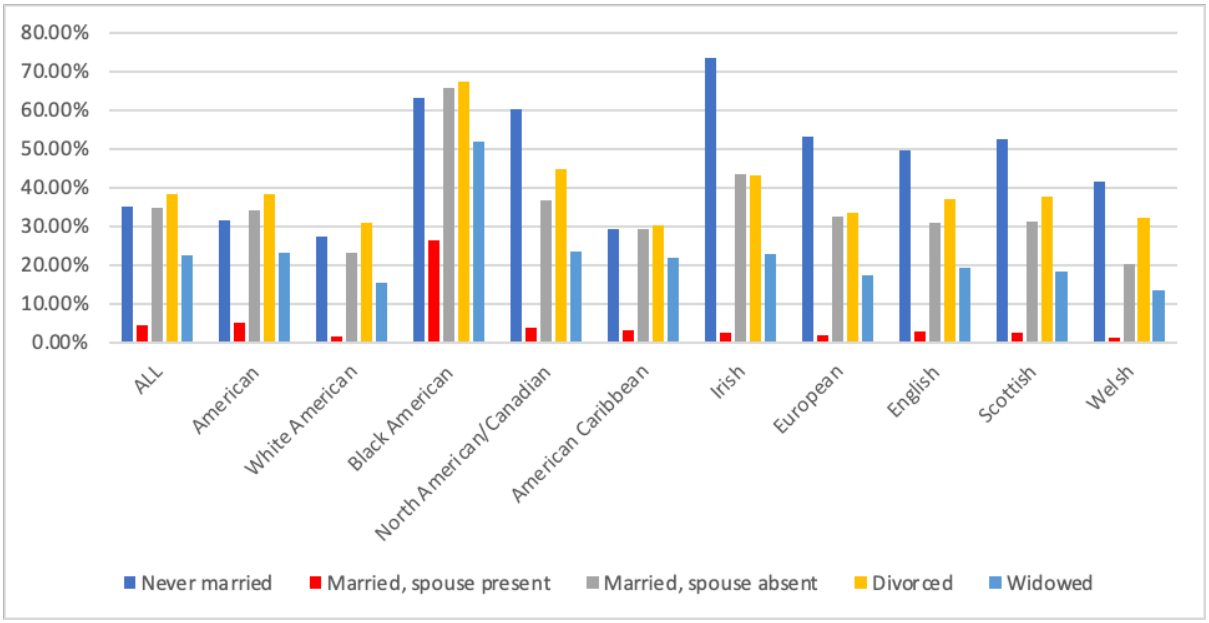
Source: IPUMS dataset.

Figure 7, which shows the enumerated LFPR disaggregated by marital status, presents significant variations by marital status and migrant status. The Irish had the highest share of single women working in the formal labour market, followed by Black American women. Women's participation in the formal labour market was heavily influenced by marital status, as Goldin has argued, prior to the 1920s women 'almost always' exited the (formal) labour market on marriage.[26] Figure 7 shows that only 5 percent of married women (spouse present) were employed in the formal labour market in 1880. Kessler-Harris has argued that as a high number of women married, small changes in their participation in the formal labour market activities would impact the overall LFPR of women. The increase in women's LFPR in the late nineteenth century was, accordingn to Kessler-Harris, due to married women's increased

[26] Goldin, 'The Quiet Revolution', 4; Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work,* 109.

employment in the US market economy. This has been attributed to smaller households and fewer children, increased life expectancy, and developments in household technology.[27]

Figure 7. Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rate by Marital Status, 1880 (All and Comparator Groups)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

The data in Figure 7 shows that women who no longer lived with a partner had a much higher propensity to work compared to those who were married with their spouse present.[28] These variations show the importance of considering how marital status influences labour market transitions; and whether many women who were separated from their partners (informally, legally or by death) were *forced* back into the formal labour market. The shares of Irish women working in the formal labour market, who were married (spouse present) was

[27] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work,* 109-111.

[28] The term 'no longer lived with a partner' is taken to mean spouse absent, divorced, or widowed; 'living with a partner' is taken to mean those married (spouse present).

three percent but this increased to: 44 percent of those married (spouse absent); 43 percent of those divorced; and 23 percent of widows.

Types of Work

Women's LFPR slowly increased over the course of the nineteenth century and women were in a variety of occupations by the turn of the century. Although domestic service declined from 60 to 25 percent of all women's occupations in the formal labour market between 1870 and 1910, it remained, the quintessentially female occupation, with women still comprising over 85 percent of all domestic workers in 1910.[29] If women were found in other professions, such as clerical work, nursing, and teaching, these roles were laden with gender norms and expectations of 'gentility, neatness, morality, cleanliness': working for wages did not undermine the feminine and domestic role of women.[30] Moreover, much of women's work remained 'unskilled, largely unorganized, and crowded into few occupations.'[31]

The main occupations in 1880 of Irish women (aged 15 and over) and, for comparison, of white and Black American women (aged 15 and over) are shown in shown in Appendix A (Tables A1, A2 and A3).[32] Here, 'main occupation' is defined as an occupation with at least one thousand women workers in the 1880 US economy. As shown in Table A1, 63 percent of Irish women were enumerated as 'keeping house' (an 'unoccupied' category) compared to 57 percent of all women aged 15 and over.[33] If comparison is made with

[29] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work* 141.
[30] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 128.
[31] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 139-142.
[32] As these are large tables, they are in an appendix as required by the History Faculty guidelines.
[33] In the 1880 enumeration process, the nominal bottom age limit for having an occupation was ten years, but exceptions were made and the occupation question was to be asked and answered for every person, whether or not they were employed in 'gainful employment' or not. As such, both occupational and non-occupational

American women (see Tables A2 and A3), Irish women were more likely to found be 'keeping house' compared with both their white and Black American counterparts.

Domestic service was the largest occupation for women in the enumerated labour force. Irish women comprised 14 percent of all female domestic servants and 59 percent of 'occupied' Irish women were employed in this job. American white women comprised 50 percent of all female domestic servants; and 37 percent of 'occupied' American white women were employed in this job. Black American women comprised 23 percent of all women domestics and 30 percent of occupied Black American women were employed in service.

Women's occupations varied by age and migrant status and further analysis of how such variations were apparent in New York are discussed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. In the Unites States economy, half of Irish servants were aged between 15 and 29 in 1880, while 30 percent were in the 30 to 44 age group, and 16 percent were in the 45 to 65 age group.[34] Half of single Irish women were working in domestic service, compared with 26 percent of wives (spouse absent) and 9 percent of widows. American domestics were more heavily concentrated in the younger age category compared to Irish women. Approximately 71 percent of white American servants were aged between 15 and 29 years old and only 12 percent were aged between 30 and 44 years old. Additionally, 11 percent of single white women, 11 percent of married white women (spouse absent), and 11 percent divorced white

responses were tabulated. Non-occupational responses coded in the micro-data include: Keeping house; at home; student; retired; sick, disabled; Institutional inmate, gentleman; other non-occupational responses; a '?'; and left blank. The 1880 Instructions to Enumerators stated that 'The term "house-keeper" will be reserved for such persons as receive distinct wages or salary for the service. Women keeping house for their own families or for themselves, without any other gainful occupation, will be entered as "keeping house." Grown daughters assisting them will be reported without occupation.' The recoding issues with this term for the micro-data are discussed in the previous chapter. See: '1900 Census Special Reports: Occupations at the Twelfth Census, 1904. Appendix A', https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/occupations/occupations-part-5.pdf (June 2020); 'Occupational Coding in the 1880 Public Use Microdata Sample', https://usa.ipums.org/usa/volii/88occtc.shtml (June 2020).

[34] Data table not reported but available on request.

women were working in service, compared with just 4 percent of white American widows. As with the Irish, half of Black female domestic servants were aged between 15 and 29. Unlike the Irish, however, 22 percent of Black female domestic servants were in the 30 to 44 age group and 14 percent in the 45 to 65 age group. Additionally, one-quarter of single Black women were in service, compared with 30 percent of married women (spouse absent), 24 percent of divorced women, and 18 percent of widows. In addition to domestic service, the main occupations for these women were agricultural labourer, general labourer and laundresses.

To evaluate whether the labour market for women was segmented according to migrant status, Tables A1, A2 and A3 show the migrant occupation quotient (MOQ): a descriptive statistic that measures the migrant concentration in the different occupational classes. It is calculated as the proportion of the different comparator groups in an occupation relative to the proportion of the total female labour force in the same occupation or classification (Table A1 reports the MOQ for Irish women, Table A2 reports the MOQ for white American women and Table A3 reports the MOQ for Black American women). A MOQ of 1.0 shows the occupational share of women in the comparator group is the same as the occupational share for all women: a MOQ greater than 1 indicates that the occupational share of the comparator group is greater than the occupational share for all women; a MOQ less than 1 indicates that the occupational share of the comparator group is less than the occupational share for all women. Furthermore, two types of MOQ are reported. First, our primary indicator, MOQ1, which is calculated using all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator. Second, for completeness, we also report an alternative, MOQ2, which is calculated using just those women that are classed as occupied as the denominator. The

difference between the two estimates, and how they are interpreted, largely reflects the impact of the variations in LFPR discussed above.

In terms of domestic service, as shown in Table A1, the MOQ1 for Irish women was 2.2 indicating a relative high concentration of Irish women in this occupation. This MOQ2 is slightly lower (1.6) reflecting the higher enumerated LFPR of Irish women compared to all women. In comparison, as shown in Table A2, the MOQ1 for American white women was 0.7 indicating a relative low concentration of American white women in this occupation. It should be noted that the MOQ2 for American white women is much higher (5.9) and this reflects the interaction of the low LFPR level and the skewed occupational distribution of American white women. American white women had a relatively low propensity to work as agricultural labourers (a relatively large sector in terms of employment) and a relatively higher propensity to work in other occupations. The MOQ1 for Black American women was 2.0 indicating a relative high concentration of Black American women in this occupation (the MOQ2 was 4.7). Although domestic service was an important occupation for Black American women, their largest occupation was as agricultural labourers, with 40 percent of occupied women in this occupation (and MOQ1 of 7.0).

As shown in Table A1, other occupations with a high absolute number, and relatively high propensity, of Irish women included: launders and laundresses (MOQ1=2.3); cotton-mill operatives (MOQ1=2.2); woollen mill operatives (MOQ1=2.4); traders in groceries (MOQ1=6.3) and nurses (MOQ1=1.7). Occupations with a high absolute number of Irish women but where their propensity to be employed was broadly in line with all women included: tailors and tailoresses (MOQ1=1.1); and milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses (MOQ1=1.0). Other occupations with a high absolute number of women employed but with a

low propensity for the Irish to be employed included: teachers (MOQ1=0.3); farmers (MOQ1=0.4); agricultural labourers (MOQ1=0.0); musicians (MOQ1=0.2); clerks in stores (MOQ1=0.5); and boot and shoemakers (MOQ1=0.8).

The national evidence supports the notion of a labour market segmented by migrant status. Irish and Black American women had relatively high LFPRs but much of their work was concentrated in less-regarded strata of women's occupations. The employment patterns of Irish women reflect demographic characteristics (including age structure), the spatial distribution of the Irish (including urban-rural variations), the operation of local labour markets - and issues of social norms, stigma and discrimination. These issues are considered in the following chapters.

Conclusions

This research provides an empirical analysis of the social and economic patterns of all enumerated Irish women in the US at the end of the nineteenth century. The findings provide five insights which generate further research questions. First, why was the LFPR rate of Irish women higher than the national female average? Second, why was there a high concentration of Irish women in low-status and low-wage occupations? Third, why did many Irish women have larger families compared with other women? Fourth, why were so many Irish women widows and heads of their household? Fifth, why were so many Irish women in correctional and mental institutions, and institutions for the elderly, handicapped and the poor? Furthermore, it is important to analyse the implications of these findings for the quality of life of Irish women and their locale.

The next chapter uses the 1880 census data and qualitative primary sources to analyse lives of the Irish in New York. New York was the main location where the Irish settled in the United States during the nineteenth century. New York provides an important focal point for this research as it was a place where the Irish, and especially Irish women, who settled there juggled the processes of continuity and change. Continuity as parts of New York, such as Five Points and Hell's Kitchen, had high concentrations of Irish who followed many of the customs and practices of the Irish in Ireland. Change, as the Irish had moved from a rural, Catholic-dominated country under British rule to an urban city in a fledgling democracy. Irish women also moved from a male-dominated economy and society to another male-dominated economy and society – but the characteristics of such dominance varied between the two countries and, at least in their youth, their new country and city offered opportunities for many Irish women.

Chapter 5
Perspiring Dreams: Irish Women in New York

New York was the principal location of Irish resettlement during the famine era, just as it had been in the early nineteenth century and would remain in the post-famine period. Irish women in New York often lived in buildings occupied by fellow Irish, surrounded by other building also inhabited by other Irish men and women. They could bump into friends and relatives in the street, hear familiar voices and accents when buying groceries, and make their way to mass at Irish Catholic churches on Sunday. What was it like to live in a city surrounded by people who, like you, had left their country of birth behind?

The development of the city has primarily been portrayed through the actions of men, including the Irish, focusing on their politicking, labouring and fighting. Irish America was, Timothy Meagher has argued, characterised by self-confidence, nationalism, and a republican masculinity.[1] The New York press routinely commented upon Irish men's visibility and vigour, how 'many of them [were] bent on joining the Fenian brotherhood', these men spoke 'enthusiastically' of the brotherhood on arrival in New York, at work, on the church steps, and in the city hall.[2] Kevin Kenny has declared that Irish women 'achieved little in the public realm of politics, nationalism and trade unionism' and their influence was 'confined' to the private realm.[3]

[1] Timothy Meagher, 'Irish America' in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2016), 507.
[2] Castle Garden', *NYT* (23 Dec. 1866), 8.
[3] Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Abingdon, 2014), 153.

The Location of the Irish in the United States

Most Irish migrants were born and brought up in rural Ireland, but they had a high propensity to move to the urban areas of the United States. As shown in Table 21, 62 percent of Irish women and 53 percent of Irish men lived in cities in the United States, compared to 22 percent of all women and 21 percent of all men. The cities with the highest proportion of Irish inhabitants according to the 1880 census were New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Saint Louis, Jersey City, Pittsburgh, and Providence. In all of these cities, women outnumbered men. The Irish adult population of the three largest Irish cities (New York, Philadelphia and Boston) was almost 60 percent women. Even in cities with smaller Irish proportion, such as Lowell, Lawrence and Buffalo, Irish women outnumbered Irish men.[4]

[4] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983), 42.

Table 21. Residents of Urban Areas and New York by Birthplace (1880)

	% Living in urban areas[1]		Residents of New York (by birthplace)[2]				
	Male	Female	Male		Female		Female/Male Ratio
			No	%	No	%	
White American	18.66	19.95	534473	61.93	555465	61.04	1.04
Black American	9.12	10.82	11523	1.34	15019	1.65	1.30
North American/Canadian	30.29	37.96	5,544	0.64	5783	0.64	1.04
American Caribbean	16.76	19.35	2411	0.28	1796	0.20	0.74
Irish	52.95	62.29	114,041	13.21	163114	17.93	1.43
European	40.87	44.99	160,520	18.60	136479	15.00	0.85
English	38.12	43.87	25,423	2.95	24697	2.71	0.97
Scottish	38.74	43.27	7,049	0.82	6333	0.70	0.90
Welsh	23.66	27.10	641	0.07	737	0.08	1.15
Other			1,420	0.16	506	0.06	0.36
ALL	20.67	22.30	863045	100.00	909929	100.00	1.05

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Notes
Urban areas are cities as classified in the census.
Female birthplace totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

To exclude Irish women's everyday lives in discussions of the New York Irish is particularly egregious. New York was a woman's city – with a very pronounced Irish hue. As shown in Table 21, just over half of New York's population in 1880 were women. When comparing groups by birthplace, the Irish were the 'most female' group, with women comprising 59 percent of the Irish population. They were closely followed by the Black American population, although it should be noted that the Irish population was over ten times the size of the Black American population of New York in 1880. Overall, 18 percent of women residing in New York in 1880 were Irish, the second largest female birthplace group following white American women. This does not include the American-born daughters of Irish women. Irish men, on the other hand, comprised 13 percent of New York's male population in 1880, whereas European-born men, comprising 19 percent of the population, were the largest non-American male group.

Why New York?

The urban metropolis was the destination of arrival and also the final destination for many women. The Mission ledger books indicate that most women who passed through their doors intended to remain in the city. However, for those only transiting through New York, Irish women still intended to settle in an urban centre, such as Chicago, Newark, Albany, and Boston. Johan Allen was loaned $10 by the Mission to make her way to Hoboken, New Jersey while Mary Gallagher stayed with the Mission for a couple of nights before travelling to San Francisco.[5] Many who arrived at other ports also headed to New York. Dympna McLoughlin has shown that women sent to Quebec from Irish workhouses on assisted schemes to work on rural Canadian homesteads refused to stay in such places. These women had 'no intention of taking up positions in the isolated Canadian outback' and instead 'sought and survived in the large urban industrial centres of North America.'[6] New York was a city of bright, blinding lights, and thundering, deafening noise and (come summer) scorching, blistering heat, where Irish women deliberately decided to live. As New York was inhabited by many Irish people, it had elements of familiarity and a supportive network for new arrivals. But this familiarity also meant it had features of the place that many women had chosen to leave.

Mid-Century New York

Many of the Irish had escaped rural poverty and even starvation in Ireland, but they were faced with new hardships caused by overcrowding and deprivation in New York. The

[5] The Mission ledger books for 1883-1954 consulted can be found at: 'Irish Mission at Watson House: the Battery Heritage Foundation.' https://archives.irishmissionatwatsonhouse.org/ (Jan. 2020).

[6] Dympna McLoughlin, 'Superfluous and Unwanted Deadweights: the Emigration of Nineteenth-Century Irish Pauper Women', in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide: History Heritage, Identity. Volume Four: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), 85-86.

famine Irish were one of the most impoverished migrant group in mid-nineteenth-century New York, with living standards comparable to that of Black Americans.[7] The city's wealthier white American residents moved uptown, north of Bleecker Street, while the growing class of white collar professionals, merchants, manufacturers and clerks lived throughout the city.[8] Migrants, however, lived in small cramped rooms, in wooden tenement buildings, across Manhattan and Brooklyn. As many as 30,000 Irish men, women and children lived in New York City's cellars alone. The densest Irish enclaves were in Manhattan's First, Fourth, Sixth, and Fourteenth Wards.[9] The famine Irish did not settle haphazardly, but on county lines. Kerry and Sligo emigrants concentrated in the Sixth Ward's 'Five Points' although some Kerry men and women also lived along Washington Street in the First Ward (at the very southern edge of Manhattan). Those from northern counties, such as Cavan and Tyrone, removed themselves from Lower Manhattan enclaves, as they preferred to live in the Seventh, Thirteen and Eighteenth Wards. Cork's emigratory community was so vast, however, that its emigrants outnumbered the other Irish in almost every ward.[10] At the conclusion of the famine emigration in the mid-1850s, New York's Irish neighbourhoods were, according to Tyler Anbinder, 'the most crowded plots of land on the planet.'[11] Five Points held 198,000 inhabitants per square mile, and the Sixth Ward had the highest death rates in the city. The lower city's street were plagued by a constant sanitation crisis, as officials failed to cope with the never-ending demand for housing and infrastructure.[12] A typical Five Points tenement building, with so many people but no running water, was

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[7] Kenny, *The American Irish,* 107

[8] Gunja SenGupta, F*rom Slavery to Poverty: the Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918* (New York NY, 2009), 41.

[9] SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty*, 43.

[10] Tyler Anbinder, *City of Dreams: The 400 Year Epic History of Immigrant New York* (New York NY, 2017), 149-151.

[11] Anbinder, *City of Dreams,* 157.

[12] SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty*, 43; Kenny, *The American Irish,* 107; David Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia PA, 2003), 155.

described by a city inspector in 1856 as barely inhabitable, its walls 'with the plaster broken off in many places, exposing the lath and beams, and leaving openings for the escape from within of the effluvia of vermin.'[13]

Irish women were not just living together in the same cities, they lived in the same streets and sometimes in the same buildings. On Vandewater Street, in the city's Fourth Ward, 39-year-old Catherine Connor resided in one of the Street's taller buildings in 1860 with her family of seven.[14] Her family was just one of the thirteen households resident in their tenement building on census night in 1860, and all but one of these households contained Irish men, women, and children. While the census only recorded their places of birth as 'Ireland', Anbinder has suggested that the Fourth Ward and the East River was home to many born in Limerick and Cork.[15] The largest household within the building consisted of fourteen people, headed by a New York-born bus conductor, David Earle. It included at least four separate families including four children under the age of three, who boarded with the Earles. The neighbouring rooms were inhabited by the Mahony family, including the husband and father John, an illiterate 46-year-old labourer, and his 30-year-old old wife Catharine, and their two boys, toddler Jeremiah and infant John. The smallest household in the building was headed by 56-year old Mary Martin, an Irish widow, who lived with a servant, 16-year old Sarah Stuart. Mary Martin was one of three female household heads in the tenement, alongside 50-year-old 'house cleaner' Bridget Downey, and 70-year old widow and housekeeper Hanora Sullivan. Bridget Downey lived with three of her own children, and she

[13] Anbinder, *City of Dreams,* 154.
[14] According to the 1860 census schedule for Catharine Connor and her building, accessed via ancestry.com (Jan. 2020).
[15] Anbinder, *City of Dreams,* 149.

also let out rooms to a young single mother, 20-year old Irish Joanna Sullivan and her infant baby, who was born in New York.[16]

Tenement families who let rooms, such as the Earle family, often did so sporadically, to help a member of their family or a friend who was newly arrived in the city, or to bolster their own income when they had fallen on hard times. Letters sent home to Ireland indicate that letting out rooms was common amongst Irish men and women once they were married. John Nolan, for example, wrote home to his parents about the marriage of his friend Jennie to a man from Kildare, noting how it was unusual that Jennie was not yet taking in boarders.[17] The Labor Bureau stated that if a foreign-born boarder was found to be living with private families they were principally 'foreign-born women living in families of their own nationality who were often friends or relatives.'[18]

The distinctions between tenants who were friends, relatives, boarders or employees were often blurred. Joanna Sullivan and Bridget Downey were women who, the Report described, as living in 'very low' conditions, where 'overcrowding, poor food, and insanitary surroundings were common.'[19] Widowed Irish women in New York, such as Bridget Downey, often took in boarders and lodgers as a form of self-support. Joanna and her child were provided with shelter (a room or part of a room) by Bridget but were expected to take their meals elsewhere. The shared surnames of those in multiple households in the Vandewater Street tenement building in 1860 suggests that many relatives did indeed live together. Next door to the building on Vandewater Street was a boarding house run as a

[16] Catharine Connor census form.
[17] John Nolan to parents, 9 Dec. 1882, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[18] Katharine Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn* (New York NY, 1914), 132-133.
[19] United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Summary of the Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States. No. 175. 1916, 221.

commercial enterprise and owned by the Irishman Thomas Brady. He was aged 54 in 1860, and he lived there with his 40-year-old wife, Margaret, and their six children, including 17-year-old Catharine, and baby Thomas who was five months old. Alongside his own family, he accommodated thirty boarders on census night.[20] The Bradys' boarding house was typical of shared accommodation. Boarding houses were often converted dwellings, or simply 'homes' with rooms to let. It is likely that these boarders were Irish migrants.

The Irish in mid-century New York had to grapple with urban poverty, but also with anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice and bigotry from nativist movements. Maureen Fitzgerald has argued that, by the 1860s, anti-Catholicism unified American Protestants into a nationalist religious culture. To be Protestant – and often explicitly anti-Catholic – was 'among the most powerful in defining a nascent "American" cultural identity in real and constant danger of fragmentation.' The arrival of the famine Irish in the 1850s had provided a target for 'purging the nation of threats to its cultural foundation and manifest destiny.'[21] Groups such as the 'Know Nothings', which sought to bar Irish men from voting or running for public office, had a million members by 1854.[22] Such Americans perceived themselves to be American because they were Protestant and not Catholic.

Anti-Catholic sentiment was exacerbated by the impoverishment of the Irish arrivals, who often entered the New York almshouses 'soon after landing.'[23] Welfare provision proliferated throughout the 1850s, alongside the arrival of the Irish in the city. Under the

[20] Catharine Connor census schedule.

[21] Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nun and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920* (Chicago IL, 2006), 22.

[22] Meagher, 'Irish America', 505.

[23] Hidetaka Hirota, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy*, (Oxford, 2017), 2.

jurisdiction of the Alms House Department, the city's destitute and disorderly were largely sent to Blackwell's Island on New York's East River. Known today as Roosevelt Island, this thin strip of land, to the west of Manhattan and east of Queens, housed the Department's Alms House, Penitentiary Hospital, Work House and Lunatic Asylum. The Department also controlled the institutions on the neighbouring Randalls and Wards Islands.

By removing inmates and patients to islands, the Department aimed to confine, conceal and control the 'wayward' inhabitants of the city. It also maintained institutions on the 'mainland', including prisons and industrial schools, as well as Bellevue Hospital and the Department of Outdoor Relief. At the same time as expanding the Alms House Department in the 1850s, the New York legislature also expanded the jurisdiction of the Commissioners of Emigration. The Commissioners were responsible for the development of Castle Garden and Ellis Island, as well as the establishment of an Emigrant Hospital and Refuge and nursery specifically for immigrant children on Randall and Wards Island. The combination of measures was paternal but also coercive, guided by the initial belief that individuals who were 'radically different' from Protestant American society were deviants who should be isolated.[24] The *New York Tribune* despaired of the Irish arrivals in the city in 1868, the 'motley crowd or rather swarm of emigrants' who 'herded together'.[25]

Expansion and Consolidation

Despite suffering poverty and prejudice, the Irish were able to forge a distinct and powerful presence in the city's voting booths, assemblies, factories, and dockyards

[24] Institutions such as the Work House were designed under the assumption that (foreign-born) paupers were inherently idle and needed to be taught how to engage in their new American industrial surroundings: Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, p. 109; SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty,* 98.
[25] An Hour in Castle Garden'.

throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Although much anti-Irish sentiment remained, nativism failed to prevent Irish men from voting following the enlistment of Irish labourers in the Civil War on the side of the Union. Municipal politics became dominated by the Irish as Tammany Hall (New York's Democrat political organisation) increasingly relied on their votes. In 1868, the Tammany political bloc naturalised over 41,000 immigrants to help win the gubernatorial election for the Democrats. It also provided 15,000 jobs (for men) for its supporters.[26] Tammany Hall ensured that many Irish men received secure city jobs and entered local government; and that city contracts went to Irish-owned businesses, in exchange for the male vote. By 1869 more than a thousand of New York's government jobs were held by Irish men. Moreover, the welfare system that had been established to control Irish immigrants, was increasingly influenced by Irish men. Irish immigrants responded to coercive initiatives by asserting their identities as labourers entitled to a minimum wage and low-income municipal housing, with a ban on evicting the unemployed from their housing implemented in 1857.[27]

As with Thomas Brady, a boarding-house keeper in Vandewater Street, some Irish (male) arrivals were able to move out of menial labour. The 'most common path up the socioeconomic ladder' for Irish men 'was entrepreneurship.'[28] Some were members of the city's fledgling middle-class and a rare few were more prosperous and powerful. By the end of the nineteenth century, Irish residents in New York ranged from impoverished immigrants to (a few) 'well-established' middle-class Irish Americans.[29] An Irish woman emigrating to New York in the 1880s arrived in a city where the Mayor was an Irish Catholic millionaire. If

[26] Kenny, *The American Irish,* 120.
[27] SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty,* 104.
[28] Anbinder, *City of Dreams,* 160.
[29] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 149.

she could afford it, she could shop at the world's largest retail store at 280 Broadway which was opened in 1862 by an Ulster-born businessman. Or, she could settle with buying her groceries from the local Irish-owned store.

The Irish also forged a significant presence in the city's Catholic churches. And, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Catholic church forged a powerful presence in the New York polity. In 1879, St Patrick's Cathedral was opened in midtown Manhattan, described as the 'noblest temple ever raised to the memory of St Patrick'. Over four hundred priests and 41 bishops marched in procession to the church where, according to Jay Dolan, some seven thousand people waited for the Cathedral to be blessed by the Archbishop of New York, John McCloskey (the son of two Derry-born immigrants and the first American cardinal). The city's politicians were the guests of honour, at the front of the bustling crowd. As Irish Catholics had arrived in such large numbers, earlier than other European Catholics, with a migratory flow that included 'their own' priests and women religious, the Irish defined 'what it meant to be Catholic in America.'[30] By 1860, the Irish accounted for 1.6 of the 2.2 million Catholics in the US.[31] According to Dolan, 23 of the city's 32 Catholic parishes were 'Irish' by 1865.[32] Irish cultural power in New York was 'premised on the proportion of the church's workforce that was Irish', including its male clergy and women religious.[33] Their sheer numbers made them impossible to ignore.

Religious charities were essential in supporting the Irish poor of New York. Catholic orders such as the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Sisters of the Good

[30] Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York NY, 2008), 107-108.
[31] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 20.
[32] Dolan, *The Irish Americans,*108. Note, Dolan does not define what 'Irish' entails.
[33] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 20.

Shepherd were all established in New York (in 1817, 1846 and 1859 respectively), and all operated across parish borders. The Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd were founded as American and French orders, their membership became filled with Irish arrivals; while the New York-based Sisters of Mercy, founded in Dublin, worked on a transnational basis with regular communications with their fellow sisters in Ireland.[34] The combination of the inauguration of Archbishop John McCloskey in 1864, who actively encouraged political and religious activism, and Irish influence over the local (and state) government resulted in increased public funding for Catholic religious orders and their charity work. Through his role on the Senate Committee on Charitable and Religious Societies in the late 1860s, William Tweed expanded state appropriations for private charities and schools. The Committee allotted almost $900,000 to Catholic charities, while the appropriations for Protestant, Jewish and non-sectarian charities were only $83,000, $26,000, and $194,000 respectively.[35] The Sisters of Charity benefited considerably from this funding and opened Brooklyn's St Paul's Industrial School in 1866, St Joseph's in 1873, and established the Foundling Asylum in 1869 and the Stephen's Home for Children in the early 1870s. While Irish women in New York could also access industrial training schools, employment bureaus and Catholic hospitals, there were no comparable institutions for Irish men.

If Irish Catholic men bartered and politicked for charitable funding, Irish women religious carried out charitable works. Moreover, nuns tended to specifically target their charitable work at women, which resulted in services available to women vastly exceeding those available to men.[36] The availability of employment opportunities as women religious,

[34] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 21.
[35] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 113.
[36] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 132.

as well as the ability to access institutional support, were crucial deciding factors in where Irish women decided to live. Furthermore, the fear of 'impressionable' Irish women marrying a Protestant or becoming a 'fallen women' must have also been a consideration.

The funding allocations to different religions was to the chagrin of the Protestant American charities and press, who suggested that the Irish were unfairly allocating funds for their own advantage in the city. In a sarcasm-filled editorial written in 1876, aimed at Irish politicians, the *NYT* declared that 'no city in the world provides more liberally for its poor than New York.'[37] A later article from 1879 suggested that only around $150,000 of municipal funds was disbursed to Protestant and Jewish charities during the rule of the 'Tweed Ring' over Tammany Hall, and that this was only for appearance's sake.[38]

The *NYT* discussion of Protestant and Jewish charities is a reminder that while middle-class white American Protestants and working-class Irish Catholics dominated New York, numerically and politically - they were not the city's only inhabitants. Although New York was filled with many familiar Irish faces, it was also home to other 'alien' groups. The immigration of the Irish *and* German people led to the city's population soaring in the first half of the nineteenth century, increasing from 371,000 in 1825 to 630,000 by 1845.[39] The German equivalent of Five Points was *Kleinedeutschland* (Little Germany), which spread across the Lower East Side. Irish and German immigrants erected settlements on the city's periphery, raising livestock at Dutch Hill, and sheltering on the Hudson River waterfront.[40] Increasing acceptance (or perhaps acquiescence) of the Irish presence in New York

[37] 'Charity's Good Deeds', *NYT* (17 Jan. 1876), 2.
[38] 'The Ruling Race and Sect: What Ireland Has Done In and For New York', *NYT* (8 June 1879), 5.
[39] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 104.
[40] SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty*, 44.

developed alongside changing migration patterns of Black Americans from the South and European countries during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Vandewater Street was not only home to Irish arrivals, but was also the site of the Colored Sailors' Home (a stop on the Underground Railroad) run by Albro Lyons from the 1850s. A few doors down lived Philip White, the Black pharmacist and proprietor of a drugstore on the corner of Vandewater and Frankfort Street. Despite the Street's centrality for New York's small Black community, housing was largely segregated on racial and ethnic lines. While the Irish migrants' right to citizenship (which James Barrett has explicitly linked to their skin colour) came under question in the famine years of the 1840s and 1850s, they were able to construct themselves as white and legitimate citizens of the US by positioning themselves against urban Black communities.[41] Danielle Phillips-Cunningham has argued that male Irish immigrants were able to establish a strong white working-class identity by supporting the pro-slavery and anti-Black Democratic Party. Much Irish opposition to the emancipation of enslaved people was rooted in the complex social and labour conditions within urban settlements, with a fear that the abolition of slavery would lead to increased competition for jobs from Black southern labour migrating northwards. The Irish in New York responded to the Emancipation Proclamation and the Conscription Act by rioting in 1863. Over the course of a week, the Irish rioters destroyed Black-owned and Black-frequented businesses, homes, and institutions. These riots were ferocious and violent, including an attack on the Colored Orphan Asylum.[42] It was only following the Civil War that the Irish in America became begrudgingly accepting of the rights of Black Americans.

[41] James Barrett, *History from the Bottom Up and the Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History* (Durham NC, 2017), 152.
[42] Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race: Irish Immigrant and Southern Black Domestic Workers* (New Brunswick NJ, 2019), 59.

Meagher has noted that the Irish-dominated Tammany Hall increasingly sought approval from both Irish and Black voters, although he does not suggest whether this was due to a belief in Black political citizenship or as political and electoral opportunism. The latter is most likely as Irish neighbourhoods and trade unions mainly remained closed to Black workers. Black men, women, and families that remained in areas such as Five Points occupied all-Black tenements that were segregated from the enclaves of foreign migrants.[43] Part of becoming white in America was to engage in the persecution of Black communities.

Many European communities contributed to New York's population. The Irish percentage of total immigrant arrivals at Castle Garden (and the US more generally) declined between 1870 and 1900. The 436,871 Irish arrivals in the US in the 1870s comprised just under 16 percent of total arrivals, and the 655,482 in the 1880s just under 13 percent, compared with 35 percent in the 1850s.[44] From the 1880s, the 'new 'immigrants were from eastern and southern Europe, who were also subject to anti-migrant rhetoric and acts. In 1891, Faustina Wiśniewska wrote home to her parents in Poland that 'moans are uttered by people here because it seems that all of Europe is depopulating itself and is heading in droves for America.'[45]

Late-Nineteenth Century New York

By the 1880s, the Irish in New York were no longer seen as *new* immigrants, they had their own distinctly Irish *and* American presence which contrasted with that of white American-Protestants, Black Americans and other European migrant communities. New

[43] SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty*, 44.
[44] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 142.
[45] Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York NY, 2016), 4.

arrivals in New York were plunged into an urban concentration of people, production and poverty; a city filled with men and women from across the globe. The new sights and sounds experienced by the Irish arrivals were in an intensely congested urban space which was much larger than any place in Ireland. In 1880, the population of New York was similar to the total population of Ulster, Ireland's most densely-populated province.[46] Streets of New York, such as Vandewater Street which ran from Frankfort Street northeast to the intersection of Pearl and New Chambers, were hives of activity, commercial and residential hubs where women, men and children lived and worked together in tightly-packed buildings - both high and low - now made of frame and brick. For the thousands of Irish arriving from rural isolation, the city was a torrent of urban and industrial commotion, a different climate, and never-ending noise and clamour. In a letter written home to County Westmeath in 1884, a newcomer to New York described a city where they were struggling to acclimatise.

> This country is very different from the old one. The houses are of brick 5 to 9 stories high with flat roofs on which people walk as in a garden…The summer has been the driest for years. I only saw one or two showers since I came here so it is not an unusual sight to see the people sleeping all night on the roofs or the steps. For my part I cannot bear quilt blanket or sheet – stark naked and suffocating at that. Somehow the days are not so bad. The streets here are paved with stones, and as they are filled with fast-driven vans at all hours –for the streets are as bright by night as day- the din and uproar is something horrid. Add to this the elevated railways running 30 feet above the avenues, as the cross-streets are called, the trains flying after one another like furies, and thousands of factories and steamboats whistling and roaring all the time.[47]

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Irish had established themselves as an important part of the New York social and economic fabric. The remainder of this chapter quantifies the living conditions of Irish women in the city using census micro-data from

[46] IPUMS Data; William Vaughan and André Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), 16.
[47] Pat Burdan, 5 Sept. 1884 TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

1880. It analyses the characteristics of Irish women's life in New York and helps to evaluate whether life on Vandewater Street was typical of the Irish in the city.

Age Structure

As noted above, women comprised a slight majority (51 percent) of the total population of New York City. As shown in Table 21, gender disparity was higher among Irish migrants compared to other migrant groups: for every two Irish males there were approximately three Irish females. Table 22 provides further evidence: overall, there were more women than men in every age group although there were significant differences between the extent of the differences between the age categories. The largest difference was in the 15-29 age group where there were nearly twice as many females as males with one quarter of Irish women living in New York in 1880 in this age category.[48] On the supply side, the relative high share of Irish women in this category may have reflected the exodus of many empowered young women from Ireland, in search of work, husbands and/or fulfilment. On the demand side, it may have reflected the employment opportunities for young Irish women in New York (see Chapter Six). It would also have been influenced by the different supply and demand factors influencing the location of Irish men. This gender imbalance was also high in the elderly age category where women comprised 63 percent of Irish people in this category, and although this was only 6 percent of all Irish women, they comprised 36 percent of all women in this age group.[49] As discussed in Chapter Eight, many of these women were widowed and lived very precarious lives. Hindered by the triple burden of being women,

[48] This was lower than the share of all women (31 percent) in this age category and Irish women comprised 15 percent of all women aged between 15 to 29 years in New York (See Appendix B, Table B1).
[49] See Appendix B, Table B1.

being immigrants and being old, they have been regarded (if regarded at all) as on the periphery of the American economy, political system and society.

Table 22. Age Structure of Irish Women and Men in New York (1880)

Age	Males		Females		Female/Male Ratio
	No	%	No	%	
0-14	2,496	2.2	2,649	1.6	1.06
15-29	21,848	19.2	42,201	25.9	1.93
30-34	50,601	44.4	64,123	39.3	1.27
45-64	33,560	29.4	44,802	27.5	1.33
65+	5,536	4.9	9,339	5.7	1.69
	114,041	100	163,114	100	1.43

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: male age totals do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Marital Status

Many Irish women were unmarried when the 1880 census was taken, more so than Irish men. As shown in Table 23, 37 percent of women were single, compared with 42 percent of men.[50] These differences may be explained by the higher absolute number of Irish women in New York compared to Irish men. In comparison, 22 percent of all Irish adult women in the United States and 44 percent of Irish adult women in Ireland were single.[51] This may reflect differences in age structures as there were proportionately more Irish women in New York in the younger age groups compared to the Irish in the US as a whole (see

[50] Percentages of adult men and women.
[51] See Chapter Four, Table 15 and Chapter Two, Table 7.

Tables 13 and 24). Furthermore, Irish adult women in New York were less likely to be single than their counterparts in Ireland.[52]

There was a yawning chasm between the sexes when it came to widowhood: 13 percent of all women were widowed in New York, compared with just 4 percent of men. A large proportion of the New York widows were born in Ireland; they comprised 20 percent of all Irish women in the city and 39 percent of all widows. Compared with all women, there were lower proportions of Irish women in New York who were married (spouse present, 45 percent) and single (32 percent). Furthermore, the proportion of married (spouse present) Irish women was the lower than that for Canadian, European, Scottish, and English women.[53] The majority of Irish men (65 percent) were married (spouse present), while just over a quarter were single and 7 percent were widowed. It should be pointed, however, that one-third of all widowers were Irish-born. As discussed in Chapter Eight, analysing old age – and explicitly widowhood– is essential to our understandings of Irish womanhood.

[52] See Chapter Two, Table 7.

[53] The census data shows that 39 percent of white American and 35 percent of Black American women are enumerated as married, spouse present.

Table 23. Marital status in 1880 New York (all and Irish)

	All						
	Male			Female			Total
Marital status	No	% of male total	% of male and female	No	% of female total	% of male and female	No
Married, spouse present	295,334	51.19	50.00	295,321	47.31	50.00	590,655
Married, spouse absent	15,447	2.68	52.62	13,908	2.23	47.38	29,355
Divorced	357	0.06	31.10	791	0.13	68.90	1,148
Widowed	22,968	3.98	21.53	83,715	13.41	78.47	106,683
Never married/single	242,820	42.09	51.31	230,429	36.92	48.69	473,249
Total	576,926	100.00	48.03	624,164	100.00	51.97	1,201,090

	Irish born						
	Male			Female			Total
Marital status	No	% of male total	% of male and female	No	% of female total	% of male and female	No
Married, spouse present	72,226	64.75	49.56	73,507	45.81	50.44	145,733
Married, spouse absent	3,073	2.75	47.07	3,455	2.15	52.93	6,528
Divorced	45	0.04	25.57	131	0.08	74.43	176
Widowed	7,487	6.71	18.69	32,573	20.30	81.31	40,060
Never married /Single	28,714	25.74	36.11	50,799	31.66	63.89	79,513
Total	111,545	100.00	41.01%	160,465	100.00	58.99	272,010

Source: IPUMS dataset.

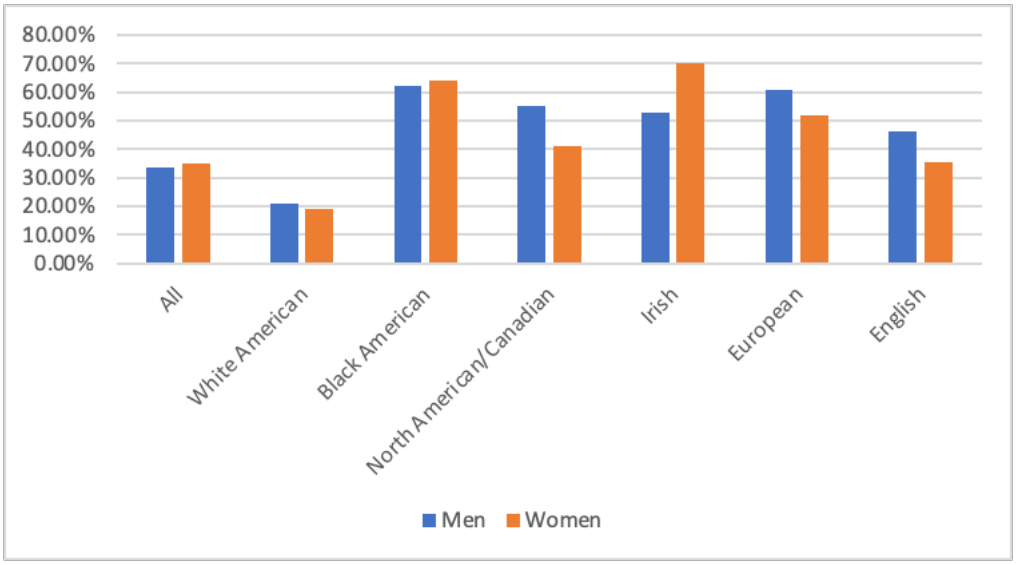
Household Structure

In terms of household structure, 15 percent of Irish women in New York in 1880 were classified as head of household, a significantly higher share compared with the 'all women' group and is only broadly matched by the share for Black American women. In comparison, 69 percent of Irish men were classified as head of house (see Appendix B, Table B7).[54] The relatively high share of Irish women who were the head of house reflects the relatively high numbers of widows in New York, 13 percent of all women were widowed in New York, compared with just 4 percent of men.[55]

A relatively high share (28 percent) of Irish women were classified as 'other non-relatives' which largely reflected their occupation as live-in domestic servants or as tenants (see Appendix B, Table B6). This share is higher than for all other comparator groups with the exception of Black American women (36 percent). Further insights can be drawn from Figure 8, which shows the proportion of single men and women (who were never married) who were classified as living as non-relatives. Overall, 70 percent of Irish women were classified in this group - the highest of all the comparator groups. It should be noted that a relatively high proportion (53 percent) of Irish men who had never been married were also living as 'other non-relatives.' For Irish women this partially reflected the conditions of their working life as servants, while for most men it reflected the conditions of their domestic life as lodgers.

[54] See Appendix B, Table B6 and Table B7.
[55] Percentages of adult men and women.

Figure 8. Share of Single Men and Women Living with Non-Relatives, by Birthplace (New York, 1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Table 24 provides further evidence of the living arrangements of single Irish women, showing the number of women living in single family units. It should be stressed that these women may have been living in shared accommodation, but they were identified as living in single family units in the census as they were not living with any other family member. Overall, 29 percent of Irish women were living in a single-family unit compared to 17 percent of all women and 38 percent of Black American women. The vast majority of Irish females in single family units were single and never married (76 percent); followed by those that were widowed (19 percent), married but with a spouse absent (4 percent) and a small number who were divorced.

Table 24. Women in Single- Person Family Units by Marital Status and Migrant Group (New York, 1880)

	Married, spouse absent		Divorced		Widowed		Never married		Total	
	No	% of independent females	No	% of independent females	No	% of independent females	No	% of independent females	No	% of all females
ALL	6398	5.94	247	0.23	21445	19.90	79677	73.93	107767	17.27
White American	2329	6.74	101	0.29	5849	16.93	26265	76.03	34544	12.00
Black American	483	10.87	13	0.29	1143	25.73	2803	63.10	4442	38.01
North American/Canadian	74	7.61	7	0.72	224	23.02	668	68.65	973	18.89
Irish	2055	4.36	56	0.12	9139	19.37	35924	76.15	47174	29.40
European	1025	6.59	61	0.39	3456	22.21	11021	70.82	15563	12.13
English	272	7.99	7	0.21	1171	34.40	1954	57.40	3404	15.31

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

The census evidence illustrates that many Irish women were living in one-person familial units often within another household structure or institutional setting. The vast majority of all residents in New York (94 percent) and majority of the Irish (93 percent) lived in ‘non-group quarters’, a classification which included houses, apartments, and rooms (see Appendix B, Table B8). Those who were live-in servants would be captured in this category. Irish women were, however, more likely to be resident in rooming houses, institutions for the elderly handicapped and poor, correctional institutions, mental institutions and ‘other group’ quarters compared to all New York women. Just under 30 percent of women living in rooming houses and just under 45 percent of women in ‘other group’ quarters were Irish.

Occupation, Marriage and Age

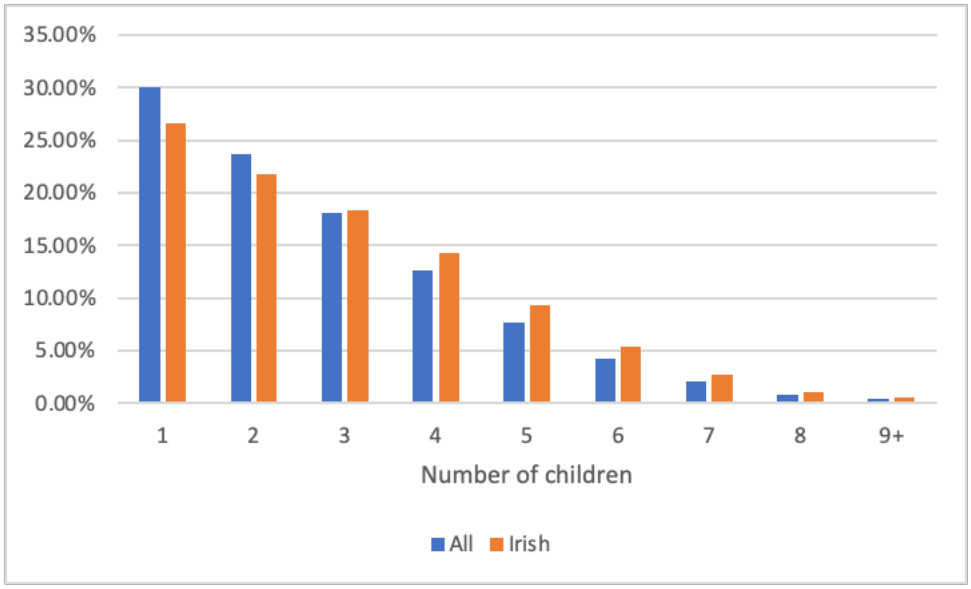
Irish women's living and working conditions were highly contingent on their age and marital status. Women who never married had a high propensity to be employed in the formal labour market and were also often living in single-family units. Single Irish women were more likely than their male counterparts to *not* be living with their immediate family, with many resident in boarding or lodging houses or as live-in domestic servants. In a boarding house such as Brady's, women could expect to be provided with shelter, meals at a common table, as well as some housekeeping services. On marriage, women's work primarily shifted to the home and the family. While men such as Thomas Brady were identified as the household head of the boarding house, this was often in name only. His wife Margaret, although recorded as 'non-occupied', took charge of managing the residences, providing food, lodging, and housekeeping services in exchange for cash.[56] This suggests that the census data may underestimate the level of participation of some married women in the formal labour market – and it underestimated their work in the household and in the informal labour market. If the marriage was terminated by divorce, desertion or widowhood, then many women became 'independent' once again.

When Irish women in New York lived with their family members, and many were mothers with a relatively large number of children. Figure 9 shows the share of own children living with their mother for the Irish and for the all women group. In general, Irish women lived with more of their own children (four plus) compared to the all women group. This suggests that Irish women tended to have larger families than the average in New York with many having children close together in age. It should be stressed that the data in Figure 9 are

[56] Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore MD, 2007), 35.

averages of the cohorts and are not the average of the final number of children that women had borne. Over one-third of New York-based women who were living with 6 to 8 of their own children in 1880 were Irish-born, suggesting that the typically Irish pattern of large families had travelled across the Atlantic Ocean. Irish women were mothers of Irish New Yorkers: by 1890, the Irish-born and first-generation Irish comprised 26 percent of New York's population creating, what Kenny described as 'the largest Irish settlement in the world.'[57]

Figure 9. Number of Own Children Living with their Mother (Percentage distribution of women with children living with their mother) (all and Irish, New York 1880)



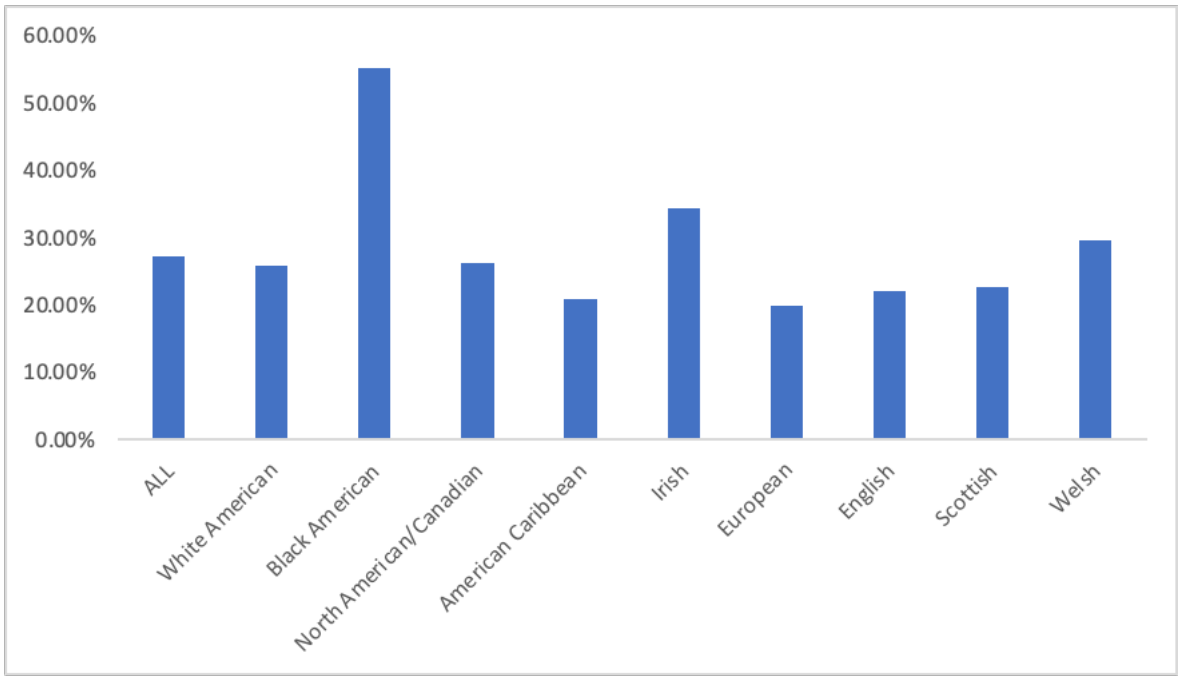
Source: IPUMS dataset.

[57] Kenny, *The American Irish,* 142. First generation here means those born in the US of Irish parentage.

Work in the Formal Labour Market

Irish women's migrant status and their working lives were intimately linked. The census micro-data shows that the labour market was segmented by migrant status and by race, as well as by sex. Irish women had the highest propensity to work in New York's formal labour market of all the international female migrant groups. Figure 10 shows the enumerated labour force participation rate (LFPR) for women over the age of fifteen disaggregated by the main comparator groups using the 1880 census data. Overall, for all adult women, the LFPR in New York was 27 percent which was significantly higher than the national figure of 17 percent (see Chapter Four). There were also major variations between the different comparator groups. Over 55 percent of Black American women were enumerated as occupied (the largest LFPR of all the women's groups) compared to 26 percent of white American women. The Irish-born had the highest LFPR (34 percent) amongst international migrant women. Furthermore, the Irish-born comprised 33 percent of occupied women compared with 4 percent of Black American women and 44 percent of white American women.

Figure 10. Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rate in 1880 New York (All and Comparator Groups, Aged 15+)

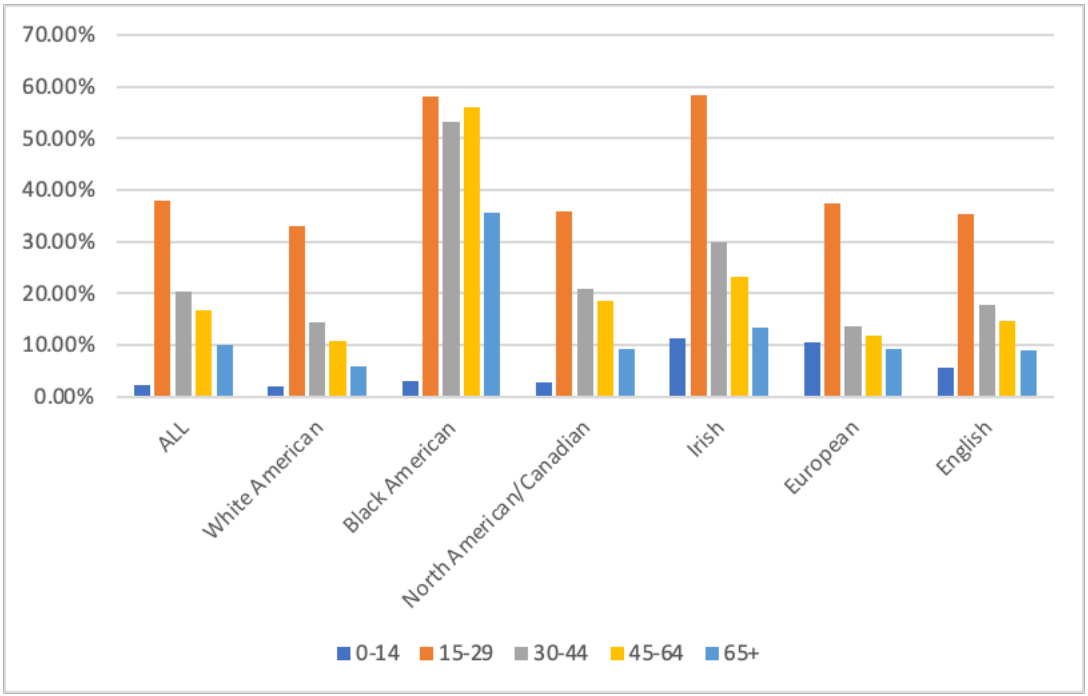


Source: IPUMS dataset

The LFPR peaked in the 15 to 29 age group for all groups and then tended to decline as they married.[58] As shown in Figure 11, the LFPR for the Irish and Black American women in this age group was higher than all other comparator groups. There was also a small share of girls aged under 15 were working in the enumerated labour force (2 percent of all young women in this category). Irish girls had the highest propensity to be employed in the formal labour market, many worked in service, suggesting that Irish families abroad still expected children to participate in the labour market and to contribute to the family income. Black women had the highest LFPR in the older age group categories, followed by the Irish.

[58] With the exception of Black American women.

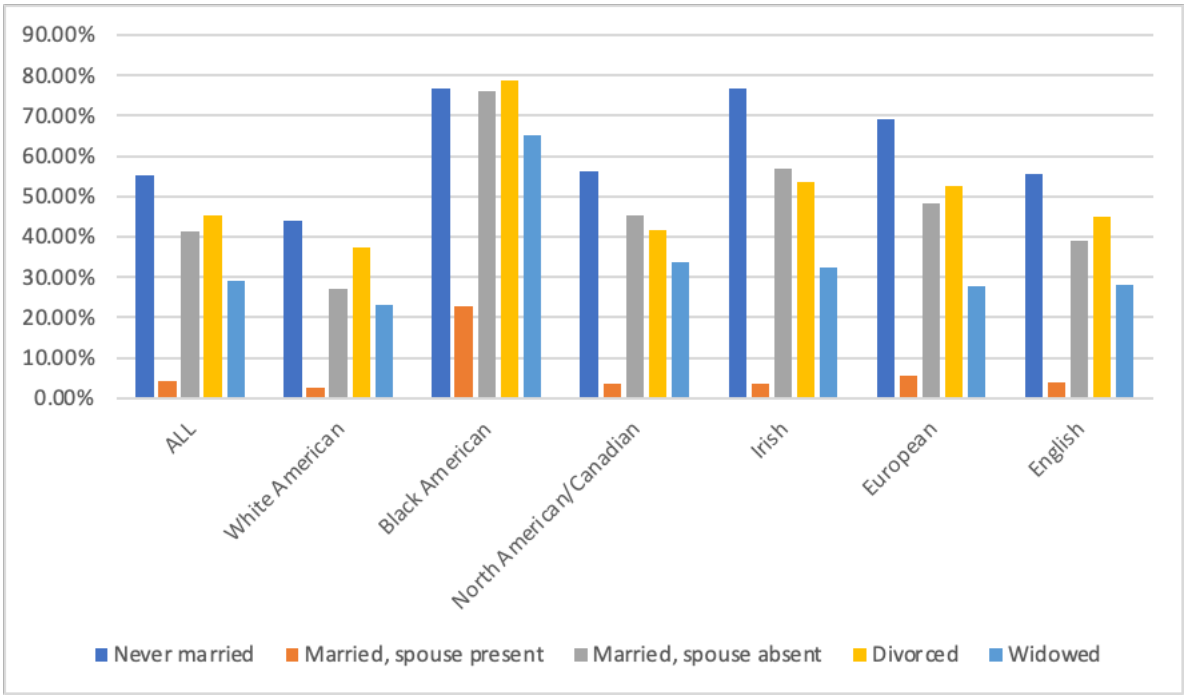
Figure 11. Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rate by Age Category, All and Comparator Groups (New York 1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Women who were no longer with a partner (spouse absent, divorced or widowed) had a much higher propensity to work compared to those who were married (spouse present). This was apparent in all groups with Black American women who no longer had a partner having the highest rates. The shares of Irish women who were no longer with a partner who were working in the formal labour market were 58 percent of those married with spouse absent; 53 percent of those divorced; and 32 percent of widows. Widowhood was a common experience for many Irish women in New York, and one characterised by a return to the formal labour market for many.

Figure 12. Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rate by Marital Status, All and Comparator Groups (New York 1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers were low.

Tables 25, 26 and 27 show the main occupations in 1880 of Irish women, white American women and Black American women respectively.[59] Over 60 percent of Irish women employed in the formal labour market were domestic servants and they comprised half of all women working in this occupation. This next group with the highest share of women working as domestics were Black Americans (56 percent of those employed in the formal labour market). They comprised, however, just 5 percent of women working in this occupation as New York was primarily a 'white city' with only a small population of Black Americans. Furthermore, only 24 percent of white American women worked as domestic servants.

[59] The top 10 occupations of the three groups (Irish, white Americans and Black Americans) in New York in 1880.

Table 25. Women's Work: Ten Main Occupations, Irish and All (New York, 1880)

	Irish born						All women		
Occupation	No	% of total	% of occupied	% of all women occupied	MOQ 1	MOQ2	Total	% of total	% of occupied
Domestic servants	33846	21.09	61.17	48.9	1.9	1.5	69208	11.09	40.76
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	6083	3.79	10.99	20.99	0.82	0.64	28982	4.64	17.07
Launders and laundresses	5469	3.41	9.88	51.1	1.99	1.57	10702	1.71	6.3
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	1453	0.91	2.63	57.27	2.23	1.76	2537	0.41	1.49
Tailors and tailoresses	987	0.62	1.78	10.85	0.42	0.33	9100	1.46	5.36
Nurses	694	0.43	1.25	27.26	1.06	0.84	2546	0.41	1.5
Traders and dealers in groceries	414	0.26	0.75	56.02	2.18	1.72	739	0.12	0.44
Shirt, cuff, and collar makers	388	0.24	0.7	23.6	0.92	0.72	1644	0.26	0.97
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	365	0.23	0.66	31.28	1.22	0.96	1167	0.19	0.69
Mill and factory operatives (not specified)	358	0.22	0.65	15.73	0.61	0.48	2276	0.36	1.34
Others	5276	3.28	9.54	12.90	0.5	0.40	40909	6.56	24.08
Total (excluding unoccupied)	55333	34.48	100	32.59	1.27	1.00	169810	27.21	100
Keeping house	81892	51.03		27.61	1.07		296555	47.51	
At home	1355	0.84		26.17	1.02		5178	0.83	
Student	195	0.12		1.9	0.07		10254	1.64	
Retired	67	0.04		29.26	1.14		229	0.04	
Sick, disabled	4	0		19.05	0.74		21	0	
Institutional inmate	81	0.05		19.9	0.77		407	0.07	
Gentleman	8	0		9.2	0.36		87	0.01	
Other non-occupational response	1973	1.23		15.99	0.62		12342	1.98	
Other	518	0.32		16.28	0.63		3181	0.51	
Blank	19039	11.86		15.1	0.59		126100	20.2	
Total	160465	100		25.71	1.00		624164	100	

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Notes
Irish-born: % of total - percentage of Irish-born women in each category as a share of all Irish-born women (occupied and unoccupied).
Irish-born: % of occupied - percentage of Irish-born in each category as a share of all Irish-born occupied women.
Irish-born: % of all women occupied -percentage of Irish-born women in each category as a share of all women in that category.
MOQ1 - the concentration of Irish-born women in different occupational classes with all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator.
MOQ2 - the concentration of Irish-born women in different occupational classes with occupied women as the denominator.
All: % of total - percentage of all women in each category as a share of all women (occupied and unoccupied).
All: % of all occupied - percentage of all occupied women in each category as a share of all occupied women.

Table 26. Women's Work: Ten Main Occupations, white American (New York, 1880)

	American born (White)						All women		
Occupation	No	% of total	% of occupied	% of all women occupied	MOQ 1	MOQ 2	No	% of total	% of occupied
Domestic servants	17918	4.95	24.14	25.89	0.45	0.59	69208	11.09	40.76
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	17697	4.89	23.84	61.06	1.05	1.4	28982	4.64	17.07
Tailors and tailoresses	5025	1.39	6.77	55.22	0.95	1.26	9100	1.46	5.36
Teachers and scientific persons	4056	1.12	5.46	84.04	1.45	1.92	4826	0.77	2.84
Salesmen and saleswomen	2332	0.64	3.14	81.48	1.4	1.86	2862	0.46	1.69
Bookbinders and finishers	1758	0.49	2.37	82.23	1.42	1.88	2138	0.34	1.26
Clerks in stores	1740	0.48	2.34	77.85	1.34	1.78	2235	0.36	1.32
Mill and factory operatives (not specified)	1698	0.47	2.29	74.6	1.29	1.71	2276	0.36	1.34
Box factory operatives	1532	0.42	2.06	84.64	1.46	1.94	1810	0.29	1.07
Artificial-flower makers	1466	0.4	1.98	76.79	1.32	1.76	1909	0.31	1.12
Others	19003	5.25	25.61	42.74%	0.74	0.98	44464	7.13	26.17
Total (excluding unoccupied)	74225	20.5	100	43.71	0.75	1.00	169810	27.21	100
Keeping house	108241	29.89		36.5	0.63		296555	47.51	
At home	1996	0.55		38.55	0.66		5178	0.83	
Student	9419	2.6		91.86	1.58		10254	1.64	
Retired	79	0.02		34.5	0.59		229	0.04	
Sick, disabled	13	0		61.9	1.07		21	0	
Institutional inmate	226	0.06		55.53	0.96		407	0.07	
Gentleman	69	0.02		79.31	1.37		87	0.01	
Other non-occupational response	7969	2.2		64.57	1.11		12342	1.98	
Other	2060	0.57		64.76	1.12		3181	0.51	
Blank	83574	23.08		66.28	1.14		126100	20.2	
Total	362096	100		58.01	1.00		624164	100	

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Notes:
American born (White): % of total - percentage of American born (White): women in each category as a share of all Irish-born women (occupied and unoccupied).
American born (White): % of occupied - percentage of American born (White): in each category as a share of all Irish-born occupied women.
American born (White): % of all women occupied - percentage of American born (White): women in each category as a share of all women in that category.
MOQ1 - the concentration of American born (White) women in different occupational classes with all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator.
MOQ2 - the concentration of American born (White) women in different occupational classes with occupied women as the denominator.
All: % of total - percentage of all women in each category as a share of all women (occupied and unoccupied).
All: % of all occupied - percentage of all occupied women in each category as a share of all occupied women.

Table 27. Women's Work: Ten Main Occupations, Black American (New York 1880)

	American born (Black)						All women		
Occupation	No	% of total	% of occupied	% of all women occupied	MOQ 1	MOQ 2	No	% of total	% of occupied
Domestic servants	3619	19.95	56.05	5.23	1.8	1.38	69208	11.09	40.76
Launders and laundresses	1809	9.97	28.02	16.9	5.81	4.45	10702	1.71	6.3
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	468	2.58	7.25	1.61	0.56	0.42	28982	4.64	17.07
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	212	1.17	3.28	8.36	2.87	2.2	2537	0.41	1.49
Nurses	96	0.53	1.49	3.77	1.3	0.99	2546	0.41	1.5
Teachers and scientific persons	38	0.21	0.59	0.79	0.27	0.21	4826	0.77	2.84
Janitors	35	0.19	0.54	10.2	3.51	2.68	343	0.05	0.2
Tailors and tailoresses	31	0.17	0.48	0.34	0.12	0.09	9100	1.46	5.36
Musicians (professional) and teachers music	26	0.14	0.4	2.58	0.89	0.68	1008	0.16	0.59
Laborers (not specified)	22	0.12	0.34	7.56	2.6	1.99	291	0.05	0.17
Others	101	0.56	1.56	0.25%	0.09	0.07	40267	6.45	23.72
Total (excluding unoccupied)	6457	35.59	100	3.8	1.31	1.00	169810	27.2	100
Keeping house	3301	18.19		1.11	0.38		296555	47.51	
At home	188	1.04		3.63	1.25		5178	0.83	
Student	119	0.66		1.16	0.4		10254	1.64	
Retired	0	0		0	0		229	0.04	
Sick, disabled	0	0		0	0		21	0	
Institutional inmate	4	0.02		0.98	0.34		407	0.07	
Gentleman	0	0		0	0		87	0.01	
Other non-occupational response	98	0.54		0.79	0.27		12342	1.98	
Other	36	0.2		1.13	0.39		3181	0.51	
Blank	1484	8.18		1.18	0.4		126100	20.2	
Total	18144	100		2.91	1.00		624164	100	

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Notes:
American born (Black): % of total - percentage of American born (Black): in each category as a share of all Irish-born women (occupied and unoccupied).
American born (Black): % of occupied - percentage of American born (Black): in each category as a share of all Irish-born occupied women.
American born (Black): % of all women occupied - percentage of American born (Black): women in each category as a share of all women in that category.
MOQ1 - the concentration of American born (Black): women in different occupational classes with all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator.
MOQ2 - the concentration of American born (Black): women in different occupational classes with occupied women as the denominator.
All: % of total - percentage of all women in each category as a share of all women (occupied and unoccupied).
All: % of all occupied - percentage of all occupied women in each category as a share of all occupied women.

The formal labour market in New York – as with the US in general – was highly segmented by sex and migrant status. As shown in Table 25, the three main occupations of Irish women employed 82 percent of those in the formal labour market. In addition to domestic service, other major occupations for Irish women were milliners, dressmakers and seamstresses (11 percent) and laundresses (10 percent). Smaller share of Irish women worked in hotels and restaurants (3 percent) and were employed as tailoresses (2 percent) and nurses (1 percent). While comprising a relatively small proportion of Irish women in the formal labour market over half of women enumerated as laundresses and as employees of hotels and restaurants were Irish.

The concentration of formal work in a narrow range of occupations was also very apparent with Black American women, with their three main occupations employing 91 percent of those working in the formal labour market. In addition to domestic service, other major occupations for Black American women included: laundresses (17 percent) and milliners, dressmakers and seamstresses (2 percent). The work of white American women was more varied than that of both Irish and Black women with the three main occupations of white American women employing 55 percent of those in the formal labour market. In addition to domestic service, other major occupations for white American women included: milliners, dressmakers and seamstresses (24 percent - similar to the number employed in domestic service) and tailoresses (7 percent). Other major occupations of white American women included: teachers and scientific persons (5 percent) and saleswomen (3 percent); and bookbinders and finishers, box factory operatives, artificial-flower makers, store clerks, and laundresses all employed 2 percent. Although white American women comprised 44 percent of workers in the formal labour market, they only comprised 26 percent of those women who worked in domestic service, and only 12 percent of those who worked as laundresses. These

were jobs that were primarily undertaken by Irish and Black women. Conversely, as shown in Table 26, white American women compromised much larger shares of all the other main occupations. Similarly, there was a greater variety of work for other migrant groups.[60]

Tables 25 to 27 provide further insights into how the labour market for women was segmented according to migrant status by reporting the migrant occupation quotient (MOQ).[61] In terms of domestic service, as shown in Table 25, the MOQ1 for Irish women was 1.9 indicating a relative high concentration of Irish women in this occupation (albeit slightly less than for US as a whole). This MOQ2 is slightly lower (1.5) reflecting the relatively higher enumerated LFPR of Irish women. As shown in Table 8, other occupations with a high absolute number, and relatively high propensity, of Irish women included: launders and laundresses (MOQ1=2.0); employees of hotels and restaurants (MOQ1=2.2); and traders and dealers in groceries (MOQ= 2.2). Occupations with a high absolute number of Irish women but where their propensity to be employed was broadly in line with all women included: nurses (MOQ1=1.1); and carpetmakers (MOQ1=2). Other occupations with a high absolute number of women employed but with a low propensity for the Irish to be employed included milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses (MOQ1=0.8); tailoresses (MOQ1=0.4); mill and factory operatives (MOQ1=0.6); and teachers (MOQ1=0.3).

The evidence in Table 26 shows a very different picture of the employment of white American women who had a relatively high propensity to be employed in most of women's

[60] For instance, domestic service was the most important occupations for European-born women, but other major occupations included: milliners, dressmakers and seamstresses (12 percent); tailoresses (11 percent); cigar-makers (7 percent); and laundresses (7 percent). Similarly, 21 percent of English-born women were milliners, dressmakers and seamstress; 5 percent were tailoresses; 4 percent were laundresses; and 3 percent were nurses.

[61] A descriptive statistic that measures the migrant concentration in different occupational classes, see the definition in Chapter Four.

main occupations with the notable exceptions of: domestic service (MOQ1=0.5) and as laundresses (MOQ1=0.2) where their propensity to be employed was much lower than other groups; and as tailoresses (MOQ1=1.0) and nurses (MOQ1=0.7) where their propensity to be employed was similar or slightly lower than other groups. In contrast to white American women, the employment of Black American women was highly concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. As shown in Table 27, occupations with a high absolute number, and relatively high propensity of Black American women included: domestic service (MOQ1=1.8); laundresses (MOQ1=5.8) and employees of hotels and restaurants (MOQ1=2.9); nurses (MOQ1=1.3); and janitors (MOQ1=3.5). Other occupations with a high absolute number of Black American women employed but with a low propensity to be employed included: milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses (MOQ1=0.6) teachers (MOQ1=0.3); tailoresses (MOQ1=0.1); mill and factory operatives (MOQ1=0.6); and teachers (MOQ1=0.3).

The New York evidence is broadly consistent with the national picture that shows a labour market segmented by migrant status. Irish women had a relatively high LFPR but much of their work was concentrated in domestic service. Similarly, the work of Black American women was also highly concentrated in domestic service as well as working as laundresses. Irish women's working lives were much closer to those of Black women than other white women in New York, although Irish women comprised a much larger share of the New York population and labour force. The segmentation of the Irish women in a narrow range of occupations reflected two interacting forces. First, the sex segmentation of the US formal labour market where women were restricted to a narrow range of occupations. Second, the migrant segmentation of the US formal female labour market where Irish and Black American women were far more willing to work in service compared with white

American women and women from other international migrant groups. Irish and Black women were at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in New York.

Conclusions

Irish women had moved from a primarily rural and Catholic country with a declining population to a newly industrialising expanding country. Their lives, like those of many migrants in nineteenth century New York, were difficult and impoverished. The Irish in New York not only had to contend with poverty but also with prejudice and bigotry, albeit not on the scale of the entrenched racism faced by Black Americans. Yet despite these challenges, there were opportunities for Irish women, although there were important between different households and between different stages in the life cycle. The 'invisible Irish women' were very visible in the formal labour market. Many of those who were young and unmarried worked in domestic service - a job that offered wages with board and lodgings. Other opportunities in the formal labour market were more limited as the labour market was highly segmented by sex and migrant status. Employment in the formal labour market was highly contingent on marital status. On marriage, women's work primarily shifted to the home and the family – with Irish women often raising relatively large families. If the marriage was terminated – as many were – primarily by desertion or widowhood, then many women returned to the formal labour market. How did these women cope with these changes?

The lives of Irish women in New York were influenced by the shifting intersections of family, homes (New York and Ireland), workplaces (household and elsewhere), community and networks. These lives have been frequently ignored with the focus instead being on men and their experiences. A variety of Irish women lived in Vandewater Street and the census evidence shows that there was a variety of Irish women living in New York in 1880. Their

lives evolved through different stages and became constrained and circumscribed, as they moved from work and life in the formal labour through marriage and raising a family to widowhood and often destitution. The evolution of their wellbeing through these different stages is discussed in the next three chapters.

Chapter 6
The Tyranny of Bridget: Young Women in New York

In a city which offered alternative income streams for women, such as factory and clerical work, why did so many young Irish women labour in service? Was service, as Margaret Lynch-Brennan and Hasia Diner have suggested, eagerly-sought employment by Irish women, providing them with not only a sense of independence, but fulfilment? [1] What was the link between young women's current and future marital status, their occupation, and their own sense of wellbeing? This chapter explores these questions, placing young Irish women's working conditions in the wider context of their lives and expectations. Service work was a key facilitator of settlement in New York. This settlement, however, was one undertaken in the complex web of American and Irish understandings of work, religion, and class. Anti-Irish and anti-Catholic feeling permeated women's domestic work. Yet these young Irish women, in one of the world's largest, most cosmopolitan of cities – metaphorically a million miles away from home – successfully navigated their working lives with busy social activities and fulfilling their obligations to their families in Ireland. Mentally strong and determined to overcome adversity – what is often defined as 'resilience' – the young female Irish workforce of New York were willing and able to prove their worth, to those abroad, at home – and to themselves.[2]

[1] Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (New York NY, 2009), 95; Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983), 74.

[2] Resilience generally refers to the ability to adapt to, or confront, adversity 'without developing negative physical or mental health outcomes.' See: Helen Harman, Donna Stewart, Natalia Diaz-Granados, Elena Berger, Beth Jackson, and Tracy Yuen, 'What is Resilience?', *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 56/5 (2011), 259.

Young Irish Women's Occupations

The women who were most likely to undertake paid work in New York were young and Irish. As shown in Figure 11 (Chapter Five), three in five young Irish women (here, classified as those aged between 15 and 29) were enumerated in the census as working in New York's formal labour market. Although an equally high proportion of young Black women laboured, there were very few Black women in New York: for every Black woman in the city, there were approximately eight Irish women. Apart from their proclivity to gainful employment, something else marked them apart: their occupations. The main jobs of young women in New York are shown in Table 28.[3] Young Irish women, alongside Black women, were heavily concentrated in just three occupations: 86 percent were employed as domestic servants, as 'employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)' (presumably service roles), or as 'milliners, dressmakers and seamstresses.'[4] The only other category of note (less than three percent) were laundry workers. The census reveals more than two-thirds were working in domestic service (69 percent), the largest proportion among all the major birthplace groups. Young men's work was more varied and less concentrated than women's work although it was also segmented by migrant status. As shown in Table 29, 40 percent of young Irish men were occupied in three occupations (laborers (not specified); draymen, hackmen and teamsters; and clerks in stores). This was a heavier concentration than for all employed young men, but was a lower concentration than that of young Black men, whose work was highly segmented and segregated. The lower-rungs of the New York labour market were full of young Irish.

[3] Main jobs are the top ten occupations in terms of the number employed. .

[4] Of all young Black American employed women, 90 percent were occupied in three occupations (domestic servants; laundresses; and milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses).

Table 28 Young women's work (aged 15-29) in New York (main occupations) – All and Main Comparator Groups

	All		American-born White			American-born Black			Irish			North American/ Canadian			European			English		
	No	% of birthplace occupied	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total
Domestic servants	42449	39.64	14,275	23.37	33.63	1,947	62.89	4.59	17,038	69.18	40.14	273	35.36	0.64	7526	53.71	17.73	948	36.90	2.23
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	19575	18.28	14,357	23.50	73.34	260	8.40	1.33	2,641	10.72	13.49	195	25.26	1.00	1535	10.96	7.84	447	17.40	2.28
Tailors and tailoresses	6393	5.97	4,524	7.41	70.76	24	0.78	0.38	326	1.32	5.10	29	3.76	0.45	1307	9.33	20.44	163	6.34	2.55
Teachers and scientific persons	3148	2.94	2,805	4.59	89.10	29	0.94	0.92	151	0.61	4.80	20	2.59	0.64	86	0.61	2.73	32	1.25	1.02
Salesmen and saleswomen	2573	2.40	2,163	3.54	84.07	1	0.03	0.04	183	0.74	7.11	26	3.37	1.01	123	0.88	4.78	62	2.41	2.41
Launders and laundresses	2255	2.11	737	1.21	32.68	571	18.44	25.32	703	2.85	31.18	17	2.20	0.75	174	1.24	7.72	38	1.48	1.69
Mill and factory operatives (not specified)	2019	1.89	1,612	2.64	79.84	6	0.19	0.30	229	0.93	11.34	13	1.68	0.64	77	0.55	3.81	61	2.37	3.02
Clerks in stores	1925	1.80	1,596	2.61	82.91	0	0.00	0.00	127	0.52	6.60	22	2.85	1.14	118	0.84	6.13	45	1.75	2.34
Bookbinders and finishers	1858	1.74	1,583	2.59	85.20	0	0.00	0.00	163	0.66	8.77	9	1.17	0.48	28	0.20	1.51	52	2.02	2.80
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	1739	1.62	500	0.82	28.75	143	4.62	8.22	901	3.66	51.81	12	1.55	0.69	130	0.93	7.48	37	1.44	2.13
All Occupied	107089	100.00	61083	100.00	57.04	3096	100.00	2.89	24628	100.00	23.00	772	100.00	0.72	14011	100.00	13.08	2569	100.00	2.40
All	281691		184677			5,336			42201			2148			37482			7249		

Source: IPUMS dataset

Note: % of occupation totals do not sum to 100% as the table excludes the smaller migrant groups.

Table 29. Young men's work (aged 15-29) in New York (main occupations) – All and Main Comparator Groups

	All		American-born White			American-born Black			Irish			North American/Canadian			European			English		
	No	% of birthplace occupied	No	% of birthplace occupied	%of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total
Clerks in stores	26588	13.70	20,880	16.41	78.53	41	1.38	0.15	1,438	7.47	5.41	198	12.97	0.74	3,206	9.12	12.06	563	10.54	2.12
Laborers (not specified)	16226	8.36	7,750	6.09	47.76	243	8.16	1.50	5,296	27.51	32.64	94	6.16	0.58	2,259	6.42	13.92	464	8.69	2.86
Draymen, hackmen, teamsters, etc.	7794	4.02	5,786	4.55	74.24	248	8.32	3.18	1,054	5.47	13.52	27	1.77	0.35	493	1.40	6.33	139	2.60	1.78
Printers, lithographers, and stereotypers	6250	3.22	5,128	4.03	82.05	8	0.27	0.13	392	2.04	6.27	84	5.50	1.34	366	1.04	5.86	210	3.93	3.36
Tailors and tailoresses	5224	2.69	1,720	1.35	32.92	7	0.23	0.13	159	0.83	3.04	15	0.98	0.29	3,152	8.96	60.34	139	2.60	2.66
Cigar makers	5054	2.60	2,261	1.78	44.74	6	0.20	0.12	27	0.14	0.53	15	0.98	0.30	2,396	6.81	47.41	202	3.78	4.00
Painters and varnishers	4528	2.33	3,267	2.57	72.15	13	0.44	0.29	368	1.91	8.13	48	3.14	1.06	640	1.82	14.13	150	2.81	3.31
Butchers	4431	2.28	2,665	2.10	60.14	6	0.20	0.14	226	1.17	5.10	11	0.72	0.25	1,445	4.11	32.61	64	1.20	1.44
Porters and laborers in stores warehouses	4180	2.15	2,544	2.00	60.86	174	5.84	4.16	795	4.13	19.02	30	1.96	0.72	514	1.46	12.30	95	1.78	2.27
Bookkeepers and accountants in stores	4039	2.08	3,334	2.62	82.55	3	0.10	0.07	159	0.83	3.94	35	2.29	0.87	373	1.06	9.23	82	1.54	2.03
All Occupied	194094	100.00	127204	100.00	65.54	2979	100.00	1.53	19254	100.00	9.92	1527	100.00	0.79	35167	100.00	18.12	5340	100.00	2.75
All	241,266		164261			3,409			21848			1,836			40,234			6,464		

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: % of occupation totals do not sum to 100% as the table excludes the smaller migrant groups.

In Service

Young Irish women's propensity to work in service on arrival in the urban northeast of the US was so well-documented by their contemporaries, it gave rise to the characterisation of the 'Irish Bridget.'[5] This had its antecedents well before the famine. The majority of the two thousand employment applications received by New York's Society for the Encouragement of Faithful Domestic Servants' employment registry in 1825 were from Irish women.[6] The link between Irish immigrant women and service only strengthened over the course of the nineteenth century. Mona Hearn argued that the increased lack of female employment opportunities within Ireland meant that women only had two options: service or emigration. As service became the occupational 'haven for women from rural Ireland and many towns and cities,' Hearn suggested that those that left Ireland automatically sought service positions abroad, 'without consideration of alternatives which might in some cases, particularly at the end of the period, have in fact existed, in factories, shops or offices.'[7] Robert Kennedy and Hearn both showed that increasing numbers of women who had previously worked as servants in Ireland emigrated to the United States between 1875 and 1911, and took up service again on arrival.[8] Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Two, Ireland's National Schools helped to inculcate a feminine culture of service abroad. Irish women were socialised for service from childhood through to the decision to leave home – and beyond.

Chain migration was both a producer and a product of migration networks which facilitated and encouraged entry into service work. Many women arrived in New York with

[5] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*; Mona Hearn, *Below Stairs: Domestic Service Remembered in Dublin and Beyond, 1880-1922* (Dublin, 1993); and Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race: Irish Immigrant and Southern Black Domestic Workers* (New Brunswick NJ, 2020).

[6] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget,* 40-41.

[7] Hearn, *Below Stairs*, 2.

[8] Hearn, *Below Stairs*, 103; Robert Kennedy, *The Irish: Emigration, Marriage, Fertility* (Berkeley CA, 1973), 76.

their service position secured, through the transnational work of the Mission.[9] Arriving in September 1897, Mary Hegarty, a 22-year-year-old from Cork headed straight to her workplace, while Hannah Gridora went straight into a situation, under the employ of Peter Goden, 131 East 110th Street.[10] Other Irish women were able to secure service employment on arrival, through the assistance of New York-based relatives and friends, as well as newspaper advertisements and local employment agencies.'[11] The letters between Margaret Nagle and her cousin Bessie Fitzgerald indicate that the latter, having been in the city for a longer period of time, used her contacts to secure Nagle employment.[12] These women retained their ties back home, sending letters detailing – or embellishing – their successes abroad. Writing home to her parents and siblings in the 1860s, Nagle stated that in New York she had 'no trouble getting places… I have not been out of place but a few days and need not be at any time' and that Irish women 'can now get good situations at any time.'[13] The 'benefits' of domestic service for workers were identified in a 1901 report by the Vassar historian Lucy Maynard Salmon, which included the responses to a survey of 662 servants in the US (heavily Irish) north-east in 1889 and 1890, and their reasons for entering service.[14] Salmon took domestic service seriously (if not always the women who made up the service work force), and has been described by Diner as the 'most exhaustive late-nineteenth-century researcher of the whole field of domestic work.'[15] Her questionnaire asked open-ended

[9] 'Irish Mission at Watson House: the Battery Heritage Foundation.' Mission Ledger Books. https://archives.irishmissionatwatsonhouse.org/ (Jan. 2020).
[10] 'situation' refers to domestic service. Mission ledger books.
[11] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 95.
[12] Bessie Fitzgerald to Margaret Nagle, 13 Aug. 1866, TLRW, AIA.077.
[13] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 21 Aug. 1866, TLRW ,AIA.077.
[14] Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York NY, 1901), 131.
[15] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 83.

questions, before submitting them for analysis and critique to 'several gentlemen prominent in statistical investigation'.[16]

As shown in Figure 13, the most common responses were: availability (36 percent); preference (31 percent); and the perceived healthiness of service work (15 percent).[17] The questionnaires revealed that the 'foreign countries having the largest absolute and relative representation in domestic service are, in order, Ireland, Germany, Sweden and Norway, Great Britain, and Canada and Newfoundland.'[18] Irish women remained concentrated in service at the turn of the twentieth century. Danielle Phillips-Cunningham has calculated that between 1899 and 1910, 40 percent of Irish women were employed as domestics, comprising 42 percent of the national servant population in 1900.[19] An Immigration Commission reported in the same year that 71 percent of Irish women in the labour force were classified as 'domestic and personal workers.'[20]

[16] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, vii.

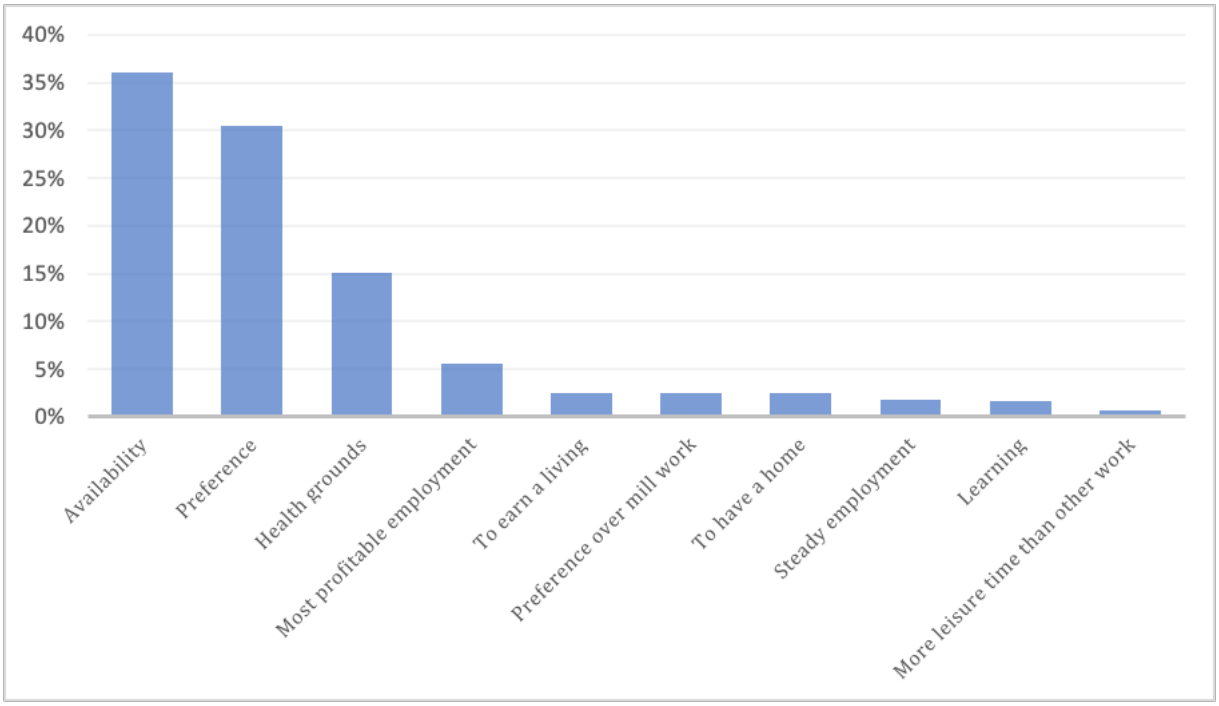
[17] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* 131. The survey questionnaire indicates that this question, and the others, were open-ended with the responses classified by Salmon.

[18] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 78.

[19] Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race*, 93.

[20] Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, 'Slaving Irish "Ladies" and Black "Towers of Strength in the Labor World": Race and Women's Resistance in Domestic Service', *Women's History Review,* 30/2 (2020), 192.

Figure 13. Reasons for Entering Service (percentage of respondents, 1889-90)



Source: calculated from Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 131.
Based on 662 responses to the question: 'Why do you choose housework as your regular employment?

'Availability' shows the high demand for domestic servants, but equally the lack of supply amongst many (white) American women in the mid to late nineteenth century. Alice Kessler-Harris has argued that women had some level of occupational choice, particularly in urban centres, and that they sought employment based on a 'variety of factors, including geography, mobility, and income level.'[21] The driving factors, however, were ethnic background and marital status. Salmon noted that 'domestic service is as a rule performed by persons of foreign birth belonging to a few well-defined classes as regards nationality, who prefer city to country life.'[22] There was significant variation by ethnicity with young Irish women most likely to be employed in service, followed by Black American (63 percent), European (54 percent), English (37 percent), and white American women (23 percent). In

[21] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work* (Oxford, 2003), 123.
[22] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 80.

1880, young Irish women in New York were strongly associated with domestic service with more than 17,000 such workers. This was some 40 percent of all domestics. Irish accounted for a third of laundry workers, and over one-half of women working in hotels and restaurants. Such high employment shares is notable at a time when just 15 percent of all New York's young women heralded from Ireland.

If service work was respectable and appropriately feminine work amongst the Irish in both Ireland and the US, with (as will be discussed) its demonstrably higher wages and working conditions acknowledged as healthful', white American women disregarded service as inappropriate labour.[23] Indeed, it was not only inappropriate, but 'so odious, so demeaning, so beneath their sense of self that in fact they often took lower paid jobs… rather than humiliate themselves in the home.'[24] This disdain towards service (and more importantly towards servant workers) was deeply rooted in racist understandings of servitude. While Salmon stated in her report it was 'unnecessary and impossible to discuss in this place the question of slavery and its relation to the larger subject of service', in a footnote she quoted the late-eighteenth-century writer Elkanah Watson, who observed that it 'would seem as if the poor white man had almost rather starve than work, because the negro works.'[25] The same might be said of white American women.

Class development and the expansion of the middle-class home further exacerbated negative perceptions of service. Salmon argued that 'the unwillingness of American women to engage in work' could be explained by 'the almost exclusive employment of foreigners in domestic service, but also because of the increase of wealth and consequent luxury in this

[23] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 127.
[24] Diner, *Erin's Daughters,* 81.
[25] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 52.

country, the growing class divisions, and the adoption of many European habits of living and thinking and speaking.'[26] The impact of urbanisation, industrialisation and 'democratic capitalism' extended beyond the streets and factories of New York, and into the gendered space of the home. As many white Americans entered the newly and shakily emerging middle class, many wives and mothers acquired the means to 'free themselves' from domestic tasks by hiring servants. To labour in the home for wages was not only beneath their class, it would reduce a middle-class women's ability to wield a positive female influence over the home, as a lady of leisure, philanthropy, temperance, and motherhood.[27] If they entered the workplace, professional occupations, including nursing and teaching, were at the top of the hierarchy, followed by clerical work, department store clerking, factory workers, waitresses, and at the bottom, domestic service.[28] The Superintendent of the 1880 Census was dismissive of the service sector, stating that the 'organization of domestic service in the United States is so crude that no distinction whatever can be successfully maintained' between the different parts of service.[29] All service work was considered as unskilled labour, as it could be done within the home. Moreover, 'servant' was not only an occupational title, but a slur, an 'offensive term applied to no other class of laborers.'[30] Salmon declared that in cities:

> where wealth comes into competition with manufacturing industries the proportion of domestic service is small. Where such competition does not exist the proportion is large. In other words, persons are willing to enter domestic service for a consideration in cities where no other avenues of work are open to them with the qualification they possess. They are unwilling to do so where such openings do exist.[31]

[26] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* 101-102.
[27] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 61-66.
[28] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 128; 135.
[29] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 113.
[30] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* 101-102.
[31] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 149.

This unwillingness reflected the extent that women's occupational choices reflected their own perceptions and the importance they placed on 'values such as cleanliness, affirmation of home roles, and possibilities of remaining "good."'[32] A white American factory operative described how her occupation not only provided a better work-life balance than service, but how the 'types' of women drawn to service were inherently unfeminine.

> I don't like the idea of only one evening a week and every other Sunday. I like to feel that I have just so many hours' work to do and do them and come home and dress up and go out or sit down and sew if I feel like it, and when a girl is in service she has very little time for herself, she is a servant. In the second place, a shop or factory girl knows just what she has to do and can go ahead and do it.… I think shop or factory girls make the best wives. Now I don't mean all, but the biggest part of them, and the cleanest housekeepers. The domestic after she gets married gets careless. She don't take the pride in her home that the shop-girl does. She has lived in such fine houses that her small tenement has no beauty for her after the first glow of married life is over. She don't try either to make her home attractive or herself, and gets discouraged, and is apt to make a man disheartened with her and then I think she is extravagant… some of them have lovely places and lay up money, but after all, what is life if a body is always trying to see just how much money he or she can save?[33]

Despite not explicitly referencing ethnicity or religion, the factory operative's description of servants as careless, lazy, and garish is characteristic of the stereotype of the Irish Catholic 'Bridget', reflecting the anti-Irish bigotry in the US. The mass arrival of Irish women migrants willing to undertake any paid labour throughout the nineteenth century – including that traditionally undertaken by Black enslaved women –consolidated the racialised and gendered perceptions of service work. Both Black women and Irish immigrant women were racialised as inferior to white American Protestant women. They represented the antithesis of virtuous white womanhood: the 'pressing question always boiled down to

[32] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 135.
[33] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 149.

whether the familiar Bridgets from Ireland or the "green" negro plantation women from the rural "backwards" South were better qualified to care for the home.'[34]

Advice manuals for mistresses proliferated across white middle-class America in the second half of the nineteenth century. Lynch-Brennan has described the authors of these manuals (such as Catharine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Harriet Prescott Spofford) as sympathetic towards Irish domestics, particularly the general servant.[35] This sympathy was not, however, wholesale. In Spofford's 1881 advice manual for middle-class white American mistresses, *The Servant Girl Question,* the author declared that the 'the different nationality of the maid, her unfettered state, her strange habits of speech, her wild traditions, her outlandish custom of wakes and ulalus, may make her seem something like a creature of another race, a rougher and more primitive race, nearer the earth.'[36] She warns her readership of white middle-class American women that their supply of domestic labour has 'just transferred from her sheiling, and among implements never heard of, without skill, without instruction, hot-tempered, without self-control, and without their the habits of indoor labor'.[37] By the late nineteenth century, the Irish domestic was a frequent target of the media and press, only serving to cement the depiction of Irish women as inept and unfeminine. Cartoons such as Samuel Ehrhart's in *Puck* (1888) constantly made fun of the women's 'strange habits of speech': 'Wiv ther dust-pan, mum, what else?'[38] While scholars have made much of Irish

[34] Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race*, 13; 92.
[35] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 82.
[36] Harriet Prescott Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question* (Boston MA, 1881), 84-85.
[37] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, 19.
[38] Samuel Ehrhart, 'An Irish Duster,' *Puck*, (30 May. 1888)https://shec.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/650 (Dec. 2021).https://shec.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/650 (Dec. 2021).

women's ability to speak English, their backgrounds and accents still rendered them outsiders, interlopers into the American home. [39]

Irish women's Catholicism further consolidated their service work as not only low status, but a threat to American Protestant gentility. Bridget's bodily presence was caricatured as the 'Irish occupation' of the Protestant and middle-class home.[40] These depictions were rooted in reality. Not all New York households were willing to hire Irish servant women, and many explicitly sought other foreign-born women from Protestant backgrounds. Marion Harland wrote for the *Washington Post* in 1886 that the 'the revolt against the tyranny of the Irish girl have created a demand for Swedish and German help…. Many delight in their release from the Hibernian yoke proclaim loudly the superiority of the Teuton.'[41] As shown in Table 28, there were 7,526 young European servant women compared with 17,038 Irish. If in England 'No Irish need apply', this had 'an echo on this side of the water in the applications (500 deep, say Castle Garden officials) for competent – or rather, Protestant – German servants.'[42] Some advertisements for service jobs explicitly sought Protestant workers, code for non-Irish Catholics. A family advertising for a post at 314 West 16th Street, for example, sought 'A Protestant Girl as seamstress or chambermaid or to take care of

[39] Timothy Guinnane has stated that the ability to read and write English 'must have made a difference' to Irish women in the US, while Enda Delaney has argued 'the nature of the national education system –which tended to promote skills such as speaking English' meant Irish women could be assured of opportunities' abroad. See: Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850-1914* (Princeton NJ, 1997), 65; Delaney, 'Diaspora', in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds) The Princeton History of Modern Ireland (Princeton NJ, 2016), 499.
to Irish women in North America

[40] Marion Harland, 'About Servants: The Difference Between Irish Women and Negroes', *The Washington Post* (14. Nov. 1886), 6.

[41] 'About Servants'.

[42] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget,* 100.

growing children.'[43] The advert specified that a 'city reference' for the candidate was required.

These attempts to discourage or push Irish women out of service in the US were a failure. Oher immigrant women were, moreover, simply not attracted to service, preferring to work in circumstances more amenable to their household set up, or cultural expectations. Many Eastern European women sought factory work, and settled in large cities with garment industries. This was acceded by potential service employers – note that the West 16th Street family specified a 'seamstress or chambermaid.' Arriving with their husbands and children, older Italian Catholic women sought work that could be taken home, while younger daughters were encouraged to remain living with their families, rather than 'unsupervised' in others' households. Community and familial need were crucial in determining women's entry into the labour market. If a woman was to leave her family at home to labour in service, an Austrian bishop wrote, it was 'only natural that family life is disturbed and, if this situation continues, is totally destroyed.'[44] Other groups of women, such as Eastern European Jews, perceived service work as downward mobility.[45] This is not to suggest, however, that they did not undertake service. One 1905 study of 300 young Jewish immigrant women who were employed in service on their initial arrival in NY showed that over two-thirds had either married or left their situation 'in favour of' factories and store work within the year.[46] It is likely that Irish women, without children and unmarried on arrival in the city, eagerly took their place.

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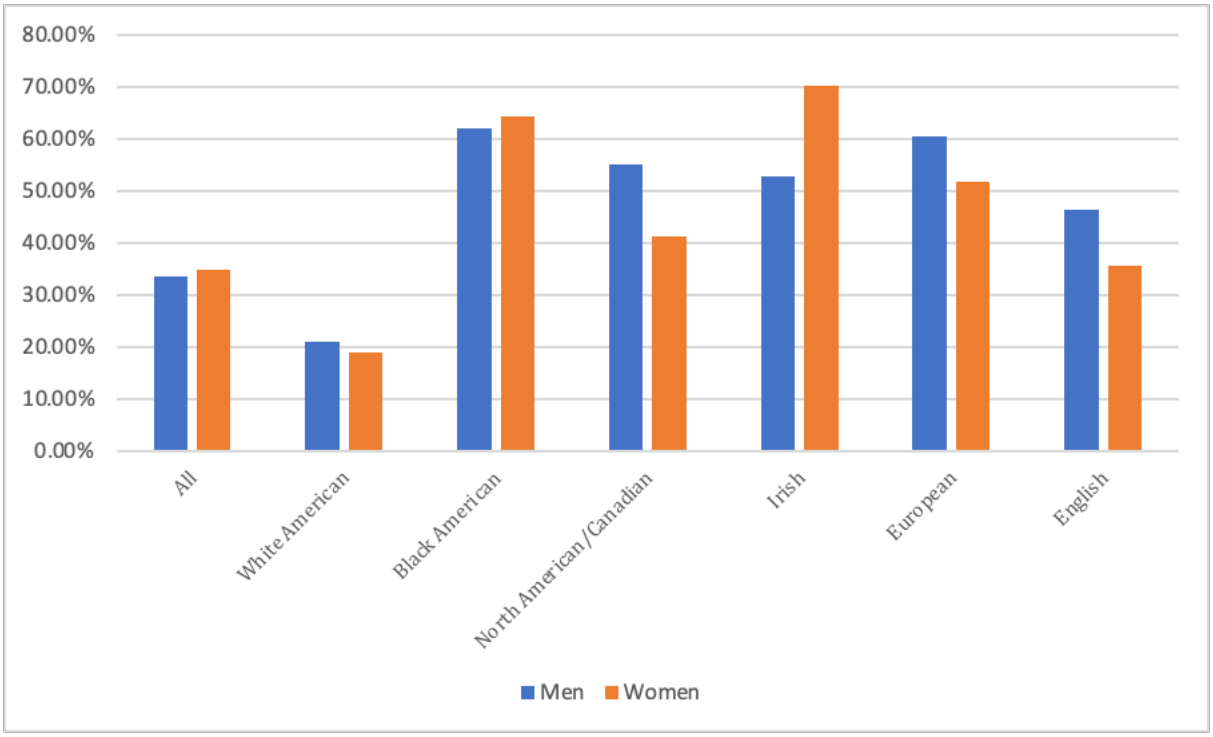
[43] Information from visit to Merchant's House Museum, Manhattan. For more information see: https://merchantshouse.org/ (Nov. 2019).
[44] Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York NY, 2016), 89.
[45] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 127
[46] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, p. 83.

Accommodation

Unlike other immigrant women who arrived in families who also needed settling and accommodation, Irish women often arrived in NY on their own and not as part of a family unit, albeit to be greeted by friends and family. Many young female women worked as live-in servants and boarded with their employers. As shown in Figure 14, 70 percent of single Irish women were living with non-relatives; and many of these non-relatives were the women's employers. This is the highest share of all the comparator groups and is only closely matched by 64 percent of Black American women who were living with non-relatives; and it was twice the share of white American women. Furthermore, it is greater than the share of Irish men living with non-relatives (53 percent). The women who found work in private homes not only received bed and board but also, Salmon claimed, the 'externals of a home.' If living in a wealthy enough home, this included, 'single rooms, medical care when sick, use of daily papers, books and magazines, evening instruction, sitting-room for visitors, no restrictions as to visitors, use of bath-room and sewing-machine, use of horse and carriage when distant from church, seat at table except when guests are present, seat in church, and concert and theatre.'[47] This claim of egalitarianism is likely to be overstated, given the Protestant/Catholic divide amongst many employers and servants. Lynch-Brennan and Diner both indicated that some American Protestant employers refused to allow servants time off to go to mass.[48] However, residing and working in a private household could be a training ground for the future, as it provided 'the knowledge it gives of household affairs and the training in them - knowledge of which every woman, whatever her station in life and whether married or unmarried, has at times most pressing need.'[49]

[47] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 133.
[48] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 138; Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 93.
[49] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 137.

Figure 14. Percentage of Single Men and Women Living with Non-Relatives, All and Comparator Groups (1880, New York)



Source: IPUMS dataset.
Some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Wages

Service provided Irish women with the immediate ability to earn. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, wages in service were both regular and relatively high compared with other female occupations.[50] Spofford described the typical salary for a typical servant girl:

> Bridget has more than doubled the price of her labor, receiving three dollars and a half where she used to have one and a half, while everything she has to buy is as cheap as formerly, and everything that her employer has to buy is very much dearer- dry-goods, for instance, all that Bridget charges herself with, being to be had at a low rate, while provisions, coal, and rent, her employer's charge, are comparatively high. Reckoning her board at the very least possible figure, it would probably be four dollars a week, and that, with wages at three dollars and a half, make her in the positive receipt of something more than three hundred and fifty a year, or more than the usual teacher of a district school receives.[51]

The average weekly money wage in service occupations in 1889 to 1890 are shown in Table 30 (from the Salmon report) and the average daily money wage (collected from the Salmon report and further data from Stanley Lebergott) for a range of occupations are shown in Table 31.[52] There were spatial urban-rural variation in money wages. Focusing on New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania - areas with a high concentration of Irish - the average weekly wage for male domestics was $7.62 and for women domestics it was $3.21.[53] Many poorer women in New York's welfare institutions undertook service work in exchange for bed and board. For instance, Mary Smith performed menial labour over the course of her stay in New York State's Woman's Hospital in the late 1850s and 1860s.[54]

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[50] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 98.

[51] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, 83-86.

[52] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* p. 90 and Stanley Lebergott, 'Wage Trends, 1800-1900', in Stanley Lebergott (ed.), *Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton NJ, 1960), 462

[53] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 88.

[54] Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens GA, 2017), 96.

Table 30. Average Weekly Wages in Service Occupations (1889-90)

Occupation	Wage rate ($)
Women	
Cooks	3.72
Cooks and laundresses	3.39
Chambermaids	3.39
Waitresses	3.19
Second girls	3.16
Chambermaids and Waitresses	3.1
General servants	2.91
Men	
Coachmen	7.84
Coachmen and gardeners	6.54
Butlers	6.11
Cooks	6.08

Source: Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 90.
Note: for women the rates are the average of returns reported by employees and employers; for men the rates are as returned by employers.

Table 31. Average Daily Wages in Various Occupations (1889-90)

Occupation	Wage rate ($)
Women	
Seamstresses[a]	1.01
Laundresses[a]	0.82
Manufacturing	
Cotton[b]	0.92
Wool[b]	1
Shoes[b]	1.08
Men	
Gardeners[a]	1.33
Choremen[a]	0.87
Manufacturing	
Cotton[b]	1.29
Wool[b]	1.47
Shoes[b]	1.8
Iron[b]	1.99
Non-farm Labour[b]	1.39

Sources

a. Salmon, *Domestic Service*, Table VIII, p. 90.
b. Stanley Lebergott, 'Wage Trends, 1800-1900', in Stanley Lebergott (ed.) *Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton NJ, 1960), Table 2, p. 462

Overall, the wage data in Tables 30 and 31 reveal two general features. First, there was a gender gap with men paid more than women and is consistent with the general trend in the US economy, and definitions of skill when applied to female and male work. Data from the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor for 1885 and the Dewey Report for 1890 show that the wages of adult females were 'somewhat less than three-fifths' of those of adult males although there were significant variations across industries.[55] This is consistent with the difference in wages between male and female cooks (see Table 3) with the latter earning

[55] Clarence Long, *Wages and Earnings in the United States, 1860-1890* (Princeton NJ, 1960), 104.

61 percent of the wage of the former.[56] Second, 'skilled' workers earned higher money wages compared with semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Cooks were the highest on the domestic occupational hierarchy, and thus commanded the highest wage. The general servant - the most common form of employment for young Irish women - received the lowest wage. Salmon's report indicates that on average women cooks could earn $3.80 a week, compared with a general servant's wage of $2.94 a week. This was despite the expectation the general servant must 'unite herself in all functions of all the other employees' she 'becomes, on account of this fact, an unskilled worker, and, therefore, receives the lowest wages.' The average weekly wage of the least skilled male servant, meanwhile, was $6.08. A Boston employment bureau reported that the majority of general servants earned between $3 and $4 weekly, compared with cooks who received between $4 and $5. Salmon made an interesting third point that is not directly observable in the reported data, that the 'foreign born in domestic service receive higher wages than the native born.' Three explanations for this phenomenon were suggested: the preference of the foreign born to live in large cities where wages were relatively high; the relatively large proportion of Black Americans in domestic service which depressed the average money wages of the 'native born'; and the (racist) assumption of the relatively superior skills of the foreign-born.[57]

International comparisons provide further evidence of the relatively high money wages in domestic service in the US. The two main destinations for Irish migrants were Britain and the US but the data suggests that wages were much higher in the States –

[56] Salmon noted two important caveats to this comparison: 'first, that nearly all the men classified as cooks are employed on the Pacific coast, where wages are relatively high; second, that forty percent of the men in domestic service do not receive board and lodging in addition to wages in money, while only two percent of women so employed, principally laundresses, do not receive board and lodging': *Domestic Service,* 92.
[57] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 89-97.

suggesting a reward from the long journey. As shown in Table 4, the average women's wage in domestic service in the US was $3.23 in 1889/1890 which, according to Salmon, equated to an annual wage of $167.96. Conversely, according to the evidence of Miss Collet's report on the money wages of domestic servants in the UK, the average annual wage was £15.18s (£15.75) in 1891; and according to Charles Booth, the average women's annual money wage in domestic service in London in 1894 was £9.1s (£9.04) for 'servants of the lower grade' and £18.12s (£18.5) for servants in 'middle and upper-class families.'[58] Adjusting both the Collet and Booth data at prevailing market exchange rates (£1 = $4.86) shows that the Collet estimate was equivalent to $76.55 and the London wages from Booth were equivalent to $43.95 for 'servants of the lower grade' and $89.92 for servants in 'middle and upper-class families' - all the British estimates are significantly below the US average. The market exchange rates may not reflect differences in prices, particularly of non-traded good and services. Jeffrey Williamson estimated that the purchasing power parity (PPP) of the pound sterling was equivalent to $6.48 in 1909 reflecting relative higher prices in the US, especially rent.[59] If the Collet and Booth data are adjusted using this PPP exchange rate, the Collet average wage was equivalent to $101.59 and the Booth London wages would be equivalent to $58.59 for 'servants of the lower grade' and $119.99 for servants in 'middle and upper-class families' – still significantly below the average in the US.

If US wages pulled immigrants to the US, did Irish wages push them to leave? The data on service wages in Ireland is less extensive and is not completely comparable with the data for the rest of the UK or the US. Collet's data for the UK does, however, provide

[58] *Parliamentary Papers* (1899), Cd. 9346, Wages of domestic servants. Board of Trade (Labour Department). Report by Miss Collet, on the money wages of indoor domestic servants, 7; Charles Booth, *Labour and Life of the People Vol. VIII: Population Classified by Trades* (London, 1889), 217; 222.

[59] Jeffrey Williamson, 'The Evolution of Global Labor Markets since 1830: Background Evidence and Hypotheses', *Explorations in Economic History*, 32/2 (1995), 184.

estimates that would result if servants were distributed in the different classes of households, in the same proportions as in London, to help comparisons across different locations in Britain and Ireland. This provides average annual estimates of £15.1 for Belfast, £14.2 for Dublin and £12.3 for Cork and Limerick.[60] At prevailing market exchange rates, these were equivalent to $73.39 for Belfast, $69.0 for Dublin and $59.8 for Cork and Limerick. Furthermore, if the PPP exchange rate (one pound sterling equivalent to $6.48) is applied, then the wages were equivalent to $97.8 for Belfast, $92.0 for Dublin and $79.7 for Cork and Limerick; again, considerably less than average money wages in the United States. The differences in relative wages may help to explain why New York was an attractive place for many Irish women to move to.

Two additional factors should also be considered when evaluating the employment conditions of domestic service: payments in kind in terms of lodging and board; and the stability and regularity of employment. Salmon stated that domestic work 'entails no personal expenditure', 'no expense for laundry work', 'no investment of capital is necessary', and we can add to the salary 'board and lodging, fuel and light', which would amount to around $250 annually. Thus, by 1890, a servant's annual effective earnings could reach $420 and she could save $150 annually. To put this into comparative perspective, the average annual salaries of women teachers (whom were considered at the higher end of women's occupational hierarchy) in sixteen US cities was $545. Salmon calculated that one should, however, deduct from this gross salary $260 for board and lodging and $25 for laundry expenses, leaving $260. Out of that cash balance, however, must come other 'necessary expenses, as the outfit for work… travelling expenses, car fares, society fees., and a large

[60] *Parl. Pap.* (1899), Cd. 9346, 10.

item for clothing.' Salmon also argued that from this should be 'deducted the interest on the capital invested in securing the education demanded in preparation for the work. If all of these items are considered, and the greater social demands entailed by the position, it seems possible for the average domestic employee to save at least as much money as the average teacher in the city schools.'[61] This is notable as teacher and domestic servant were on opposite ends of the occupational hierarchy for women.[62] Moreover, Salmon was not able to compare the earnings of teachers and domestic servants in the same city, due to a lack of consistent records of teachers' salaries in the late 1880s. Other sources, however, remedy this deficiency. A roll call of teachers for the Union Free School in East New York, Brooklyn, for the years 1883-84 shows that a typical district schoolteacher's annual salary in inner-city New York ranged from $350 for a female primary teacher to $600 for the most senior grammar school female teacher. A male German teacher at the same school, meanwhile, received an annual salary of $1000. Interestingly, the following year's report showed that the salaries of female intermediate-level teachers declined from $425-450 to $400-425.[63] Taking these latter figures and using Salmon's estimates of board, lodgings and laundry would reduce the range of the effective net salary for intermediate teachers from $140-165 to $115-140 – considerably below the average wage of domestic servants ($168).

Records of school board meetings in New York City are filled with salary disputes amongst the teaching staff, whose requests for pay rises invariably were overruled by official governing bodies. Regulation did not always work in favour of the female labour force. Service work, in contrast to the experiences of teachers engaged in disputes with school boards and the municipal authorities, was built upon inter-personal relationships. An

[61] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* 98-101.
[62] Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work*, 128-139.
[63] Roll of Teachers in Union Free School District No.2, 1883-1884, NYCMA, REC-007-C.

individual servant worker, if particularly prudent, *might* have been able to use this lack of regulation to her own advantage, negotiating better working conditions and pay rises from her individual employer.

Further comparisons can be made with other forms of women's work. As shown in Table 31, women who worked in wool manufacturing earned an average of $1.00 a day. If they worked a full week this would equate to $6.00 a week.[64] Although this was greater than the average weekly domestic servant money wage of $3.23, it was below the effective wage (including board, lodgings and laundry) of $8.00 per week. Moreover, servants were more likely to be found consistently in employment compared with workers in other industries. An unemployment report by the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1885 stated that of the total number of women in the state engaged in remunerative occupation at that time, 30 percent were unemployed. However, only 7 percent of servants in families and 4 percent of housekeepers were out of work compared with 27 percent of seamstresses and milliners, 33 percent of tailoresses, 44 percent of cotton mill operatives, 45 percent of woollen mill operatives, and half of all trained teachers. Salmon argued that while 'the demand for domestic service varies in the different states, but the condition of the unemployed in this occupation in Massachusetts may perhaps be considered fairly typical of that in other localities.'[65] The 1916 Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States indicates little improvement in many New York women's working conditions some

[64] Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, 'How Long was the Workday in 1880?', *Journal of Economic History*, 52/1 (1992) , 29-160: According to Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman the average hours worked was 10 a day; and according to Michael Huberman and Frank Lewis, the average weekly hours worked in the USA was 62 in 1870 and 57.2 in 1900. See: Atack and Bateman, How Long was the Workday in 1880?', *Journal of Economic History*, 52/1 (1992) , 29-160; Huberman and Lewis, *Bend it like Beckham: Hours and Wages across Forty-Eight Countries in 1900*. No. 1229. Queen's Economics Department Working Paper (2007).

[65] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* 104-105.

thirty years after Salmon's original report. An account of waitresses – an occupation just above service in Kessler-Harris's occupational hierarchy – in New York reported:

> The average age of the waitress living at home was 25.9 years, average experience 4.4 years and average weekly earnings $5.54; for the adrift waitresses the average age was 26.9 years, average experience 4.2 years, and average earnings $5.71… Sixty-nine percent of those living at home turned in all their wages and 20.3 percent of those adrift contributed an average of $2.09 weekly to needy relatives. Among the women interviewed the impression seemed to be that the work of a waitress was hard and heavy and that the worker was exposed to unpleasant advances from men.[66]

The Report indicates another reason why Irish women might turn to domestic service. if they could work in a private home they could – hopefully – work somewhere safe.

Savings and Remittances

The relatively high wages of domestics combined with the provision of board and lodgings allowed many to save a large share of their income – much of which was remitted home to Ireland. Data from New York's Emigrant Saving Bank shows that more than half of women who declared an occupation were working as domestic servants.[67] Tyler Abinder's analysis of a sample of 900 of the bank's customers, suggests the savings of those employed as a domestics was approximately $200 between 1850 and 1858, equivalent to $5,300 in 2012 prices.[68] A subsequent analysis, which used a large sample of Emigrant Bank's customers that was 'fairly representative of the city's Irish population', shows that domestics had an average high balance of $96 and a median high balance of $194.[69] Comparisons by migrant group, as shown in Table 33, indicate that the average peak balance of Irish servants was higher than that of German-born servants but was lower than those that were native born.

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[66] US. Bureau of Labor Statistics. No. 175. 1916, 224-225.

[67] Tyler Anbinder, 'Moving beyond "Rags to Riches": New York's Irish Famine Immigrants and their Surprising Savings Accounts', *Journal of American History,* 99/3 (2012), 754, Figure 3.

[68] Anbinder, 'Moving beyond "Rags to Riches"', 757.

[69] Tyler Anbinder, Cormac Ó Gráda, and Simone Wegge, 'Networks and Opportunities: A Digital History of Ireland's Great Famine Refugees in New York', *American Historical Review*, 124/5 (2019), 1614, Table 3. See Table 32.

Anbinder has attributed women's ability to save to their service work, 'thrifty' character and marital status, arguing that arriving 'single in New York was not an impediment to wealth accumulation' for the female famine emigrants. [70] The implication here is that other female emigrants might ordinarily require a male breadwinner to acquire wealth.

Table 32. Highest Bank Balances Achieved by Female Irish Famine Immigrants, by Occupational Category at Time Opening Bank Account (New York 1850-1858)

Occupation	Average High Balance ($)	Median High Balance ($)	Most Common Jobs in Category
Business owners	230	422	Boardinghouse keeper, grocer
Nurses	99	170	Hospital nurse, private nurse
Petty entrepreneurs	100	239	Fruit peddler
Servants	96	194	Domestic, cook
Laundresses	116	177	"Washer," "ironer"
Needle trades	94	218	Seamstress, dressmaker

Source: Anbinder, Ó Gráda, and Wegge. 'Networks and Opportunities', 1614.

Table 33. Comparison of Highest Bank Balances Achieved by the 'Native-Born' and Major Immigrant Groups, by Occupational Category (New York 1850-1858)

Occupation	Irish Median High Balance ($)	German Median High Balance ($)	Native-Born Median High Balance ($)
Business owners	389	414	500
Lower-status white-collar workers	207	125	243
Male petty entrepreneurs	251	112	305
Skilled tradesmen	139	150	306
Unskilled workers	163	113	373
Female servants	96	62	200
Female needle trades	94	103	204

Source: Anbinder, Ó Gráda, and Wegge. 'Networks and Opportunities', 1614.

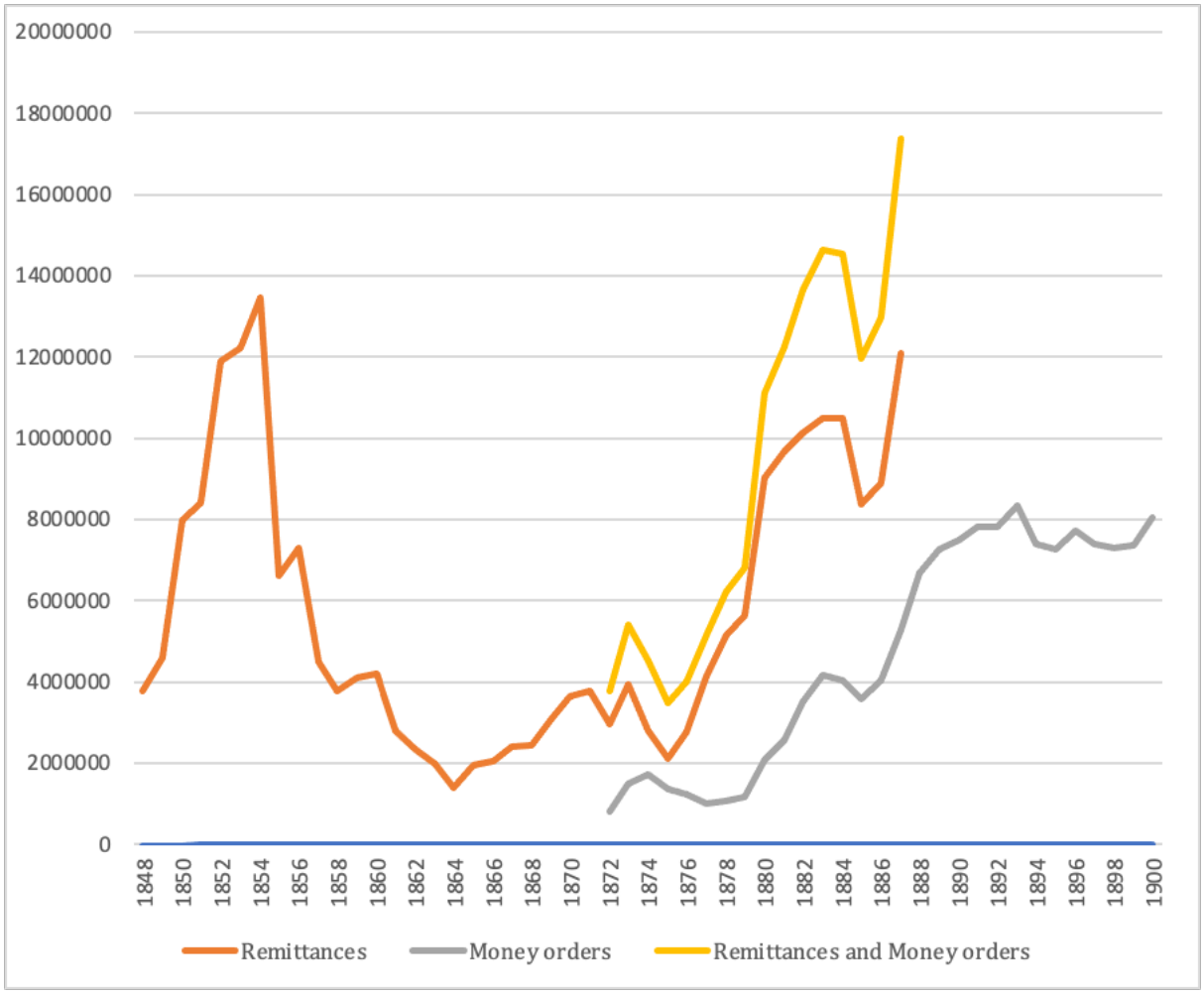
[70] Anbinder, 'Moving beyond "Rags to Riches"', 757.

Bank balances are only one indicator of savings behaviour. A balance is a stock indicator which will be determined by the flow of monies in and out of a bank account. Many Irish women did not accumulate savings to finance their own future expenditures but to send remittances home to Ireland to fulfil their familial expectations and responsibilities. Some women went to extremes to do so. The *Ballymena Observer* recorded the 'remarkable self-sacrificing conduct' of Ann Jane McCord, a servant girl who in 1860 paid off the entirety of her father's debt. Her father's death in 1853 had left his family 'without a shilling for themselves or any means for the liquidation of these debts.' McCord had emigrated as she was 'from the outset determined to pay every farthing of her dead father's liabilities, she hoarded the small earnings of her industry with the utmost care; and after six years of incessant toil, her noble aspirations were crowned with success.' McCord was able to send over £34.3s.3d. to cover her father's debts, while £5.11s.9d., was sent to her sister, Margaret Wilson.[71]

The overall picture of remittances is fuzzy because of lack of comprehensive and consistent data. Some insights, however, can be drawn from Figure 15 which shows remittance data from the emigration commissioners (1848 -1872) and American post money orders (1872-1900). Both series are adjusted for inflation. The overall picture shows a large increase in remittances during the famine followed by a decline in the 1850s and 1860s associated with depressed US economic activity, as well as better conditions in Ireland for those who had survived. From the 1870s there was rapid and sustained increase in remittances.

[71] 'General City News', *NYT* (20 Jul. 1860), 8.

Figure 15. Remittances and Money Orders from USA to the UK, 1848-1900 (1870 constant dollars)



Source: Nominal data from Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, Tables 18 and 19 adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics from: https://www.bls.gov/cpi/#tables and https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator/consumer-price-index-1800-.

The remittances sent home helped to fund continued emigration, but they were also important to support the basic needs of many of those in Ireland such as the payment of rent. American money, Arnold Schrier argued, at the very minimum 'made life in Ireland tolerable for a great proportion of the peasantry.'[72] Letters sent from servants to their parents reveal the

[72] Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, 1850-1900 (PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 1956), 123.

importance they placed on providing for their families. Margaret Nagle was semi-literate and dictated her letters to a professional letter-writer in New York City, and kept the drafts, while the finished versions were sent onto her family in Cork. In March 1867 Margaret wrote home that she had 'been waiting before writing again to see if I could not make up enough money to send you another present.' Margaret declared she could not 'wait any longer, and write to let you know that I am well and still getting along well. I have still a good place and am so far very well pleased that I came over here, as I am sure I can make a good living and besides send you a little p[re]sent [something illegible] once in a while.'[73] For Margaret, at least, the importance of sending money home appears to reflect both obligation and love and desire to help her family.

Irish domestics also saved and donated money to political causes and many showed their support for the Irish nationalist movement. In 1865, the Fenian Sisterhood, the women's auxiliary of the Fenian Brotherhood, sent Ellen Mahoney to raise money in New York.[74] Mahoney addressed only 'intelligent Irish ladies' in her fundraising efforts, in response to which the *NYT* declared that 'Now we all know what "intelligent Irish ladies" means; it means Bridget. "Only this, and nothing more."' The *NYT* repudiated the Sisterhood for targeting working-class servant women who had 'already sent half, perhaps three-quarters, of her scanty earnings to the never-to-be-forgotten circle in the dear old home, and become thereby a proverb of faithfulness throughout the world.'[75] In this iteration of the Bridget stereotype, Irish immigrant women were presented as an easy target for Irish nationalists. Tara McCarthy, however, has argued that Irish women were enthusiastic in their support for

[73] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 26 Mar. 1867, TLRW, AIA.077.
[74] Tara McCarthy, *Respectability and Reform: Irish American Women's Activism, 1880-1920* (Syracuse NY, 2018), 67-68.
[75] 'The Confidence Woman in the Kitchen Area', *NYT* (17 Dec. 1865), 4.

the Fenian movement: they not only donated money to the cause, but were visible at public meetings, 'laying a base of support for Irish nationalism in the 1860s.'[76] Some 20 years later, the Warden of the Alms House sent a check for $51.25 to the Irish Relief Fund in February 1880, for those suffering from famine hardship in the west, on behalf of a number of the institution's – low-waged – employees. Half of the donors were women, some of whom such as Mary Mulligan donated up to $5.00. In the note alongside the check the Warden stated, 'I have the honor to add that this appeal was most cheerfully and generously responded to, on the part of my employees.'[77]

This enthusiasm continued into the twentieth century. Robin Adams' forthcoming work shows that almost half of the Manhattan subscribers to the bond drive to raise money for the national *Irish Press* newspaper between 1919 and 1921 were women.[78] Of those female subscribers identified, 40 percent were domestic servants working for a private family, and over one-quarter were under 35 years old. The median subscription of these domestic servants, $10, was in line with the sample as a whole, but there were a surprising number of high subscriptions. Six of the domestic servants identified subscribed $100, while another six subscribed $50. Five of the six $100 subscribers were under 35 years old. As Adams states, 'the political agency of the female subscribers to the bond drive must not be overlooked.'[79]

[76] McCarthy, *Respectability and Reform*, 67-68.
[77] 'Subscription to Irish Relief Fund', 16 Feb. 1880, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 308.
[78] Robin Adams, *Shadow of a Taxman: Who Funded the Irish Revolution?* (Oxford, forthcoming 2022), 223.
[79] Adams, *Shadow of a Taxman*, 226-227.

Catholicism and Community

Irish women's Catholicism played an essential role in their experience in service abroad. In the eyes of the church, service was suitably feminine domestic labour, undertaken out of sight. By aiding women find service work, religious institutions such as the Mission, were able to ensure Irish women remained enmeshed in Catholicism even in the hustle and bustle of the Protestant and urban north-east of the US. Indeed, if Irish women remained in these areas, Catholic clergymen and women could keep a literal eye on their young domestics. The record-keepers of the Mission estimated that approximately 75,000 Irish women had been assisted in gaining accommodation and/or employment by 1903. By the 1930s, this had reached 170,000 including securing a position in service for 30,000 women.[80] Many of these women were found work in other Catholic institutions abroad. The Mission's ledger books recorded, for example, that on arrival at Watson House in August 1898, Mary Mulcahy (aged 19 from Kerry) was provided with $10 to pay for her travel to her new employer, an outpost of the Society of Mary, where she would work as a servant for the women religious. Ellen Shanahan, aged 32, arrived in May 1898 to report to the 'St John's O. Asylum' Brooklyn, to work as a domestic for the Catholic religious order in their orphanages and schools. Meanwhile, the Reverend Mother of the Bernard Convent of Mercy, Cincinnati, Ohio, asked the Mission to 'direct any girls leaving for Cincinnati' to 419 W. 4th Street, where the 'Sisters will keep them and give them temporary employment', likely in service roles.[81] A similar scheme to the Missions was also established in Boston in the early twentieth century, under the sponsorship of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Charitable Irish Society of Boston.

[80] 'The Work of the Mission, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York Digital Collections http://omeka.archnyarchives.org/exhibits/show/missiongirls/work (January 2021). The information does not differentiate between employment and accommodation

[81] Mission ledger books .

In general, discussions of Irish domestics and their relationship with their employer assumed that they worked in American Protestant homes. Lynch-Brennan has argued that in the 'urban Northeast, in the homes of (generally) Protestant Americans, Bridget and her American mistress (as the female employer was known) faced each other across a gulf of class, cultural, ethnic, and religious differences.'[82] Representatives of the Irish Catholic church abroad used various means to encourage Irish servant women to retain their religion in the face of American Protestantism. Father George Deshon's *Guide for Catholic Young Women, Especially for Those Who Earn Their Own Living*, published in 1868, directly addressed servant girls, providing them with instructions on how to effectively resist mistresses who tried to force their servants to read the Protestant version of the Bible.[83] The *Guide* was so popular it went through at least 31 editions.

The church also acted as a go-between, ensuring that Irish Catholic servant women went to Irish Catholic employers. Even as early as 1858, Mary Brown arrived in New York without secured employment and accommodation, but she informed her friends back home that it only took six days before she 'got a place' with an Irish family that she 'likes very well.'[84] By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Mission ensured that young Irish domestics could earn their keep while living in in Catholic 'homes' in the city, rather than in digs or other such suspicious circumstances. Acting in effect as an employment agency, the Mission required prospective employers of Irish servant women submit written references to the Mission from their Catholic priest to ensure that Irish women were sent to situations

[82] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 60.
[83] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget,* 138
[84] Letter from Mary Brown, 11 Mar,1858.

deemed suitable for young Catholic women.[85] This was in stark contrast to the experience of Irish servants in Ireland and Britain, where prospective *employees* were normally required to submit references to their potential employers.[86] The hiring process was mutually beneficial for both the young Irish employee and her Irish employer; providing the former with a degree of job security on arrival in a new city; and the latter with the veil of white American middle-class respectability.

Despite complimenting her Irish mistress in 1858, Mary had moved into a new home with new employment working as a servant at 105 West 13th Street, by July 1859. Writing to her family in County Wexford, Mary emphatically pointed out the kindness of the American-born couple who employed her.[87] Indeed, she planned to remain there as the family were more prosperous. Whenever her mistress 'goes in the country she always brings me a present.'[88] Mary's occupational trajectory is indicative of the mobility of Irish servant women in the city, who often moved from job to job. The high demand for their labour meant that Mary and her fellow country women had some level of individual autonomy, and could pick and choose their employer and place of work, if not their occupation. It also implies that as servants, Irish migrant women did not always remain within the boundaries (or confines) of their diasporic community. Their own material needs were just as, if not more, important.

[85] The Irish Mission at Watson House'.
[86] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 100.
[87] We do not, however, know the family's religion.
[88] Mary Brown, 27 Jul.1859, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

An Arduous Day's Work

The relatively large number of young Irish women working in service work did not suggest that the work was enjoyable or easy. The work was available and relatively well paid; but it was physically arduous, the hours were long, gratitude was often lacking and workers were stigmatised. It is, moreover, important to remember that service work not only referred to working in private households, but encompassed a variety of living and working conditions, including employment in institutions and lower-middle class households. One domestic explained to Salmon the relentless nature of general service, how 'most women like to follow one particular branch of industry, such as cooking, or chamber work, or laundry work, because it enables one to be thorough and experienced; but when these are combined, as a general thing the work is hard and never done.'[89]Another described how in 'a family of five or six, they expect the "maid" to do the work of the whole house, from attic to cellar, including the chopping of wood, and taking care of the furnace', and that the 'most a servant gets in Flatbush is plenty of hard work.'[90] Salmon concluded that in 'no other occupation involving the same amount of intelligent work do the results seem so literally ephemeral.' Specialisation, meanwhile, was rare, with 'little or no opportunity for promotion in the service', with one domestic declaring that "Once a cook, always a cook."'[91] Perhaps moving from household to household, such as in the case of Mary Brown, allowed some Irish women to introduce some variety into a working life normally characterised by being stuck in one place and doing the same series of relentless chores, day in and day out.

[89] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 143.
[90] Phillips-Cunningham, 'Slaving Irish "Ladies"', 191.
[91] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 141-142.

Domestic work could often be dangerous as well as laborious, particularly when working in hotels, hospitals, or institutions. Some women worked in institutions in exchange for their keep, with devastating consequences, such as in the case of Mary Smith the patient-servant in New York Women's Hospital. [92] Deirdre Cooper Owens has shown that in mid- to late-nineteenth century American gynaecological studies 'elite, native-born white women were fragile, normal women. Irish and Black women, in contrast, were described as physically stronger, more sexual and suitable for gynaecological experiments and (mis)treated accordingly. Mary Smith had over thirty gynaecological surgeries during her stay, all conducted without general anaesthetic.[93]

The Manhattan Hotel also consistently employed – and housed – young Irish women at the turn of the twentieth century, including sisters Nora and Annie Byrnes from Limerick, and their friend Maria Kelly. The Kerry-born O'Connor sisters also worked in the Manhattan.[94] Their social backgrounds suggests that the sisters were unlikely to be guests at what was a fashionable hotel, with five electric elevators, a local telephone, as well as mail service on every floor The second floor held the 'elaborately and richly decorated' foyer, while the thirteenth floor was home to the Transportation Club, which included a library, billiard room, dining room and reception. The *NYT* proclaimed that 'Life can be spent within its walls without missing very much of the fruits of civilization.'[95] Valets were in abundance, and clothes would be cleaned and pressed on the same floor as the guest's room.

[92] Mission ledger books; Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage,* 96.
[93] Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*, 96-106.
[94] Mission ledger books.
[95] 'Hotel Manhattan Opened', *NYT* (15 Oct. 1896), 2.

If hotels were a major employer of Irish women, they were also an emblem of the city's innovative forward-thinking hospitality trade. Yet its development was not without its occupational hazards. A fire swept the Fifth Avenue Hotel in 1872, beginning in the servants' quarters which were occupied by the 500 hotel employees. The fire resulted in the death of at least twenty-two employees, mainly women employed in the scrubbing department. Of the six women able to be identified, four were Irish-born, including: a single scrub woman, Marry Ann Fagan aged 25; Mary McCabe aged 25, who had only been employed at the New York hotel for two months, while her husband remained in Ireland; Lizzie Moran, a single scrub woman aged 20, who had been in the city for five years, and identified by her 'peculiarly formed feet.' The last one identified was Honora Ward, who had only been in America for three weeks. She was 22 years old when she died.[96] The *New York Tribune* described the state of around 50 women surviving servants, noting that they 'had lost their effects, and many of them considerable sums of money, their hard-earned savings for years.' The women were 'the picture of misery' although all processing the trauma in different ways, with 'some sitting upon the floor, some reclining upon beds, some nervously walking about, and some in a hysterical condition…. Others viewed their narrow escape and their losses with calm fortitude.'[97] The *Chicago Tribune*, however, was less charitable towards the domestic staff. Leaning into anti-Irish tropes the writers in Chicago suggested that the women themselves might have been to blame, as the servants had been paid off the day before thus, 'possibly, drunkenness was at the bottom of the calamity' and it 'was with the greatest difficulty that the domestics were awakened.'[98]

[96] 'The Last Horror: Burning of a Portion of the Fifth Avenue Hotel', *Chicago Daily Tribune* (12 Dec. 1872), 1.
[97] 'A Horrible Fire: The Fifth Avenue Hotel in Flames', *New York Tribune* (11 Dec. 1872), 1.
[98] 'The Last Horror.'

The rhetoric towards Irish women was inconsistent. In the same year as the fire, the *Chicago Tribune* discussed the 'merits' of Irish domestics. By working within the home, rather than in a more transgressively public institution like a hotel, an Irish woman rightfully remained in the private sphere and would learn how to be a proper housewife. Even better if the household was white American Protestant: she could then go on to disseminate her learnings to her own Irish Catholic household, teaching them how to be true American citizens.

> Bridget makes a good servant when thoroughly trained, equally valuable in all departments of housework. She has the home feeling strong within her, and is capable of earnest attachment to members of the household in which she is placed. This is a decided merit, and atones for many little sins.[99]

Psychic Costs of Migration

The monotony of service life was often compounded by homesickness and loneliness. This was the downside of the decision to migrate. Historians have suggested that in order to 'properly appreciate the situation of Irish domestics, one must understand that most of them were young… For transplanted young Irish girls, domestic service could have been a lonely experience, at least initially.'[100] The provision of board and lodging do not, as Salmon pointed out, 'constitute a home and the domestic can never be part of the family whose external life she shares.'[101] Like the tenement building they avoided, accommodation was often cramped, small and sparse:

> A garret at the top of the house, uncarpeted, half furnished, any bed, any bed-clothes; nothing wholesome or happy in it; nothing calculated to make a girl feel that she has a retreat…We say to ourselves that, bad as it is, it is infinitely better than anything she ever had before; but she has already seen the difference between our own rooms and that. And can we picture to ourselves

[99] 'Domestics: Absolutely Necessary to Successful Housekeeping', *Chicago Daily Tribune* (20 Oct. 1872), 7. Spofford also encouraged her readership to give their Irish servant girls the space to become 'a desirable handmaiden of our house, fit to become a helpful and economical wife to the poor workman who marries her.' See: *The Servant Girl Question,* 42.

[100] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 112.

[101] Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 151.

> anything more lonesome and desolate than a girl might feel who, under such circumstances wake from an unhappy dream in the middle of her first night in a strange house, in such a room as that.[102]

The material conditions of an Irish servant girl's accommodation, shunted into a small corner of (another) family's home, were a reminder that she was part of, but separate from, the rest of the household. It also questions the value of the in-kind wages. One general servant sobbed that 'Ladies wonder how their girls can complain of loneliness in a house full of people but oh! It is the worst kind of loneliness- their share is but the work of the house, they do not share in the pleasures and delights of a home. One must remember that there is a difference between a *house,* a place of shelter, and a *home,* a place where all your affections are centred.'[103] Emigrant letters reveal the corrosive impact of loneliness on a young woman's wellbeing. Cathy Green, based in Brooklyn wrote to her mother in County Kilkenny in 1884:

> What on earth is the matter with you all, that none of ye would think of writing to me. The fact is that I am heart sick fretting. I cannot sleep the night and if I chance to sleep I wake up with the most frightful dreams. To think it's now going, and gone into the third month since you wrote to me I feel as if I'm dead to the world. I'm left the place I was employed…. I was out of place all summer and don't know how long. This is a world of troubles.[104]

Green's loneliness had created a 'world of troubles' - she was anxious about away from her family back home, and this was only further compounded by her anger for her family for not writing to her. Green's situation – or lack thereof – also serves as a reminder that not all young Irish women were able to secure steady employment in service. In 1868, both Alice McDonald and her father were out of work. McDonald's father was a former coachman, who had been forced to sell his stable, horses and coaches due to the high rents in

[102] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, 39.
[103] Salmon, *Domestic Service,* 151.
[104] Cathy Green, 1 Aug. 1884, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

New York. McDonald wrote to her mother back in Ireland that 'I wish I never came to New York it is hell upon earth I wish I was home once more I am dreaming all the time of home.'[105]

These letters reveal the complexities of transnational relationships, and how young women navigated their overlapping - yet sometimes contradictory - social worlds: their family and community they left behind, the Irish community abroad in New York, and wider New York society. Familial duty was often twinned with deep affection and love, a point that is sometimes missed or obscured in economic histories. Green penned a post-script on her letter: 'with love to one & all for God sake write soon. Your lonely daughter Cathy.'[106] She was not alone in worrying for her mother and the wellbeing of her family. When Margaret Nagle's family ties in New York were fraying, her ties with those in Ireland remained strong.[107] The emigrant letters reveal the anxieties that emigration wrought on those remaining in Ireland. John Nagle wrote to his daughter that he and his wife were:

> Very uneasy at not hearing from you for so long a time and you may be sure we were most contented when we at least heard from you. Margaret's mother very much rejoiced at your letter and She Says that when you will have a house of your own yet that she will see you…Your mother always Said that you were doing something good if You were in health and she was not very well herself as she was fretting about you… Your poor Mother also, with the greatest anxiety, thinks a week a month until she hears from you.[108]

In a later letter, John Nagle thanked Margaret 'for the nice ribbon you sent me which will bring you to my memory every time I shall look at it during my lifetime, your brother Johnny kissed it several times when he saw it.'[109] Although leaving Ireland was common in

[105] Alice McDonald, 3 Feb.1868, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[106] Cathy Green.
[107] See Chapter Three.
[108] John Nagle to Margaret Nagle, 2 Dec, 1866, TLRW, AIA.077.
[109] John Nagle to Margaret Nagle, 17 Sept. 1867 TLRW, AIA.077.

the nineteenth century, frequency and reoccurrence did not diminish the emotional repercussions on individuals and their families.

The vastness of the Irish NY community was crucial for young Irish women's ability to continue to labour in such isolating circumstances. Like other European immigrant women who sought comfort in working in groups in factories, or by undertaking homework surrounded by relatives, Irish domestics created their own network within and beyond the workplace. Irish women in larger houses sought comfort and friendship with their colleagues and Spofford's manual suggests that domestics often shared stories and swapped tips, much to their employers' chagrin: 'Nor is the trouble confined to the region above stairs Bridget and Nora in their turn discuss the situation, gossip over the personalities in the house, and establish conspiracies between themselves.'[110] This gossip often spilled onto the New York streets and into the private homes of friends and relatives:

> Almost every night of their lives, work being over, they resort to one house or another of their friends and make good cheer there… gossiping and dancing, sympathizing and chirruping with each other, and getting the little drop of honey out of the present…. That meeting from house to house is something that strengthens the bond between them, and maintains their close communion. It is a simple place of meeting- one room in something little better than a hole, a bed in this corner, a cooking stove in that- yet doubtless the pleasure of it is past telling.[111]

The social lives of Irish domestics were also constructed in a third place: neither home or work but public, social and religious realms such as churches, cafes, parks, and public libraries.[112] Dance halls, parks and above all the church were of particular importance for young women.[113] Many of those in service tried to obtain jobs that were near local Catholic

[110] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*,16.
[111] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, 56-59.
[112] Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You Through the Day* (New York, 1989).
[113] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget*, 121.

churches, so that they could attend mass but also to meet others. Alongside his friends and family in the City, another Irish migrant John Nolan attended mass every morning at 5 o'clock, before starting his work in a hotel. Crucially for John, a Catholic church was 'about two minutes' walk from both his boarding house and his hotel of employment.[114] As Pat Burdan wrote of New York, the 'people here have as good accommodation for the exercise of religion as at home- perhaps more.'[115] Indeed, when wealthy households took their leave from the city to summer in Loudonville, New York State, they apparently had difficulty in retaining their servants as they could not easily attend mass nearby.[116]

Spofford noted that beyond the home Irish servants 'have but one other place of general congregation, indeed, precious and peculiar to them, where they may come and feel as if they clustered round a great common hearth, and that is the church step.'[117] Standing outside the church, before and after mass, a young woman could chat and catch up with the latest gossip, learn about other opportunities for work and accommodation, and take up her own space. This space was so important that some Irish domestics served notice if they were not permitted to attend church or if they were forbidden to socialise during their (short amount of) time off.[118] They could get away with doing so because they were in such demand.

The link between the willingness to do service work and the reason they stayed in New York was the local Irish Catholic community, that raised their spirits on their days off. Mary Brown's letters home reveal that her social life in New York was a kaleidoscope of

[114] John Nolan, 9 Dec. 1882, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[115] Pat Burdan, 5 Sept. 1884, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[116] Lynch-Brennan, *Irish Bridget,* 139.
[117] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, 56-59.
[118] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 93.

friends (old and new), family members, and romantic partners. She often saw her friends, who had 'all been very kind to me.' Brown wrote to her sister with news of others from their hometown who had also travelled abroad; including Patrick Cullen, whom she saw 'very often… he is always talking of his mother and sisters, tell his mother she may soon expect a letter from him.' Brown also noted that their aunt had married recently, and was 'doing very well.' While not married herself, Brown spoke of the 'good many' beaux she had, how New York was good for health and particularly her appearance, stating the city 'agrees very well with me… if I was at home the boys would be all around me.'[119] John Nolan's letters to his parents reveal his close affectionate relationship with his sister, Sarah, who constantly forgot to send her picture to their parents. The one time she was ready to send the picture, she was affectionately teased by her brother and sister-in-law: 'in fact she had it direct and all ready to Post and she had the name written over in one corner of the envelope and Kate and me began laughing at it and she tore it up – we made her so mad, but she will send it all right.'[120]

The letters were more than mere correspondence, they were channels of intimacy and means of proximity for Irish women living far from home. Mary Brown's letters were filled with news and gossip of friends and neighbours – both in New York and in Ireland. She was very keen to be remembered back in Ireland, and to hear how those left behind were getting on. Brown even asked for her sister's advice on how to respond to their mutual émigré friend: he has left New York to work in the country for the season, yet he 'expects to be back in sept and says he must have me. Would you advise me.'[121] The letter and gifts from America had importance far beyond monetary value. They enabled Irish women to continue their

[119] Mary Brown, 11 Mar.
[120] John Nolan, 9 Dec.
[121] Mary Brown, 27 Jul. 1859.

connection to their homeland, while they forged a new life. They were a means through which women could simultaneously fulfil, negotiate and temper familial obligations, personal ambition, and collective identity-formation, with those back home.

As migrants, young women had status within the family as an authority on the wider world and the migration experience. Acutely aware of the importance of their role, women purposefully and carefully selected the information to convey, and the words to use, knowing that their communications could have life-changing consequences for their readers. Mary Brown encouraged her sister to cross the Atlantic, exclaiming that she wanted 'to know if you would ever wish to come out to this country. I think that you might do well here.'[122] Like Brown, Margaret Nagle was emphatic in telling her family that 'when you want any information about anything wait to hear from me.' Nagle told her brother that if he wanted to come over, he must have some kind of schooling beforehand so that 'he can take some good kind of places instead of anything and everything as so many have to do.'[123] The letters sent home by sisters and daughters often contained essential information that informed the migration decision of others. Nagle was also desperate for him to wait until she had saved some more money, so 'perhaps I can have him come and live with me, instead of going to and being dependent upon relations who perhaps (wouldn't) care anything about him, only to get rid of him…. I don't think it good policy for children or old people to come over unless they have money or a plan.'[124] Her brother was not to 'come over depending upon relatives and luck and chance for a living.' The young women were concerned not just about the affordability of the passage, but also the physical capacity of their older relatives to cope with emigration Cathy conveyed her concerns to her mother, writing, 'I sometimes think you

[122] Mary Brown, 11 Mar.
[123] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, undated, TLRW, AIA.077.
[124] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 26 Mar. 1867, TLRW, AIA.077.

would come here and that health would fail and like almost all the Irish drop off one by one.'[125]

Margaret Nagle constantly juggled her desire to support her family with her ambition to make her own way in the United States. She was particularly concerned with keeping up with the latest trends in New York and hoped to save up enough to buy new dresses. But Nagle also wanted to save enough to send treats and presents to her younger siblings - whilst worrying that she may not be able to save enough for her parents. She wrote 'I am not able to lay by very much but will do the best I can.'[126] John Nagle wrote to Nagle to inform her that he forbade her younger sister Mary from piercing her ears but the arrival of a small parcel of earrings from America suggests that the sisters may have overruled their father.

While Nagle's letters often suggested a confident and assertive young woman, they also contained fragments of uncertainty. Her memories of home in Cork and the burden of family obligations weighed heavily on her. She wrote that she was concerned about her inability to send money, and sometimes appeared homesick, impatient for news: 'I am sure I can make a good living and besides send you a little p[re]sent…once in a while, and without the assistance of relatives either.' Her openness about her anxieties and obligations are in stark contrast with her male compatriot. John Nolan's (outward) nonchalance verged on irritation with his mother and father in Ireland, complaining 'I don't see what you need to be fretting about as long as you hear from us occasionally.'[127] Was Margaret Nagle actually more anxious than John Nolan, or did John feel unable to reveal his emotions? Gendered

[125] Cathy Green.
[126] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 18 Feb. 1867, TLRW, AIA.077.
[127] John Nolan to parents, 16 Dec. 1881, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

expectations permeated the letter writing of emigrants, and Irish daughters were expected to keep in contact with home. Nagle might have wanted to go out and socialise, and find romance, in the City - although if she were to marry, that might involve writing home for approval. One letter tentatively approached the question: 'What would you say to my getting married if I had a chum?'[128]

Many letters were filled with longing for, and the desire to return to, Ireland. Mary Brown states 'I like New York very well' but she would 'give anything to see my friends again' and does not 'like it as much as I do Ireland, I would give anything to see it again.'[129] Cathy, meanwhile, suggested that she only left Ireland out of necessity, lamenting 'there is no place like home if one could at all live there.'[130] John Nolan appeared much more blasé in his attitude to a potential (and temporary) sojourn back home: 'If everything goes along as I expect, I expect to run over home in September.'[131] Daughterly and sisterly duty, on the other hand, weighed heavily on Nolan's female compatriots. Their letters are filled with concerns about keeping in touch and crucially sending money home. Alice McDonald promises her mother that 'I hope I will see you all next fall… in my next letter you will get some money I will make you happy yet.'[132]

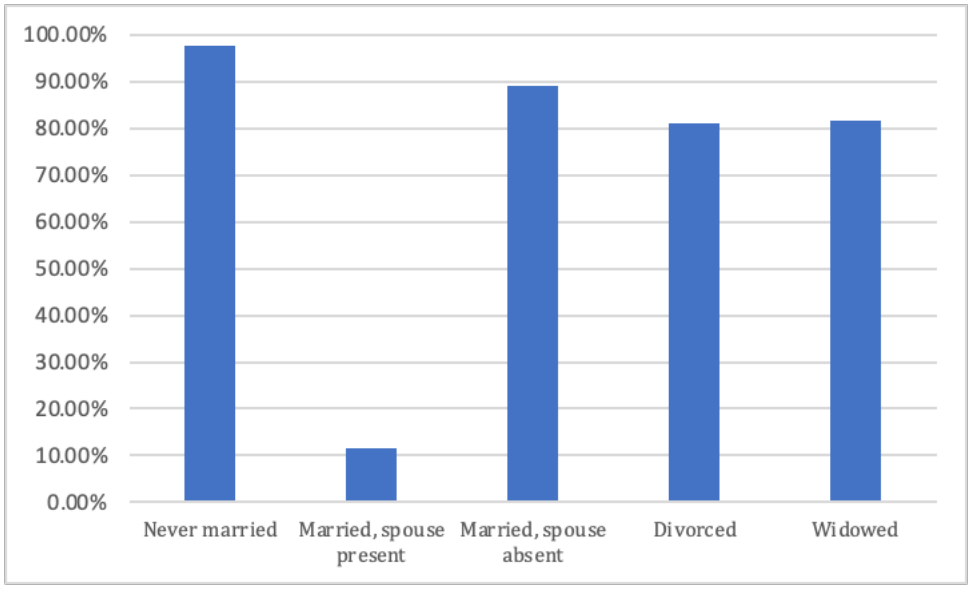
[128] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, undated.
[129] Mary Brown, 11 Mar.
[130] Cathy Green.
[131] John Nolan, 14 Jan. 1882, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[132] Alice McDonald.

Young Women and Precarity

Cathy Green and Alice McDonald's wanting circumstances serve as a reminder of the precarity of women's lives in late-nineteenth-century New York. Young Irish women had a relatively high propensity to be engaged in the formal labour market, with domestic service being the most popular occupation, but this was highly contingent on marital status and childcare responsibilities. As shown in Chapter Four (see Figure 7) the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of all single women in the USA who had never been married was 35 percent but fell to 5 percent for those who were married (spouse present). The LFPR of Irish women in the USA (73 percent) for those that were single and who had never been married was much higher compared with the all women group, but fell to 3 percent for those who were married (spouse present). As shown in Chapter Five (see Figure 12) the LFPR of all single women in the New York who had never been married (55 percent) was much higher than the national picture but fell to 4 percent for those who were married (spouse present). The LFPR of Irish women in the New York (77 percent) for those that were single and who had never been married was the highest (with Black American women) of all the comparator groups but fell to 4 percent for those who were married (spouse present). Further insights into the importance of the marital status of young Irish women are shown in Figures 16 and 17. As shown in Figure 16, which shows the LFPR for young (aged 15 to 29) Irish women by marital status, 98 percent of those who were never married were employed in the formal labour market compared with only 11 percent who were married (spouse present). Figure 16 also shows that the vast majority of young Irish women whose marriage was terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce,) were working in the formal labour market: 89 percent of those married (spouse absent); 82 percent of those widowed; and 81 percent of those divorced.

The data suggests that on marriage many Irish women were excluded from or left the formal labour market, whereas the end of a marriage forced them to seek paid work. There were, of course, exceptions. Marriage and children did not always go hand-in-hand. New York's Catholic order of the Sisters of the Divine Compassion was established in 1886 specifically to provide shelter for 'very young domestic servants who had been "seduced" by employers', and thrown out of their place of work (and therefore accommodation) on discovery of their pregnancy.[133]

Figure 16. Young Irish Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rates, by Marital Status (New York 1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

The importance of domestic service work for young Irish women disaggregated by marital status is shown in Figure 17. As discussed above, a high proportion of young Irish women worked in service and Figure 17 shows that 70 percent of those in the formal labour market who were never married worked in the sector. Moreover, high shares of young Irish

[133] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 224.

women of whose marriage was terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce,) were working in the service market: 66 percent of those married (spouse absent); 52 percent of those widowed; and 38 percent of those divorced. Service work was relatively less important for – or less available to – young Irish women who were married (spouse present) with 26 percent working in this occupation. Excluded from the employment they trained for, due to their childcare commitments and dependents, women turned to other, more haphazard, occupations. Other important occupations for the small share of married (spouse present) Irish women included milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses (19 percent) and laundresses (14 percent). These were occupations where work could be undertaken in the home. In particular, many milliners, dressmakers and seamstresses worked at home; some had learnt their trade in workshops with others being 'aspiring amateurs' who 'found support in the pages of advice manuals.'[134] According to Anbinder, 'the vast majority of women who sewed for a living did so because they had children to care for and thus could not work as domestics.' [135] Many women occupied a fragile position in the supply chain as they were employed in finishing parts of mass produced clothing pieces. Some were helped by the availability of the home sewing machine – if they could afford the investment.[136] Many laundresses also worked mostly in their own homes and neighbourhoods, alongside other women or with the help of their children.[137] It is likely that the children would have been their oldest daughters. New York was 'full of single men who could afford to pay someone to do their laundry', but many women were 'barely making out a living sewing collars or helms for

[134] Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Chicago IL, 1997), 135

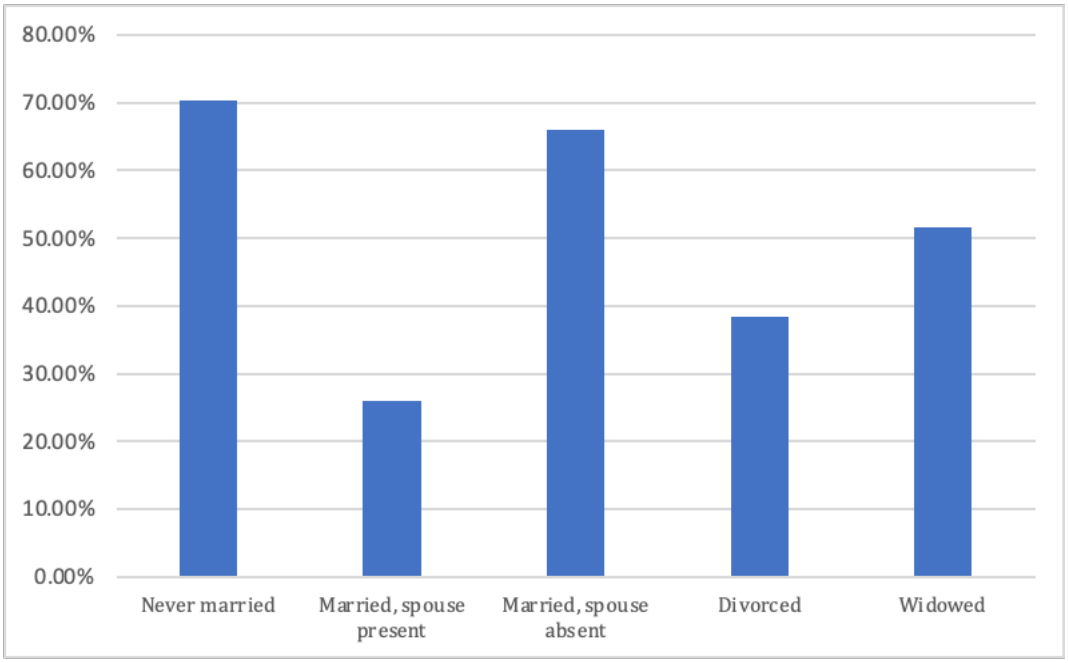
[135] Anbinder, *City of Dreams,* 168.

[136] Frederick Lewis Lewton, *The Servant in the House: A Brief History of the Sewing Machine* (Washington DC, 1930).

[137] 'Atlanta's Washerwomen Strike', American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, https://aflcio.org/about/history/labor-history-events/atlanta-washerwomen-strike, (June 2021).

a penny apiece, working eighteen – or twenty hours days yet earning only a few dollars a week.'[138]

Figure 17. Proportion of Young Irish Women Working in Service, by Marital Status (New York 1880) (% of those enumerated as occupied)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

What forms did this 'degradation' take? Diner has argued that the (Catholic) obsession with purity and legitimacy meant that Irish women rarely participated in the sex trade in both Ireland and the US, and men and women 'retained much of the sexual behaviour' – or lack thereof – they had 'exhibited in the homeland.'[139] There are, however, multiple accounts of Irish women working in the sex trade in nineteenth-century New York. William Sanger, the first resident physician of Blackwell's Island, conducted a survey of sex work in the city, in which 60 percent of his sample were foreign-born, half of whom were Irish and working in the 'lowest grade of establishment.'[140] Cooper Owens has previously

[138] Anbinder, *City of Dreams*, 168
[139] Diner, *Erin's Daughters,* 114.
[140] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 115.

suggested that the disproportionate number of Irish women imprisoned in New York was due to their sex work.[141] In their ongoing work on criminal Irish women in north America between 1838 and 1918, Elaine Farrell and Leanne McCormick argue that Irish women were the single biggest group of foreign sex workers in New York. Indeed, the numbers of Irish women imprisoned in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century New York, Boston and Toronto were 'so huge it was difficult to manage them.'[142] In a sample I have collected from the New York Alms House Admissions lists between 1881 and 1885, Irish women comprised 41 percent of *all* 2306 entries. The majority of these Irish women were admitted for destitution, 30 percent were confined for disorderly conduct, a catch-all phrase for behaving improperly in public, such as drunkenness and soliciting sex. While the average age at admission was 56 years old, the women's ages ranged from 20 to over 90 years old. Women under the age of 45 were more likely to be admitted for their disorderly conduct. [143]

Women's past experiences within Ireland were often referenced in explaining – if not excusing – the Irish women's recourse to deviancy abroad. Sanger directly attributed 'female depravity' and the number of Irish sex workers in New York to the 'lamentable manner in which the Irish have suffered' as a result of British legislation and neglect. The physician was ultimately frustrated with what he perceived as the 'useless efforts' amongst the Irish labouring poor to better themselves, and that New Yorkers must be taxed to aid Irish women, 'for their support in hospitals, Almshouses, prisons of women whose poverty compelled their

[141] Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage,* 91- 94.
[142] 'Bad Bridget: Podcast Reveals Irish Emigrants' Tale of Poverty and Prison', *Guardian* (14 Jan. 2021), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/bad-bridgets-podcast-reveals-irish-emigrants-tales-of-poverty-and-prison. (Jan 2021).
[143] Admissions, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. A. Vol. 119

crime.'[144] In contrast many of the Irish (both within Ireland and the US) blamed women's new surroundings, stating that new urban centres brought Irish women into disrepute. Fitzgerald has shown how in 1868 the Irish writer John Maguire conceded that 'in some, yet comparatively few places in America a certain percentage of women of bad repute are necessarily of Irish origin.' But this number was, Maguire fiercely argued, 'very small indeed' and due to individual women's perverse vanity leading them astray. In most cities and districts throughout the US the 'character of the Irish woman is the pride and glory of all who belongs to the old country, or have a drop of genuine Irish blood in their veins.'[145] Maguire deployed a familiar social discourse about women in Ireland, where women's wellbeing is synonymous with the national struggle, that of 'suffering Mother Ireland.'[146] This rhetoric was, as Jennifer Redmond has stated, 'the most important aspect' of womanhood and Irish women's identity in Ireland, particularly in nationalist discourse.[147]

Cooper Owens has claimed that the prevalence of abuse on the emigration journey, combined with the lack of familial support abroad and a general lack of skill or opportunities, resulted in Irish women resorting to sex work in cities such as New York.[148] But Irish women were able to find work in service in the city, surrounded by an ever-growing Irish community. The first part of the argument, however, can be extended from the trauma of the emigration journey, to the longer-term repercussions of the reasons for leaving Ireland. One unnamed physician at Blackwell's Island was unsurprised by Irish women's institutional presence, due to the 'combined moral and physical influences of their leaving the homes of

[144] William Sanger, *The History of Prostitution: its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World* (New York NY, 1895), 537-538.
[145] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 69.
[146] Cara Delay, *Irish Women and The Creation of Modern Catholicism* (Manchester, 2019), 111.
[147] Jennifer Redmond, *Moving Histories: Irish Women's Emigration to Britain from Independence to Republic* (Manchester, 2018), 133.
[148] Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage,* 91- 92.

their childhood, their coming almost destitute to a strange land, and often after great suffering.'[149] Perhaps the trauma of growing up in mid-nineteenth century Ireland had long-lasting impact, constraining Irish migrant women's opportunities in later adulthood. Yet some incarcerated Irish migrants were still children, such as 13-year-old Bridget Bell who was sentenced to 12 months in prison in 1886, having been found in a NY brothel.[150]

Regular recourse to New York's Alms House on Blackwell's Island is indicative of young and 'deviant' Irish women's use of the municipal institutions as part of a wider survival strategy. In a sample I have taken of Alms House admission lists between 1881 and 1885, those aged 45 and younger, admitted for their deviant and disorderly conduct, frequently entered and exited the institutions. It was, on average these women's second time in the Alms House alone, although some were more frequently admitted. For example, 43-year-old Irish Eliza Daly was admitted to the Island for the tenth time for her disorderly conduct. It was also common in their homeland. As Maria Luddy has demonstrated, women of similar means and occupations also entered and left Irish institutions on a regular basis, using homes as temporary refuges from sex work. These women in urban Irish institutions were often internal migrants from rural areas, without immediate family nearby for support.[151] Their New York counterparts were also similarly without relatives or friends, such as 20-year-old Mary Murray, who had only lived in New York for one year. She had already sought recourse from municipal institutions three times. Clearly Irish women knew that if they could not turn to social networks for support, institutions were available to them. In

[149] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 109.
[150] 'Bad Bridget'.
[151] Maria Luddy, 'Prostitution and Rescue Work in Nineteenth-century Ireland' in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds), *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Dublin, 1989), 78-79.

contrast with the punitive aims of New York's municipal authorities, Irish women used the Alms House as a 'public service vehicle to minister to their immediate material needs' rather than as a last resort.[152]

Municipal authorities consistently accused younger Irish women of taking advantage of the proximity of the institutions. One Superintendent suggested that many female inmates who had been sent to the Work House for disorderly conduct 'tricked' officials into finding them 'unfit for work' and transferred to the Alms House to serve their respective sentences. By moving to the Alms House, disorderly women's sentences were effectively depleted: they performed no punitive labour; received food, drink, and medicine; and were 'entitled to the liberties of the grounds and share with other inmates those articles of food contributed by the charitable folk visiting here, smoke, chew tobacco and do other things not permitted in prison.' It was, the Superintendent despaired, 'no punishment for such a class to be compelled to remain at Alms-House for six months or for the period of time of their sentences.' At the end of their sentences, many women requested to remain there, 'claiming that they are destitute and of course are admitted as inmates.'[153]

In the context of women's internal migration from Irish village to town, Luddy has posited that this was a freeing experience for women, removing them from 'the constraints of family life and expectations.'[154] Cooper Owens has argued that by using New York's hospitals and institutions, Irish women were exercising autonomy claiming ownership over their bodies, minds, and decisions. Irish women wanted to 'prove that they were not deviant

[152] Gunja SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty: The Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918* (New York NY, 2009), 93.
[153] John Terry ,Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, undated, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 319.
[154] Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge, 2009), 133.

and, in fact, wanted to improve their condition in America.'[155] Instead of conceptualising women's experiences as a freeing experience taken to prove themselves to the American Protestant middle class, as Cooper Owen suggests above, it is more pertinent to see their institutionalisation as one of material need. Irish women might have had a monopoly over institutions, but they certainly needed to access them. The institution, in providing all the material conditions of the home, was a welcome relief from other domestic anxieties and the sex trade, as well as the streets.

Conclusions

The decision to emigrate appeared thus far, to be paying off for Margaret by 1867, a young Irish woman who was working in domestic service. Over time, her letters were increasingly written with a sense of motivation, a determination to live within her own means and to prove her capabilities to her parents; and possibly to herself. 'It may please you a little to hear that I am trying to learn to read and write, and may be able to write you a letter yourself before (very) many months. But I must close for the present, by cautioning you not to allow yourselves to be worried in <u>any way</u> about me, as I can now take good care of myself, and believe I shall do better than you thought I could yet.'[156]

Women's domestic service provided the foundations of urban Irish identity in the United States. Young Irish women in New York had significant employment opportunities, especially in domestic service which offered relatively high pay. Such work offered some independence – albeit often living in the employer's home; and some agency – albeit

[155] Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage,* 92.
[156] Margaret Nagle to John Nagle, 26 Mar. 1867.

constrained by gender norms and a labour market segmented by migrant status. For many, life was better than the alternative of staying at home in Ireland – as in New York, they were (mostly) employed, relatively well paid and led full social lives.

Chapter 7
Some of the Rose Buds have Grown into Wall Flowers Since: Middle-Aged Irish Women in New York

This chapter considers the lives lived by 'middle-aged' Irish women in New York.[157] As far as the census data is concerned, those aged between 30 and 44 are considered to be 'middle-aged.'[158] This was the time of life when Irish women crafted their families. Although historians and contemporaries have consistently emphasised the importance of service work in understanding Irish women's lives in New York, they also suggested that Irish women's time in service was often short-lived. It was an employment of convenience to facilitate their transition into city life. Margaret Lynch-Brennan argued the job was a taxing but 'temporary, rather than a lifelong vocation' and Irish women 'expected to have some fun while single, and eventually to find husbands for themselves in America.'[159] For many Irish women, the desire to marry, albeit not immediately, and raise a family were important motivations to migrate to the United States. This chapter shows that the route to becoming a 'respectable American housewife' was difficult and could be perilous. As many Irish women moved from being single workers to becoming married mothers, they lost independence and many descended into precarity.

[157] Title quote from John Nolan, Letter home, 14 January 1883, 1884, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

[158] Life expectancy at birth of the white population of the United States was 44 in 1880: J. David Hacker, 'Decennial life tables for the white population of the United States, 1790–1900', *Historical Methods*, 43/2, (2010), Figure 6.

[159] Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (New York NY, 2009), 120.

Demographics

Middle-aged Irish women were heavily represented in New York. Almost 40 percent of Irish women were aged between 30 and 44 years old, another 27 percent were mature, and 6 percent were elderly. Numerically there were more Irish women over the age of 30 living in the city than white American women (118,264 and 103,194 respectively).

The remainder of this chapter focuses on middle-aged women, defined as aged between 30 and 44 years, thus born between 1836 and 1850 and likely living their formative years in Ireland exposed to famine. Table 34 indicates that 62 percent of these Irish women were married, just under one quarter remained single and 12 percent were widowed. Overall, 76 percent of Irish born women in the US in this age category were or had been married, which was similar to the 75 percent of Irish born women in Ireland in this age category who were or had been married.[160] The proportion of women enumerated as 'spouse of household head' (61 percent) is almost equal to the proportion who were married (see Appendix B, Table B9). Only 11 percent were household heads; and almost one-quarter were unrelated to the head of their household. The proportion of Irish women who remained single, however, was higher compared to the proportion of all women in the same age group. Irish women in this age group in New York were also less likely to be married compared with white, Canadian, European and English women.[161] Many Irish women in New York remained single into middle age, rather than being widowed at a young age.

[160] The data for the Irish women in Ireland is from census data in William Vaughan and André Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), 88.

[161] At 85 percent, European-born women were the most likely to be enumerated, while over 70 percent of English-born women were also married. In contrast, just under half of Black American women in this age group were married. At 21 percent, Black-American women are more likely than any other group to be enumerated as widowed in their thirties and early forties. The actual numbers of Black widows aged between 30 and 44 was small in NYC, reaching just 220 women, compared with 7,829 Irish widows.

Table 34. Marital Status of Middle-Aged Women, All and Irish (New York 1880)

	All		Irish-born	
Marital status	No	% of all females	No	% of Irish-born females
Married, spouse present	135,681	69.55	39,443	61.51
Married, spouse absent	5,316	2.73	1,557	2.43
Divorced	333	0.17	52	0.08
Widowed	21,263	10.90	7,829	12.21
Never married/single	32,486	16.65	15,242	23.77
Total	195,079	100.00	64,123	100.00

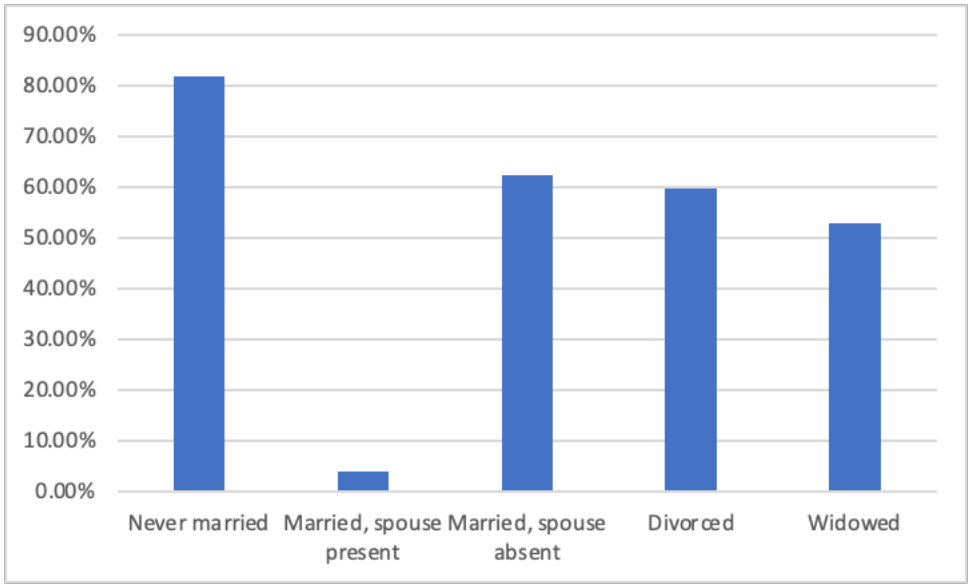
Source: IPUMS dataset.

The majority of middle-aged Irish women (70 percent) were classified as 'unoccupied' and 'keeping house' according to the 1880 census. Figure 18 reports participation rates of Irish middle-aged women in the formal labour market and shows that there were significant variations according to marital status. Only 4 percent of middle-aged Irish women who were married with their spouse present were occupied in the formal labour market. This compares with 82 percent of similar women who were not or had not been married (see Chapter Five). Of those Irish women in New York who were keeping house, the vast majority were married (80 percent had a spouse present).[162] Irish husbands and children 'bent every effort' to maintain wives and mothers in their role of homemaker which included many children going out to work.'[163]

[162] Women of all ages.

[163] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983), 52.

Figure 18. Middle-Aged Irish Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rates, by Marital Status (New York ,1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table 35 shows the main occupations of middle-aged Irish women in the formal labour market. Overall, 83 percent were working in just three occupations: domestic servants; laundresses and; milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses. The most common occupation was domestic service which employed 58 percent of Irish middle-aged women in the formal labour market, which comprised 64 percent of women in this occupation in the middle-age category. Furthermore, 13 percent of Irish middle-aged women in the formal labour market were working as laundresses which comprised 53 percent of women in this occupation in this age category. Almost all middle-aged Black American women were enumerated in just three occupations: domestic servants; laundresses and; milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses. White American and European-born middle-aged women were employed in a wider range of occupation compared with Black Americana and Irish women. Overall, 63 percent of middle-aged white American women were enumerated in three occupations: milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses; tailoresses; and teachers and scientific persons. Furthermore, American

women comprised 77 percent of women teachers (and scientific persons) in the middle-aged category. As shown in Table 35, 56 percent of middle-aged European-born women were enumerated in three occupations: milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses; tailoresses; and teachers and scientific persons. Additionally, middle-aged European women comprised 96 percent of women cigar makers and 48 percent of tailoresses. Overall, the evidence shows that the formal labour market for middle-aged Irish women was highly concentrated as it was for young Irish women, with domestic service being the most important occupation for both age groups. A major contrast between the two age groups was the importance of laundry work which employed 13 percent of middle-age Irish women working in the formal labour market compared with only 3 percent of young Irish women (see Table 28).

Table 35 Women's work (aged 30-44) in New York (main occupations) – All and Main Comparator Groups

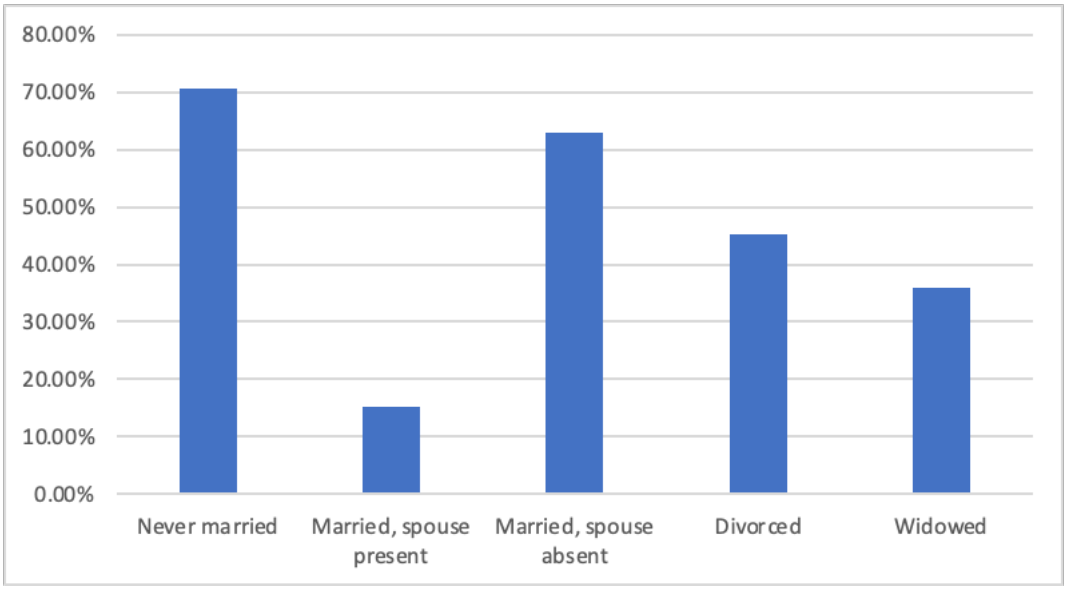
	All		American-born White			American-born Black			Irish-born			North American/Canadian			European			English		
	No	% of birthplace occupied	No	% of birthplace occupied	%of occupation	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	%of occupation Total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total
Domestic servants	17413	41.02	2355	25.17	13.52	1003	49.46	5.76	11148	58.28	64.02	128	31.84	0.74	2050	29.73	11.77	461	34.53	2.65
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	6494	15.30	2510	26.83	38.65	154	7.59	2.37	2284	11.94	35.17	104	25.87	1.60	971	14.08	14.95	363	27.19	5.59
Launders and laundresses	4483	10.56	414	4.43	9.23	724	35.70	16.15	2391	12.50	53.33	18	4.48	0.40	808	11.72	18.02	86	6.44	1.92
Tailors and tailoresses	1652	3.89	364	3.89	22.03	5	0.25	0.30	409	2.14	24.76	19	4.73	1.15	794	11.51	48.06	47	3.52	2.85
Teachers and scientific persons	1333	3.14	1029	11.00	77.19	8	0.39	0.60	130	0.68	9.75	15	3.73	1.13	102	1.48	7.65	4	0.30	0.30
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	646	1.52	61	0.65	9.44	52	2.56	8.05	453	2.37	70.12	6	1.49	0.93	51	0.74	7.89	13	0.97	2.01
Nurses	606	1.43	196	2.10	32.34	18	0.89	2.97	206	1.08	33.99	8	1.99	1.32	110	1.60	18.15	40	3.00	6.60
Cigar makers	602	1.42	12	0.13	1.99	0	0.00	0.00	7	0.04	1.16	0	0.00	0.00	579	8.40	96.18	0	0.00	0.00
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	500	1.18	213	2.28	42.60	3	0.15	0.60	163	0.85	32.60	17	4.23	3.40	77	1.12	15.40	20	1.50	4.00
Traders and dealers in groceries	346	0.81	30	0.32	8.67	0	0.00	0.00	204	1.07	58.96	2	0.50	0.58	99	1.44	28.61	8	0.60	2.31
All Occupied	42454	100.00	9355	100.00	22.04	2028	100.00	4.78	19128	100.00	45.06	402	100.00	0.95	6896	100.00	16.24	1335	100.00	3.14
All	195079		64523			3808			64123	335.23		1930			50213			7550		

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Domestic service was the main occupation for both young and middle-aged Irish women but there are three key features to consider when comparing the employment across different age groups. First, employment as a domestic servant was highly contingent on marital status. As shown in Figure 19, 71 percent of middle-aged women in the formal labour market who were never married worked in the sector. Figure 19 also shows high shares of middle-aged Irish women for whom marriage was terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce,) were working in service market: 63 percent of those married (spouse absent); 45 percent of those divorced; and 26 percent of those widowed. Service work was relatively less important for young Irish women who were married (spouse present) with 15 percent working in this occupation. Other important occupations for the small share of married (spouse present) Irish women included work that could be undertaken in the home such as: laundresses; and milliners and dressmakers. Second, many unmarried women worked as live-in housemaids, cooks and nurses whereas married women tended to work by the day out in private houses or in public buildings as the latter allowed them to work in their own homes. Third, although a large share of married women who were employed as domestics undertook similar work before marriage, many were also previously employed in other occupations such as factory work.[164]

[164] Katharine Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn* (New York NY, 1914), 63

Figure 19. Proportion of Middle-Aged Irish Women Working in Service, by Marital Status (New York, 1880) (% of those enumerated as occupied)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

Marriage

Gerard Moran has argued that for the Irish, 'marriage was a progression to adult status' and that those 'who remained single endured a lower standing within the community.'[165] On marriage, many Irish women exited the workforce to raise a family and to manage the home and many Irish women in New York achieved these goals by middle age.[166] As Hasia Diner has stated, although economic motives were 'paramount' in Irish women's decision to leave Ireland, marriage was not 'wholly unappealing' and upon marriage Irish women 'abandoned their jobs with the same zeal and ardour with which they had rushed into

[165] Gerard Moran, 'Retaining Their Irish Identity: Marriage and the Famine Irish in Five Points, New York, in the 1850s, *New Hibernia Review*, 25/3 (2021), 114.

[166] As previously noted, the census data reveals how Irish women were heavily represented in New York's older age groups in 1880 although they were younger than Irish women in the United States. Almost 40 percent of Irish women were aged between 30 and 44 years old, comprising one-third of this female age group. There were more Irish women in this age group compared with white American or Black American women. Over one-quarter of Irish women are aged between 45 and 64, comprising 37 percent of the female age group. While only 6 percent of Irish women are elderly, aged 65 plus, they comprise 36 percent of that age group for women. There were also numerically more women in the 45 to 64, and 65 plus age groups.

them as single women.' Diner has further argued that the rate of marriage for women migrants was higher, and their age of marriage younger, than their counterparts back in Ireland. This may be indicative of a greater desire to marry or greater success in marrying – or both.[167] Irish women on both sides of the Atlantic married at a younger age than Irish men although this age gap varied considerably within both Ireland and the United States. In the tenement building on Vandewater Street, all the wives were younger than their husbands. At the time of the 1860 census, Catharine Connor was 39 years old, considerably younger than her 58-year-old Irish husband, Daniel. Her neighbours, Jane Crowe and Honora Costello were also younger by their husbands. The Irish women on Vandewater Street followed the usual path of Irish women by marrying within their birthplace group and this did not substantially change during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.[168] The age gap was evident in other parts of the United States, for example, in rural Buffalo between 1877 and 1882, Irish women married at an average age of 31, four years younger than their Irish husbands.[169]

The pool of potential husbands were limited to other Irish. Employing marriage records of Five Points' Catholic Church of Transfiguration between August 1853 and November 1860, Moran has recorded the high levels of intermarriage between Irish immigrants. Moran argued that both the Irish county of birth and the New York parish of residence were crucial in the choice of marital partners, and that Irish brides and grooms 'perpetuated the local loyalties of the old country through marriage and the family.'[170]

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[167] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 47.
[168] According to the 1860 census schedule for Catharine Connor and her building, accessed via ancestry.com (Jan. 2020). See also: Moran, 'Retaining Their Irish Identity', 111-125.
[169] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 47.
[170] Moran, 'Retaining Their Irish Identity', 115.

Intermarriage was, in Moran's view, a way for Irish immigrants to retain their identity in a foreign and hostile environment, as kinship was 'strengthened by common experiences, shared lives, and memories brought from home, and these aspects combined with being close to other Irish people as well as marrying a partner with the same religion and values made life in places like Five Points more bearable.'[171] Diner agreed, suggesting marriage eased the 'shock of migration and cultural change.'[172] Marriage was not always the cause of migration, but a way to mitigate some of the difficulties wrought by the move away from home.

In her investigation of New York's West Side in the early 1900s, the writer Katharine Anthony identified that 76 of 95 Irish wives and mothers were married to Irish men.[173] The area that Anthony studied was the mid-west-side, in a district bounded by fifty-fourth street to the north, thirty-fourth street to the south, eighth avenue to the east and the North River on the west, an area now known as 'Hell's Kitchen' which had a high concentration of Irish immigrants. Anthony noted that 'religious agreement' between second-generation Irish and their German Catholic neighbours facilitated some intermarriage. The Irish and German migrant communities were entrenched in New York, and as Anthony observed by the early twentieth century the two communities had become 'accustomed' to one another. Although Anthony was a well-known feminist, her research methods were laced with bigotry, often attributing tales of domestic discord to Irishness.[174] When one German woman complained to Anthony that her Irish daughter-in-law was a poor housekeeper and Anthony enquired 'whether she thought this might be *due to her Irish habits*, the old woman took up the cudgels at once on behalf of the Irish, declaring that they were just as good housekeepers as her own

[171] Moran, 'Retaining Their Irish Identity', 124.
[172] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 40.
[173] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 54.
[174] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 55.

countrywomen.' In contrast to Anthony's assumption of ethnic discord, there was solidarity amongst the Irish and Germans, who both instead regarded the 'newer Italian element 'as strangers and aliens.' Anthony described how an 'Irish woman born in County Cavan commonly referred to her Italian neighbour as a "foreigner"' while the 'Poles and Greeks who are beginning to settle in the district are not merely aliens; they are interlopers.'[175]

Motherhood

Irish and American domestic values converged on the belief that 'not to work is a mark of the middle-class married woman.'[176] Only 4 percent of middle-aged Irish women who were married with their spouse present were occupied in the formal labour market. On Vandewater Street, Catharine's four oldest children, including 13-year old Thomas, all worked together on a local paper stand, while Catharine remained at home. Child-rearing took up most of Irish wives' day-to-day lives. Once married, Irish women continued to have large families, although perhaps not quite as large as Irish mothers back home.[177] The 1880 census data shows that a large proportion (52 percent) of Irish women lived with children of their own, which was a higher proportion than white American, Black American, and Canadian women.[178] Moreover, where Irish women were mothers they tended to have a larger number of children in the household compared with other groups, despite commencing their childbearing years later.

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[175] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 8. Emphasis added.

[176] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 15.

[177] Timothy Guinnane has argued that the rising emigration rates of women, combined with rising celibacy, indicated that life as a wife and mother of a large family in Ireland was particularly unappealing to women. Moreover he has suggested Irish women in the US deliberately sought smaller families through contraception. He does not use comparator groups, or defines what is meant by a 'large family'- although his work on earlier census data manuscripts indicates that his estimate may be around seven children in Ireland. *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration, and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850-1914* (Princeton NJ, 1997), 241.

[178] This statistic is for women in all age groups, over the age of fifteen.

Of those women who lived with between six and eight children of their own, over one-third were Irish. The Irish and those of Irish parentage, continued to have higher marital fertility compared with white American women into the twentieth century.[179] The median number of births for first-generation Irish immigrants was between five and six in 1910 and 1911, compared with between two and three for the white American population.[180] This is broadly comparable with the number of children born to Irish women in Ireland, which according to John Fitzgerald's analysis of census data was 5.9 in 1881, 6.0 in 1891, 5.8 in 1901 and 5.9 in 1911.[181] It has been suggested that by 1910, white American women 'deliberately stopped childrearing' via contraception and that they controlled the number of children they wanted, adjusted the space between births - while others remained childless. To have a relatively small family was a sign of agency and prosperity for many American women.[182] Whereas for Irish women, prosperity and fertility often increased in tandem.

The evidence from Vandewater Street is consistent with a positive link between prosperity and fertility: the Irish families with the largest numbers of children were also the families with the wealthiest husbands, or at least where the husbands had a relatively high value personal estate.[183] Jeremiah and Honora Costello had four children and Jeremiah's

[179] Diner, *Erin's Daughters,* 52-54. See also Chapter 4.

[180] Timothy Guinnane, Carolyn Moehling, and Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The Fertility of the Irish in the United States in 1910', *Explorations in Economic History*, 43 (2006), 467.

[181] John Fitzgerald, 'Irish Demography since 1740' in Eugenio Biagini and Mary Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2016), Table 1.6, 19.

[182] S. Philip Morgan, Susan Watkins, and Douglas Ewbank, 'Generating Americans: Ethnic Differences in Fertility', in Susan Watkins (ed.), *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census* (New York NY, 1994), 84-88.

[183] The 1860 Census asked enumerators to collect data on the *'value of personal estate*. According to IPUMS, enumerators were instructed to identify: 'the value of personal property or estate. Here you are to include the value of all the property, possessions, or wealth of each individual which is not embraced in the column previous, consist of what it may; the value of bonds, mortgages, notes, slaves, live stock, plate, jewels, or furniture; in fine, the value of whatever constitutes the personal wealth of individuals. Exact accuracy may not be arrived at, but all persons should be encouraged to give a near and prompt estimate for your information.' See: 1860 Census: Instructions to Marshalls', https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1860.shtml (June 2020).

personal estate was worth $300 in 1860. Catharine Connor has the largest number of children in the tenement and her husband's personal estate valued at $1000.

Furthermore, the census data from 1910 suggest that even women who were not living in urban Irish communities tended to have relatively large families.[184] The McHenry-Malone family lived approximately 200 miles north of New York City in the rural hamlet of Middle Granville. In this rural area, Martin McHenry worked in quarries and was able in the 1870s to buy a house, barn, and twelve acres of land, for approximately £500, where he lived with his wife Mary, their three children, and Mary's brother-in-law, Daniel Malone. The family would get much larger but writing to her parents in the 1870s, Mary noted her delight with her home. Her health, she described as 'never better thanks be to God' and she is 'fatter than ever.' Their home was only five minutes from the chapel, both Martin and Daniel are 'hard-working and sober men', who can come home for their dinner every day: 'we are happy thanks be to God… even a girl with 200 pounds fortune could not live as comfortable as I can with everything a woman could ask.'[185]

Housework

To keep house in New York, and to make a tenement room a home was a never-ending task. Anthony described the difficulty in keeping the small and cramped quarters clean and tidy, where such 'a home absorbs an endless amount of labor without making much return in the way of tidy appearance; the housekeeper can overcome the dirt more successfully than the disorder.' Increasing access to household technologies and prepared

[184] Guinnane, Moehling, and Ó Gráda, 'The Fertility of the Irish', 482. Emphasis added.
[185] Mary McHenry, 31 Dec. 1873, TLRW, AIA.082.

foods by the turn of the twentieth century resulted in Irish women spending less time at the stove – but this did not lead to more leisure time. Women simply spent more time undertaking domestic labour; 'doing more and more laundry work' and 'washday, especially, reduces the home to chaos.' Laundry included 'carrying baskets of wet clothes to the roof to dry, moving and lifting furniture, scrubbing, scouring, and above all, standing continuously.' The family wash was particularly heavy-going, especially for mothers of many children and wives of labourers: 'washing overalls and other work garments requires a great deal of strength. When everybody praises the smart appearance of the street cleaners in their white suits, who thinks of the wives of these men who must wash the coarse, heavy garments at least twice a week?'[186] Men's employment in manual labour soaked into women's domestic lives.

Husbands

Irish men in New York remained heavily concentrated in manual labour throughout the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As shown in Table 36, 40 percent of all Irish middle-aged men were enumerated in three occupations (laborers (not specified); draymen, hackmen and teamsters; and clerks in stores). Irish men comprised 66 percent of all labourers in the middle-aged category.[187] Urban areas such as New York were, however, locations with a large supply of male labour combined with intermittent demand for many occupations. An investigation of unemployment in 1911 by the Charity Organization Society and the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, stated that of the nearly

[186] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 144; 169.

[187] 32 percent of Black middle-aged men were employed in their three main occupations: labourers (not specified); draymen, hackmen and teamsters; and porters and labourers in stores warehouses. Conversely, only 18 percent of white middle-aged men were employed in their three main occupations: clerks in stores; draymen, hackmen and teamsters; and carpenters and joiners. Similarly, only 19 percent of European middle-aged men were employed in their three main occupations. Furthermore, European-born men dominated some occupations, including tailoring and cigar-making.

two thousand unemployed men interviewed '37¾ percent were unskilled laborers. The other well-represented occupations were teamster's work, longshore work, and the building trades, particularly house painting.'[188] As shown in Table 36, a large share of Irish men were employed in these occupations in 1880. This piecemeal and unreliable work resulted in many wives searching for employment to support their family. Anthony's sample of 370 wives in employment found that 45 percent of their husbands were engaged in trade and transportation, 28 percent in manufacturing and a quarter in domestic and personal service. These jobs were 'low-paid work and that more than half of them were in occupations where unemployment is characteristic.'[189] Anthony observed that '"Laid off " and "fired" are familiar words in the family vocabulary. They are among the first Americanisms acquired by the immigrant workman and he can pronounce them with dreadful distinctness.'[190] Indeed one Irish wife despaired how 'if a man falls out of work for a day, the family feels it for a week after.'[191]

[188] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 42.
[189] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 56.
[190] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 41.
[191] Annual Report of Children's Aid Society, 1855, NYHS, F128 HV885. C6 A3.

Table 36 Men's work (aged 30-44) in New York (main occupations) – All and Main Comparator Groups

	All		American born White			American born Black			Irish-born			North American/Canadian			European			English		
	No	% of birthplace occupied	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total
Laborers (not specified)	19819	11.60	1976	3.75	9.97	359	11.66	1.81	13120	28.53	66.20	72	3.97	0.36	774	6.71	19.04	381	5.12	1.92
Clerks in stores	8144	4.76	4719	8.95	57.94	31	1.01	0.38	1440	3.13	17.68	112	6.18	1.38	1168	2.08	14.34	468	6.29	5.75
Draymen, hackmen, teamsters, etc.	7322	4.28	2522	4.78	34.44	350	11.36	4.78	3167	6.89	43.25	36	1.99	0.49	965	1.72	13.18	220	2.96	3.00
Carpenters and joiners	6232	3.65	2016	3.82	32.35	20	0.65	0.32	1445	3.14	23.19	196	10.81	3.15	2016	3.59	32.35	348	4.67	5.58
Tailors and tailoresses	5811	3.40	279	0.53	4.80	11	0.36	0.19	622	1.35	10.70	6	0.33	0.10	4712	8.38	81.09	125	1.68	2.15
Painters and varnishers	4229	2.47	1598	3.03	37.79	11	0.36	0.26	866	1.88	20.48	54	2.98	1.28	1304	2.32	30.83	316	4.24	7.47
Porters and laborers in stores warehouses	4118	2.41	668	1.27	16.22	271	8.80	6.58	2042	4.44	49.59	43	2.37	1.04	902	1.60	21.90	131	1.76	3.18
Boot and shoemakers	3729	2.18	376	0.71	10.08	31	1.01	0.83	1056	2.30	28.32	26	1.43	0.70	2042	3.63	54.76	156	2.10	4.18
Butchers	3233	1.89	666	1.26	20.60	9	0.29	0.28	409	0.89	12.65	10	0.55	0.31	2028	3.61	62.73	104	1.40	3.22
Cigar makers	3143	1.84	337	0.64	10.72	1	0.03	0.03	11	0.02	0.35	3	0.17	0.10	2448	4.35	77.89	117	1.57	3.72
All Occupied	170918	100.00	52738	100.00	30.86	3080	100.00	1.80	45985	100.00	26.90	1813	100.00	1.06	56229	100.00	32.90	7445	100.00	4.36
All	197801		65020			3347			50601			2092			63752			8802		

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

A husband's employment in regular work did not always alleviate risks to the family. Men's wages were insufficient to maintain a large Irish family in New York. One forty-year old Irish-American woman had worked in a knitting mill as a young girl, in order to support her Irish migrant parents and siblings. Despite initially leaving her factory work on marriage, she returned to work as a janitress, while her son intermittently worked as a driver.[192] Her Irish husband's regular job running a freight elevator did not earn enough to look after his family. His work was, moreover, hazard-filled and 'the moment he is sick, it comes hard upon us.'[193] Irish men were most likely to suffer from 'on-the-job mishaps' in late-nineteenth-century New York, having taking dangerous and physical employment refused by other men in the city.[194] Men were unable to take time to recover from injuries out of fear of family poverty. One Irish builder had been confined for several weeks with lower back pain, resulting in his wife going out to work to support their seven children. On return to work, his back immediately gave out again and the labourer was laid up for three months, 'almost at the point of death.' He forced himself to return to the building site and soon after, a gable fell upon his head, killing him instantly.[195]

The poor working conditions of Irish men in New York was not, however, replicated across all of the US. The further west that they travelled, the better the wages and the work that was available. In 1880, 20 percent of Irish men in San Francisco were employed in white-collar jobs, 19 percent in skilled blue-collar work, 30 percent in semi-skilled blue-

[192] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 14-15.
[193] Annual Report, 1855.
[194] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 60.
[195] Annual Report, 1855.

collar jobs, and the number in unskilled manual labour had fallen from 48 percent in 1852 to 32 percent by 1880. Irish women in San Francisco, by contrast, remained consistently concentrated in service work.[196] For those men who moved to New York, their work remained restricted to life-threatening and low-paid labour. The knowledge that working conditions might have been better elsewhere 'must have broken the spirit of many a man.'[197]

Many Irish men who arrived in New York did not stay for long unlike Irish women. John Nolan arrived in New York City in 1882 and stayed there in Mrs. Johnston's boarding house for almost two years. Having enough of the city's relentlessness, he boarded a ship for Panama in May 1884, where he planned to stay for three months, before heading back to New York or perhaps San Francisco, 'if my health keeps up.'[198] His itinerancy was redolent of Irish men's seasonal migration to Britain where they worked in agriculture for part of the year before returning home. Leaving New York, however, may not have been Nolan's wisest decision. In November 1884 he updated his parents of his various travels and subsequent hospital stay. Nolan wrote: 'I was in San Francisco but I did not care much for it. I could have went to Australia, but I am getting tired of travelling… Still I have a shine to go out west again.' John's fellow travellers and colleagues had succumbed to illness and, unlike other Irish men, he did not settle in San Francisco. His mind and body were weary from his constant travel and yet John planned to keep moving. Perhaps this was his way of dealing with being so far away from home? More than anything, however, he was planning to return to Ireland, writing 'I expect to reach home next fall if God spare me.'[199]

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[196] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 150. 60 percent of Irish women enumerated as domestic servants between 1852 and 1880

[197] David Gerber, The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825-1860 (Urbana IL, 1989), 131.

[198] John Nolan, 13 Aug. 1884, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

[199] John Nolan, 28 Nov. 1884, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.

Nolan's peripatetic behaviour was characteristic of many Irish men abroad, even including those with dependent wives and children. Irish families were 'wracked' by uniquely high levels of male desertion from New York and across the United States.[200] Mary McHenry had written to her parents back in Ireland stating how pleased she was with her life in America. She pointed out her great relief that both her husband and her brother (Daniel Malone, who lived with McHenry and her family) were 'hard working and sober men', who came home every day. This did not, however, last. Even in this rural area on the outskirts of New York, which offered more work to Irish men than many urban locations, men felt under pressure to find work and provide for their family. McHenry wrote a later letter home to update her parents that Daniel had 'gone and left us to another strange country.' McHenry was not only bereft, but mystified by her brother's actions, as he had been 'living very comfortable here… he went to mass and went to the boss that he worked for and asked his wages. It was 40 dollars. He went the next day and he never told one of us nor his wife where he was going. We did not know what to think… I thought that Dan could never do that to me or Martin.'[201]

Despite McHenry's perception of Malone's departure as betrayal, her brother's own letters to Ireland suggest he had moved away because of the fear of a lack of work. He explained to his parents that he had discussed his idea to move with the local Catholic priest and put some money to one side. What might be perceived as 'desertion' was in fact this Irish man's attempt to provide for his family. What Daniel Malone had not done, however, was

[200] Patricia Kelleher, 'Maternal Strategies: Irish Women's Headship of Families in Gilded Age Chicago', *Journal of Women's History,* 13/ 2 (2001), 82. Women headed 13 percent of the Irish, 6 percent of German, and 7 percent of white American households in Chicago.
[201] Mary McHenry, 26 Mar. 1876, TLRW, AIA.082.

communicate his plans to his sister or his wife. Whether this was out of negligence, shame or inadequacy, one cannot say. Malone did end reuniting with his wife and children, if not his sister. He relied on his wife to gather their four children, and travel across the country with them to Missouri, where Malone found work as a labourer. This pattern was repeated in other cases where apparent male desertion reflected men moving to find work before being reunited with their families.[202] The family had been reunited for three short weeks when they buried their youngest son, two-year-old Patrick. The family were heartbroken at their loss, despairing that Patrick had been 'too cute' for this world, 'the best child of his age.'[203]

Malone later decided it was time to move their family from Missouri to Chicago. Another letter to his parents shows that Malone later came to regret this decision. Writing in January 1885, he described Chicago as 'very cold with heavy snow on the ground and work very scarce there is supposed to be between 15000 and 20000 men out of employment', where families are in an 'act of starvation without food, fire, or clothing.' Malone concluded his letter stating Chicago was 'a poor place for a man with a family and a bad place to raise children. I think I will leave here in the spring for some other part of the country.'[204] He did not, however, make it clear whether he was to make his next move alone or with his long-suffering wife and children. As Anthony observed:

> The deserting husband may return and take up his responsibilities once more; the loafer may reform and go to work; the man who has lost his job may find another next week or tomorrow – vague hopes like these play their part in the lives of the women whose husbands are still whole and sound.[205]

[202] Kelleher, 'Maternal Strategies', 84.
[203] Daniel Malone, 6 Sept. 1876, TLRW, AIA.082.
[204] Daniel Malone, 25 Jan. 1885, TLRW, AIA.082.
[205] Anthony, Mothers Who Must Earn, 20

Men's presence within the home was, however, sometimes more of a hindrance than a help, punctuated by the curse of drink especially when paid labour was sparse. Catherine Brady, a 33-year-old Irish woman in New York described her husband of twelve years (48-year-old Patrick) and father to her four daughters, as a 'walking beer-keg.' Patrick Brady would intermittently balance his heavy drinking at home with desertion, periodically leaving home during periods of familial stress, such as before the birth of their children. He would only return when his wife was 'once more supplied with a paying job.' Catherine Brady, a 'woman of robust physique in spite of all she has gone through', nursed and cared for their children, while working from 7am to 6pm daily as a scrubwoman. She would 'make a race of it' twice a day back to her tenement apartment (or the three rooms of it that her family occupied) to ensure that her children were safe. Brady rarely took time off despite having four children, as her wages went towards paying the family's rent of $7 a month.[206]

Wives at Work

As Catherine Brady's living and working conditions demonstrate, the realities of mothering multiple children in New York resulted in some Irish women seeking waged labour outside the home. Irish wives and mothers were also boarding-house keepers, laundresses, and ad hoc domestics. The evidence in Figure 19 suggests that only a small share of Irish wives (with spouse present) were working in the formal labour market but participation increased markedly when their marriage terminated. Cleaning tenement buildings in exchange for a lower rent was also common, yet Anthony argued tenement wives were prone to concealing their employment out of pride, as 'one of the little snobberies of the

[206] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 181.

poor.'[207] One wife had worked as an attendant in a 'beauty doctor's office' before and for two years after her marriage; and later worked 'off and on, mainly taking washing and ironing. After her husband's death, she got regular work as a waitress.'[208] Another 34-year-old wife had been working in the same shirt laundry for nineteen years, although following her marriage aged 27, this was only during times of financial crisis. One laundress did not stop work and even 'got as far as to dress to go to work the very morning her child was born. After three weeks' rest, she was back at the mangle.'[209] Others earned money through the keeping and letting of rooms, either to supplement familial income or were dependent on it entirely. By undertaking waged labour in the home, migrant boarding house keepers transgressed the domestic ideal of white middle-class America: 'if women's unpaid labors of love made houses into homes, women's market labour converted boarding houses into hovels, even brothels.'[210] Anthony's perception of women's concealment of their waged labour can be reinterpreted: it was concealed because of shame rather than pride.

Wages

As a laundress, dressmaker, and boarding-house keeper, an Irish wife was, first and foremost, carrying out her duty to her family. While some women might have concealed their labour out of shame, many others did not consider their employment as 'real work.'[211] Like their sisters and cousins in Ireland, wives in New York did not view their waged labour as an 'occupation', but as a means to an end: an extension of their familial responsibilities. Many tenement wives and mothers did not seek progression in the formal labour market but viewed

[207] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn,* 15-16.
[208] Anthony*, Mothers Who Must Earn*, 68.
[209] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 78-79.
[210] Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore MD, 2007), 8.
[211] Gamber, *Boardinghouse,* 4.

their steady attendance record as evidence of their ambition and respectability. Irish wives and mothers in their middle-age would not leave their home or their children to go into work on a Sunday, 'even when pressed back to her last bulwarks.'[212] Irish mothers, even in times of economic need, would prioritise their family's religious wellbeing and their reputation within their local Irish Catholic community.

An Irish mother's wage was often crucial for paying the rent, and there was a 'strong tendency for the wife to assume the responsibility for this item of the family budget.' As Anthony argued, the 'mother's interests are most closely bound up in the preservation of shelter and warmth' for her children.[213] The wage data collected by Anthony from working mothers from the New York's West Side shows the importance of a mother's wage. As shown in Table 37, in families where both mother and father were wage earners, the mother's earnings were 31 percent of the average family income. The overall average income for these families, which consisted of two parents and three children, was $705. According to a study of the standard of living in New York in 1909, Robert Coit Chapin reported that with 'an income of between $700 and $800 a family can barely support itself, provided that it is subject to no extraordinary expenditures by reason of sickness, death or other untoward circumstances.'[214] A mother's income was essential to maintaining a basic level of subsistence. In families where the mother, father and some children were wage earners, the mother's earnings were 19 percent of the average family income. The overall average income of these families, (which on average consisted of 6.5 people) was $1,112. According to

[212] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn,* 111-112.
[213] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 137-138.
[214] Robert Coit Chapin, *The Standard of Living Among Working Men's Families in New York City* (New York NY, 1909), 279

Anthony this income would provide a standard of living less than the normal standard of comfort defined by Chapin.

Table 37. Average Annual Income and Rent of West Side Families with Working Mothers (1910-11)

Members of family at work	No of families	Average number of persons in family	Average number of wage-earners in family	Average annual income of family	Average annual income of mother		Average Annual Rent	
					$	Percent of total income	$	Percent of total income
Mother only	101	3.2	1	393.64	346.84	88.11	115.96	29.46
Mother and children	106	4.72	2.71	773.76	294.32	38.04	146.64	18.95
Mother and father	96	4.96	2	705.12	218.92	31.05	146.64	20.80
Mother, father and children	67	6.48	3.52	1112.28	209.56	18.84	164.84	14.82
Total	370	4.69	2.21	713.49	273.74	38.37	141.43	19.82

Source: Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn,* 127; 137.

In families where the mother alone was the bread-winner, her average earnings were 88 percent of the average family income. The remaining income came from various sources, including rent from lodgers, pensions and monies from charitable societies, child-helping agencies and the church, and help from relatives.[215] The overall average income of these families, which on average consisted of 3.5 people was $394 or approximately $7.50 per week. According to the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board in 1912 the living minimum wage of women was between $9.00 and $11.00.[216] Thus, these female bread-earners had to

[215] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 132.

[216] US Congress. Representatives. *Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards.* House Document 1697, Jan. 1912, 220.

support themselves and two or three other family members on an income that was considered less than that required to support one woman. Table 5 also shows that rent comprised 29 percent of the incomes of women who were the sole wage earner which compares to 21 percent of the incomes of those with mother and father at work, 19 percent of the incomes of mother with children at work and 15 percent of those with both parents and children at work. In general, the was paid in advance and was the priority household expenditure. As one woman recalled: 'many's the time we've gone to bed without supper, and with money in that yellow bowl on the shelf for the rent. Whatever you do, you don't want to be turned out on the street.'[217]

The wages that middle-aged women earned varied by occupation. According to the evidence collected by Anthony, the average weekly wage of 370 mothers who lived in New York's West Side in the early 1900s was $5.63.[218] The highest earners who were normally paid weekly were garment workers ($9.15) and the lowest earners were hotel workers ($4.83). The average earnings of the Irish mothers was the second-highest by nationality with an average weekly wage of $5.91: compared with $6.36 for white American women; $5.30 for German women; and $4.11 for 19 Italian women.[219] These differences will have primarily reflected the occupations and the hours worked of the different nationalities – many Irish women were day workers (undertaking a range of tasks washing and ironing, window cleaning, brass and silver polishing, floor scrubbing and cooking), cleaners and laundry workers which were on the upper end of a modest wage spectrum.

[217] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 138.
[218] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 118.
[219] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 120.

Many Irish women undertaking laundry work were considered to be 'superior workers' because 'washing and ironing is the only kind of work that pays.'[220] But the average weekly wage of those who took in washing at home was only $2.25 as most laundresses did not work a full working week. A report from 1911 on women laundry workers in New York by Sue Ainslie Clark and Edith Wyatt declared that there was an 'artificial' division of labour created during lunch hours, when women stopped to rest, recuperate and to chat, as a 'deep-rooted feeling of antagonism and suspicion exists between the Irish and the Italians, each race clubbing together from the different departments, in separate bands.' Ainslie Clark and Wyatt reported that while Irish and Italian women worked in the same city laundries, the best-paid work (the hard starching of shirts and colours and the hard ironing) was undertaken by Irish women, Black women, Italian and Eastern European Jewish men. Mangle work, on the other hand, tended to be done by Italian women. Italian women were found working side by side with Irish and American women in two laundries, undertaking the same tasks but 'were paid solely less because they were Italians.' One of the employers declared he 'never paid Italians more than $4 a week.'[221]

There may have been wider opportunities for working mothers in middle age outside of New York City and beyond the realm of domestic service. The Bureau of Labor's study of wage-earning women in manufacturing industries in New York State and the US north-east revealed that Irish and Black American cotton workers were typically much older than other cotton workers and were often mothers. The data shows that 24 percent of the 2,351 Irish women cotton mill workers were married, compared with just 4 percent of the 2,421 Irish silk workers. The Bureau's report suggests that some Irish wives remained concentrated in low-

[220] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 80.

[221] Sue Ainslie Clark and Edith Wyatt, 'Women Laundry Workers in New York', *McClure's Magazine,* 36/4, (1911), 404-407.

skilled and low-paid manufacturing work and laboured purely because of financial necessity. Despite this concentration, the Bureau argued that Irish wives progressed in more skilled manufacturing work, with at least two-fifths of Irish cotton workers employed as weavers. These women were, the Bureau suggested, 'less likely than the unskilled to give up their work at marriage.'[222]

Irish women openly discussed their wages amongst themselves although many knew little about their husband's earnings. Anthony was incredulous about the women's 'amazing capacity for details in their narratives.' One 'indomitable' Irish woman warned Anthony 'Now don't faint when I tell ye' of her wage of 7 cents an hour, the woman's life all those around them 'resolves itself largely into a drama of wages.'[223] Discussions of wages show the temperamental nature of life in the tenements. Much of women's work was ad hoc and piecemeal but it was also vital so it not surprising that so much time was spent discussing wages. It was precarious working on piece rates with the family income easily tipping from plenty to deprivation depending on the availability of work. If money talks, talking about money was the focal point of discussion for many immigrants. Moaning, laughing, comparing wage rates was a social marker, a way to connect with other Irish women.

Working-class wives from different migrant backgrounds had different expectations and understandings of their fellow migrant women and of the world of paid work. While Italian mothers may have helped each other out with childcare (free of charge), Irish women would expect remuneration in the form of wages or in-kind. Mrs O'Shea, for example, only

[222] United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Summary of the Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States. No. 175. 1916, 414; 416.
[223] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 112-113.

let an elderly woman stay in her home, in exchange for nursing her children.[224] To look after children without payment was a mother's job alone. Instead, Irish mothers would help each other find paid work, acting as informal employment agents. Irish mothers employed outside of the home would often act as agents or 'scouts' to help their fellow countrywomen find paid employment.

Welfare

American Protestant Welfare

Motherhood might have been central to Irish Catholic working-class and middle-aged womanhood in New York, but many failed to live up to the expectations of the wider New York community. Christine Stansell has described how American philanthropists perceived motherhood as an expression of an innate womanhood, taking on a particular 'psychological and material forms of emotional nurturance and a comfortable home.' By dint of their poverty, their inability to provide domestic stability, and their Catholic religion by implication, immigrant working-class mothers 'became a kind of half-sex.'[225] Fitzgerald has argued that Protestant social reformers believed that women's Catholicism and Irishness has 'either exacerbated or was wholly responsible' the tendency towards impoverishment and dependency.[226]

> How little we realize the misery of these wretched homes in the crowded tenement-house districts of our great city during the sultry summer. Nearly all of these poor women have their tale of sorrow to tell, stranger than fiction. Drunken and worthless husbands and deserted homes too often tell the story and the cause of their poverty and suffering. Left with their helpless children to fight the hard battle of life alone, they struggle on till strength and courage fail, and then if no helping hand appears for their rescue, they too often yield

[224] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 130-140.
[225] Chistine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York NY, 1986), 209.
[226] Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920* (Chicago IL, 2006), 4.

> to the temptations about them, and seek their only solace in a life of dissipation and despair.[227]

A letter written on behalf of a pregnant Mrs Leary in the early 1870s to the Lying-In Hospital details how her husband had left New York and his family to return to Dublin. He had, the letter details, left Leary no support, and she had 'no friends or relatives to assist her', just her boardinghouse keeper. Both poor and paying mothers were accepted into the Lying-In Hospital, which was a municipally-run maternity hospital. Leary, however, feared that she would not be assisted by the city due to her Catholicity. The letter begged the Lying-In Hospital's managers not to 'show any bigotry' and accept her request to take her in, because of 'the circumstances' being so extreme.[228]

Mrs Leary feared that her religion would leave her abandoned and alone by the municipality. Fitzgerald, however, has stated that Protestant philanthropists in New York believed that Irish Catholic mothering 'necessitated drastic social intervention.' Poor mothers were responsible for the reproduction of (im)moral traits associated with poverty, particularly those who were Catholic and Irishness. Intervention into the private lives of intemperate and incapable Irish Catholic mothers was vital charitable work. Throughout the 1850s until the mid-1870s American Protestant intervention took on the form of 'placing out' systems in New York. One of the city's most prominent charities in the second half of the nineteenth century was the Children's Aid Society, formed by Charles Loring Brace in 1854. Tens of thousands of poor immigrant children removed from New York's tenement buildings between the 1850s and the mid-1870s, sent by the Children's Aid Society to stay with

[227] Annual Report, 1855.
[228] Letter on behalf of Mrs Leary, 4 Mar. 1873, NYHS, MSs Collection Lying-in Hospital Records.

Protestant families in the rural Midwest. The only appropriate setting for child-rearing was the American Protestant nuclear family, guided by the 'maternal devotion of the American woman.'[229]

Irish mothers were consistently portrayed in philanthropic reports as 'bestially drunken and abusive', prone to losing their intellect 'through the influence of liquor.'[230] An Irish child, known as child 'C' in the Children's Aid reports, was recorded writing home to her Irish parents in January 1856.

> I do hope that you both have left off drinking since I came away. I hope you will never drink any more strong drink… for if you do not drink up what money you earn, I am sure you can get a good living without having your daughter begging in the streets. *You little know what I used to suffer in body and in mind,* when I have had to go and beg for something to eat, when I knew if you would leave off drinking, you could get enough to eat, without sending your child to beg for cold victuals. Do leave it off now I am gone away.[231]

Letters, such as that of child C, were published in the Children's Aid Society's annual reports, often accompanied by elaborate discussions of parental failures and how reformed children were hostile towards their parents. These reports were published to discourage any public sympathy for those parents who wanted to keep their children and to raise more funds to send more children to foster homes.[232] In making another claim that one Irish mother was an affliction and member of the 'dangerous class' of the city, the report also stated that her children were still provided with food, shelter, and attended school when they could. Perhaps it was not so much the mother's behaviour that they found disdainful, but that she belonged

[229] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 4.
[230] Annual Report, 1855.
[231] Annual Report of Children's Aid Society, 1856, NYHS, F128 HV885. C6 A3.
[232] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 95.

to the 'great foreign stream of immigration.'[233] A woman's nationality, class and religion underpinned attitudes towards her mothering.

Irish Catholic mothers in New York may have failed to live up to American Protestant perceptions of motherhood, but these external forces also failed to appreciate –or wilfully misunderstood and misrepresented– the very different patterns and strategies of Irish Catholic working-class motherhood. Stansell has argued that reformers had portrayed a 'stark tableau of virtue and vice', concealing the reality of a 'complicated geography of family life'.[234] It is likely that reformers might have exaggerated the incapability of Irish Catholic working-class women to look after their own children. Did the letter-writing child 'C' go out begging purely because her parents were wasting time and money drinking? Her actions were also indicative of the survival strategies of many poor families, where poor children were widely expected to contribute to the family's income, through scavenging, huckstering, rag-picking, and stealing, while their parents attempted to find work.[235]

The Irish Catholic family economy was in stark contrast with the American Protestant ideal. From the 1830s onwards there had been a push to reform labour law in the northeast, to implement a minimum age for work, limit the hours worked and make schooling compulsory. Those who sought reform, Elisabeth Anderson has argued, were largely motivated by the fear that industrialisation (like immigraiton) threatened American nationhood. To implement child labour legislation was to implement order and control, to consolidate America. Indeed, 'productive, peacable and hardy citizens' required children to

[233] Annual Report, 1856.
[234] Stansell, *City of Women,* 208.
[235] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 95; Stansell, *City of Women,* 208.

be in the classroom and not in the factory.[236] By the 1860s, rudimentary child labour laws had been established in eight north-eastern states, with the 'notable exception' of New York.[237]

Misrepresentation can be extended to discussions of Irish mothers' experiences of domestic violence and drinking. Nineteenth-century contemporaries and historians have both argued that Irish wives 'gave as good as they got' in marital disputes. Anthony noted that Catherine Brady often insulted and denounced her husband in his presence, and 'it often comes to a fight between them, especially on Saturday nights.'[238] Pat Burdan finished his letter home stating he amused himself at night 'killing bugs' or 'listening to the women beating their husbands.'[239] On reporting the arrest of John McDermott for the murder of his wife, Elizabeth 'by throwing her out of a window' of their fifth-story tenement apartment on Greenwich Street, the *NYT* emphasised that Mrs McDermott 'was addicted to the use of strong liquor and as a consequence neglected her household duties' making their domestic relations 'far from pleasant' as Mr McDermott would return home daily to find his wife not only drunk, but with no meal prepared for him, and 'the usual quarrel and fight occurred.'[240] If violence was embedded in some Irish homes in urban America, it was enacted by *both* husbands and wives. Some historians have gone as far as to frame violence as some form of women's agency.[241] Diner argued that women 'when they could, struck back and rarely took the blows passively or submissively', they held their own and 'frequently dealt out the first fist.'[242] These suggestions from contemporaries and historians, however, that Irish women's

[236] Elisabeth Anderson, *Agents of Reform: Child Labor and the Origins of the Welfare State* (Princeton NJ, 2021), 2-11.
[237] Anderson, *Agents of Reform*, 22.
[238] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 181-183.
[239] Pat Burdan, 5 Sept. 1884, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[240] 'A Climax to Domestic Misery', *NYT,* (9 May 1880),7.
[241] See, for example, the writings of Finley Peter Dunne and the commentary of the fictional Mr Dooley, based in South Side Chicago.
[242] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 56.

ability to engage in domestic violence and 'fight back' is indicative of female empowerment is unconvincing. Instead, it illustrates that Irish wives and mothers, husbands and fathers, lived and worked in claustrophobic, stressful environments – environments where affection was often difficult and antagonism was common.

Many Irish husbands and fathers could 'escape' these worries, although often temporarily, at the workplace or through desertion or in the pub. The options for women were far more circumscribed. Evidence has shown that Irish women in the US drank more heavily than those in Ireland and drinking to excess was considered a problem amongst the New York Irish. Alcohol consumption often slipped into addiction with serious impacts on health. Irish women in New York died from alcoholism at a rate of 1.16 per one thousand between 1884 and 1890, in stark contrast with German women (0.12 per one thousand) and British and Welsh (0.42 per one thousand).[243] The death rate for Irish men from alcoholism, however, reached 3.08 per thousand, more than double that of Irish women. The prevalence of drink did not, however, mean that drinking problems were entirely ignored by the Irish community in New York. It was a very real concern and attempts were made to rectify the issue, through the establishment of local temperance communities alongside the Catholic Total Abstinence Societies. Women themselves recognised that their habits were unhealthy, but drinking and arguing was for many women, the only 'escape' route - a mechanism to cope with the difficulties wrought by everyday life. They lived in a constant state of precarity, working both in and out of the home, trying to satisfy their own wants and needs, and above all, those of their family As the West Side Irish woman, Mrs Gurney said to her

[243] Diner, *Erin's Daughters,* 113. Diner does not clarify who she defines as 'British' here: most likely Welsh, Scottish and English.

husband: ‘It’s not right for us to be quarrelling all the time before the children. But it seems like we can’t help it. He’s so worried all the time and I’m so tired.’[244]

The abandoned and destitute Irish wife was a stock character in nineteenth-century American Protestant philanthropy. Yet in another Children’s Aid report, she was deserving of sympathy and aid.

> In East Thirty-fourth street, in a tenement-house, a poor sewing-woman has lived for the last two years. She had formerly been in very good circumstances, and her husband, a respectable mechanic, earned a good support for her and her three children, until at length he fell into intemperate drinking… The poor wife was forced to the hardest work to keep her children alive. Last winter, in a moment of desperation, the husband put his name down for a three years’ whaling voyage, and was taken off to sea, leaving the woman with an old father and three children to care for. Many a night, the old man says, has the poor creature walked up from the lower part of the city (some three or four miles) with four dozen shirts on her back, through snow and wet, and then without fire or food, in her wet clothes, has worked till the dawn of day for the poor little ones dependent on her…. The children for whom she had slaved, and whom she loved more than her own life, were attacked with scarlet fever, and two of them died in the mother’s arms… Her exposures and hard labor had brought on a cough, and finally a disease of the lungs. She was at last unable to work, and could only lie upon her bed and depend on the chance charities of strangers[245]

This woman and her family were Irish Protestant and had apparently emigrated to New York from the north of Ireland. The Children’s Aid portrayal of the woman, Ireland, and her decision to emigrate is filled with contradictions. The woman is described unlike Irish Catholics who had emigrated from the rural west, as having had ‘everything very comfortable as all the Protestant Irish do.’ Her reason for leaving Ireland was, according to the report, to find '*greater* love and happiness.’ Yet it was on marriage in New York that it all started to go wrong. Her once beloved husband is now a ‘drunken vagabond; her children dead, except one who is to be left to the cold charity of strangers; she herself poor, deserted, unbefriended, her life in the very richness of its bloom wasted out by unceasing labor, and thus to die!’ For this

[244] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn,* 20-21.
[245] Annual Report, 1855.

woman and her remaining children to need charitable intervention was a tragedy, rather than a fundamental necessity as it was for Catholic mothers. The report presents a romanticised version of the Ireland she left behind. While many in Ireland were seeking out new delicacies and goods to eat, this mother was apparently desperate for all of 'the good old plain things' she used to eat, such as oat-meal cake. Above all, she was desperate for her mother and for her youth, where 'love had been all about her.'[246] For this Irish mother, her destitution is presented as a tragedy of modern urban living, rather than an inherent characteristic caused by her Irishness.

Irish Catholic Welfare

Protestant philanthropic organisations, such as the Children's Aid Society, continued to intervene in Irish family life in New York well into the second half of the nineteenth century. They were, however, increasingly supplemented by Catholic institutions. During the last quarter of the century, the proliferation of Irish Catholic activism throughout the city under the influence and guidance of Tammany Hall and Archbishop John McCloskey led to increased welfare relief for the Irish working poor. Thanks to state and city funding, more than ten times as much was spent on dependent children in New York by the mid-1890s compared to any other US city.[247] When Irish men in New York temporarily moved in search of work to alleviate their family's plight, their wives could temporarily place their children in institutions, or enter the workhouse themselves, to help cope with family distress.

One such Irish Catholic institution, the Foundling Asylum of the Sister of Charity, dominated New York's late-nineteenth-century welfare system. The Foundling was opened

[246] Annual Report, 1855. Emphasis added.
[247] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion,* 110.

by Sister Mary Irene Fitzgibbon at 17 East 12th Street in October 1869, as a Catholic home for 'abandoned' babies. Tellingly, the home reached capacity almost immediately after opening. Funded through city taxes, the Foundling expanded between the 1860s and 1890s, taking up an entire block, housing an average of six hundred women and 1,800 infants at a time, as well as providing day care for working mothers, maternity and children's hospitals, and a shelter for unmarried mothers.[248] The babies were often found with notes left by their mothers which were tucked into their blankets, providing the staff with details of the child's name and their parentage. Sometimes these notes were written by others, such as Thomas J. J. Lynnatt, who intervened on behalf of a mother who had not been 'yet a year in this country', and does not want to give her child up to a Protestant asylum in her state, but 'is willing to do all she can to support the child.'[249] Another mother had left her three-year-old son in the charge of friends, while hoping that her nine-month-old daughter could be taken under the Foundling's care.[250]

The Irish Catholic welfare system enacted a 'revolving door' policy, in which children were temporarily cared for when their parents' financial hardship was deemed greatest. This welfare system was based on two key foundations of Irish households abroad which were fundamentally at odds with Protestant American middle-class values. First, that the large Irish families and communities of which the children were part should be strengthened, rather than have the children sent away to other (Protestant) homes outside the city. Fear of proselytism was always at the heart of it. Second, the nuns at the heart of the welfare system understood that many Irish women and their children needed to undertake

[248] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 1-2.
[249] Thomas J.J. Lynnatt to the Foundling Hospital, 28 Dec. 1882, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.
[250] Jas. W. Sparks to the Foundling Hospital, 7 Jun. 1872, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.

paid work. Alongside accommodation and food, welfare services also encompassed industrial training and education. In 1863 the Catholic Protectory was established to take in Catholic children. Over the next thirty years the Protectory taught stenography, typewriting, printing, electro-typing, machinery, shoemaking, chair making, stocking making, tailoring, blacksmithing, carpentry, and gardening to its male students. The girls' department offered fewer opportunities although by 1893 glove making, machine sewing, cooking, stenography, typewriting, 'and various types of work other than domestic service were taught at the institution.'[251] Once their parents had managed to find some financial stability, children were allowed back into the familial fold. Funded by the municipal government, the Catholic church adapted its ideological stance of gendered spheres to the material needs of both its municipal funders, and its Irish working-class patrons. In doing so, it taught daughters of Irish women migrants of a world beyond service, away from the strictly private domestic setting.

Irish wives and mothers were also able to negotiate (or manipulate) the municipal system of poor relief, such as the New York Alms House. Women sought treatment in the Alms House when pregnant, treating the institutions as a maternity ward and home.[252] Irish women, including mothers and wives, deliberately left their family homes to move into such institutions. One mother 'had been away' having 'committed herself six months to Blackwell's Island… for drinkin.''[253] For many Irish mothers, the ability to place children in the care of others was part of a longer-term strategy to keep their children alive and to ensure that the mother remained the effective 'head of her family' (although, not as defined by the

[251] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 135.
[252] Gunja SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty: The Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918* (New York NY, 2009), 93.
[253] Annual Report, 1855.

census enumerators). Mary Malone, a 44-year-old widow, immigrated to Chicago from Ireland in 1874, with two of her five children, placing a daughter with a relative and two sons in a poorhouse back home. Malone worked as a live-in scrubwoman at Cook County hospital, while her stepdaughter took care of one of her sons, and her daughter worked in service. By 1880, however, she had 'a little home once more': she had remarried, and her and her new husband earned enough for all five children to live with or near her in Chicago; 'all the children are with me… so we are all home at night.'[254] Women such as Malone considered their behaviour as commonplace and sanctioned by the local Irish community. Studies undertaken by Martha Kanya-Forstner, Ruth-Ann Harris, Dympna McLoughlin and Virginia Crossman have demonstrated Irish women's ability to negotiate with authorities – such as the Catholic Church, landlords, and the state – to challenge the patriarchal status quo to improve their living conditions.[255] This challenge continued in the US.

The ability to receive institutional aid did not, however, completely end women's suffering. Evidence of women's ill health permeates institutional records. Young children were often sent to the Foundling after their Irish mothers had died in the city's institutions such as the State Emigrant Refuge, the New York City Asylum for the Insane, and the Manhattan Psychiatric Center. One pregnant woman arrived in New York in December 1870 but died the following May, 1871. Municipal emigration officers were consistently sending children to the Foundling. One child was sent to the Foundling in early 1872, having been born in the State Emigrant and Refuge Hospital in December 1871. Their Irish mother died of

[254] Kelleher, 'Maternal Strategies', 81.

[255] Martha Kanya-Forstner, 'Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool', in Donald MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin, 2000), 168-188; Ruth-Ann Harris, 'Negotiating Patriarchy: Irish Women and the Landlord', in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy Curtin (eds), *Reclaiming Gender: Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland* (New York NY, 1999), 207-26; Dympna McLoughlin, 'Workhouses and Irish female paupers, 1840-1870' in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds) *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Dublin, 1989), 117- 47.

puerperal fever on Christmas Day, 1871.[256] A 13-month-old child had been left at the Foundling Asylum by his father, whose note stated that 'the mother has lost her health and has gone to Ireland to try and regain it.'[257] As with the report of the fading Protestant Irish mother, Ireland emerges once more not only as a homeland, but also a place of vitality and physical health for Irish women. Both of these incidences contrast with the arrivals of young women in Chapter Six, who often sought domestic service due to its 'heathlful' nature. As experiences of health in New York deteriorated, women's understandings and memories of their life back in Ireland shifted.

Moreover, although leaving one's child with an institution might have been accepted and understood by the Irish community in New York, the separation was still emotionally fraught. One mother wrote in September 1870 that it was 'necessity' alone that compelled her to part with her 'poor sick little son,' as her 'husband deserted me and I am sick since my confinement and unable to make a living.' She signed off 'from his broken-hearted Mother.'[258] The mental distress was compounded when administrative difficulties meant that temporary sojourns to institutions often became permanent absences. Many mothers often tried to keep in touch with the institutions so that they could reclaim their children but this proved to be difficult. One letter from 1871 is particularly painful to read:

> I expect you will excuse me for writing to ascertain whether my baby is still living, and if so, whether you'll be so kind as to let me know, if by any chance, when I call I may be let to see him. I can never cease thinking of the child. There is scarcely a night I lie down but I cry my fill and it makes it all the worse because I have to bear it all in silence without a word of advice or consolation from any-body; but trying to be what I was before, that I cannot be, for do what I will I am disconsolate. Oh dear Sister, I know your kind heart will induce you to grant me this favor and pity a poor unfortunate girl. I have always in my heart that I would like to adopt that child again and work

[256] Commissioner of Emigration to the Foundling Hospital, 10 Jan. 1872, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.
[257] Anonymous Letter, 30 Sept. 1870, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.
[258] Anonymous Letter, undated, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.

> for him all my life. I could give up friends and relations for him. Will you please answer this.[259]

The separation – or tearing apart – of families had a devastating impact not only on parents but also on their children. Bernard Mallon wrote in 1898 of his experience as a child migrant and how 'after two months in this Country our little home was broken up' due to his father's desertion and mother's inability to take care of him and his siblings. His three sisters were placed in one institution while Mallon and his brother went to another, 'where we found out to our hearts sorrow the want of a dear Fathers & Mothers home…We almost lost track of each other we were separated for 15 years and many a salt tear we shed in that time thinking of all dear belonging to us.' Upon reaching adulthood some of the siblings did, however, manage to make a living and to reunite, although only one of his sisters remained alive. Mallon's childhood profoundly shaped his adult outlook on life. While describing himself as very much like his father in disposition, both Mallon and his brother staunchly stayed away from drinking and focused on work and their families. Mallon concluded that he was 'very thankful to Almighty god for giving us our health… we are very happy Eliza, Joseph, and myself are always together.'[260] The difficulties that Irish migrants had in keeping their families together had a generational impact on their children's perception of familial relationships and the necessity of kinship.

While the material reality and necessities of many Irish women's lives 'challenged the paradigm of female domesticity' –for example through participating in the work force – this does not, of course, mean that gendered norms were wholly disbanded, in Ireland or in the US. [261] Institutions such as the Foundling still operated within patriarchal structures expand

[259] Agnes Maloney to the Foundling Hospital, 9 Feb. 1871, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.
[260] Bernard Mallon to Catherine Mallon, 9 Dec. 1898, TM, RG3. 5.11.1
[261] Cara Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 2019), 26.

here – albeit ones that were familiarly Irish Catholic rather than American Protestant. The Irish Catholic nuns who ran these institutions never advocated 'liberating' women and children from traditional patriarchal structures but sought, perhaps more realistically, to strengthen them 'by minimizing stresses that made family cohesion and stability difficult among the urban poor.'[262]

Irish wives and mothers' behaviour and habits were policed by their partners, communities, and institutions. A note left with a child at the Foundling described how the child's father, a slate roofer who had only been in the country for three years, had been the 'most excellent and practical Irish Catholic, respected and beloved, who by a fall from a roof in this place died instantaneously' in 1871. The note revealed that the father has left behind 6 half-Orphans, two of whom were to be sent to the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum, while the eldest son was to learn slate roofing in Englewood, New Jersey. It was, at the time of writing in 1872, undecided where the other two boys would go. None, however, were to stay with their Irish mother, 'a most helpless woman, given to drink, Catholic or Protestant, as it serves her passion or interest.'[263] The suggestion that the mother was not dutifully Catholic indicates how important (at least pretences) of piety was in Irish New York, in order to access diasporic support. Policing could collide and collude, resulting in a woman's incarceration. Instead of arguing and beating his wife as was usual on a weekend, Patrick Brady took another path: 'one such Saturday night about two years ago, he had her (Catherine Brady) arrested and she was sent to "the Island" (workhouse) for six months… if her health has survived, her home and her children have suffered.'[264] Another wife who had entered the

[262] Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 135.
[263] Anonymous Letter, 5 Dec. 1872, NYHS, Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, Vol. 67.
[264] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 181-183.

Work House by choice was also criticised for leaving her family in a state of 'great confusion.'[265] The welfare of the family was a women's responsibility – even if this responsibility was exercised from an institution. If a woman was committed to Blackwell's Island to help support her family, she did so to the detriment of her reputation.

Not all Irish mothers had become pregnant out of an immediate desire to start or grow a family. In April 1879 a pregnant and single 22-year-old Irish woman named Mary Moore applied to the Commissioners of Emigration for assistance, stating that she had been betrayed by Cameron Smith, a real estate agent who used to visit Moore 'clandestinely' at her place of work and 'seduced her under promise of marriage.' The Commissioners sought Smith's arrest. On appearing in front of the local magistrates, Smith vehemently denied the charge, and sought to prove that 'the complainant's character was previously bad.'[266] Moore had to defend her probity in court in front of several members of her own church, to obtain the means necessary to look after herself and her unborn child. Another young Irish servant woman in similar circumstances had her former fiancé arrested. The woman's respectability was put on trial, with attempts to 'show that the previous life of the girl had not been chaste.' The case against her fiancé for refusing to carry out his promise of marriage was thrown out to the woman's severe distress. Unable to 'bear the disgrace the put upon her', the young woman returned to her place of work, put her employer's children to bed, dressed herself in her best clothes, wrote a letter to her parents, and took her own life. On her death she was described as a girl 'but twenty years of age, and is said to be respectably connected in Ireland, which country she left eighteen months ago.'[267]

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[265] Annual Report, 1856.
[266] 'An Irish Girl's Charge', *NYT* (1 Jan. 1879), 2.
[267] 'A Servant Girl Takes Poison', *NYT* (20 Oct. 1875), 8.

Single Women

John Nolan wrote home to his parents in 1883 about a group of Fermanagh women based in New York's plan for a ball for the Enniskillen Rose-buds, 'but as some of the rose buds have grown in to wallflowers since, they thought better of calling it by (an)other name.'[268] Nolan's comment serves as a reminder that not all women became wives as they got older. Yet, despite Nolan's suggestion that this was because these women were shy, with limited ability to socialise with potential suitors, many middle-aged Irish women simply did not want to marry. A significant minority remained single out of choice. In New York, the most heavily concentrated area of Irish women in the United States and, crucially, the location where many women sought to move to, many were either marrying late, or not at all. As discussed above, 24 percent of Irish born women in the US in this age category were single and had not been married, which was similar to the 25 percent of Irish born women in Ireland in this age category who were single and had not been married. Irish women in the US also married less frequently and at a later age compred with other migrant groups of women. Even in those urban areas where Irish women did not outnumber Irish men, such as San Francisco, 'Irish women still demonstrated a reluctance to marry.'[269]

Not working in the formal labour market was considered a sign of wellbeing, but this was a route that was difficult to follow for unmarried women. As shown in Figure 18, large proportions of middle-aged Irish women whose marriage had been terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce,) were working in the formal labour market. While a young single Irish woman was likely to be a domestic servant, Irish domestic servants were

[268] John Nolan, 14 Jan. 1883, TM, RG3. 5.11.1.
[269] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 48.

not always likely to be young. As shown in Figure 19, 71 percent of middle-aged women in the formal labour market who had never married were working in the sector. It shows that high shares of young Irish women whose marriage was terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce,) were working in service: 63 percent of those married (spouse absent); 45 percent of those divorced; and 26 percent of those widowed. Service work was relatively less important for young Irish women who were married (spouse present) with 15 percent working in this occupation. Other important occupations for the small share of married (spouse present) Irish middle-aged women who were working in the formal labour market included work that could be undertaken in the home such as: laundresses; and milliners and dressmakers. Many unmarried women worked as live-in housemaids, cooks and nurses whereas married women tended to remain living in their own homes. Although a large share of married women in New York who were employed as domestics undertook similar work before marriage, many were also previously employed in other occupations such as factory work.[270]

Work in domestic service encompassed multiple roles and multiple experiences and the presence of older women in service primarily reflected two factors. First, many Irish women remained single and remained in domestic service. Second, many married women were forced back into the formal labour market by familial circumstance. Irish women of all ages could often be found within one household that employed domestic servants. The Merchant's House, for example, was a townhouse owned by the upper-middle class Protestant merchant family, the Tredwells, from 1832 until 1933. The Tredwell home is now the only remaining historic house museum in Lower Manhattan. The family consistently

[270] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 63.

employed three to four servants from 1840 through to the turn of the twentieth century.[271] The servants ages ranged from 18 to 41 years of age and the vast majority were born in Ireland. The 1855 New York State Census indicates a relatively young cohort of Irish servants with Mary James, aged 31, being the eldest. The 1880 federal census reports a different set of four servants: Mary Brun (aged 25 and single) who was maid-of-all-work; Catherine Rock (aged 40 and married); Bridget Padding (aged 40 and single); and Annie McNulty (aged 40 and single). Three new servants were employed in Merchant's House in 1900, including 42-year-old Mary Romey, who had emigrated to New York some 16 years previously; and 35-year-old Emma Doak, who had arrived in the City in 1891. Both Romey and Doakwere single. While the Merchant's House Museum stated that Emma was a servant, her occupation according to the 1900 census was female companion to the head of the Tredwell household, 66 year-old Phoebe Tredwell. The city's labour market allowed women the opportunity to remain single, and, for those that were married, to support their families especially when their menfolk were out of work or they were widowed or deserted. In urban centres, life as a single woman was a fairly attractive and realistic alternative to life as a wife and mother in a struggling household.

Health

Remaining single (and by implication, childless), or in waged labour, was arguably a preferable option for Irish women, mentally and physically, in middle age. The relentless and hard nature of domestic labour meant women were plagued with aching backs and feet, stomach ulcers and varicose veins. Irish housewives in their forties were criticised by

[271] Information from visit to Merchant's House Museum, Manhattan. For more information on the Museum see: https://merchantshouse.org/ (Nov. 2021).

Anthony for having the 'look of premature age', which hampered their ability to be employed. She noted with approval that American-born daughters took particular care over their appearance, compared with their toothless mothers, and 'fared better' in the labour market. Daughters quickly undertook the aesthetic labour required to be accepted in the workplace, and to be distinguished and separated from their mothers. Childbirth also wreaked havoc on Irish women. Prolapsed uteruses a common complaint amongst tenement wives. Anthony declared it irresponsible for Irish women to be so frequently pregnant, that they undermined their own 'strength and vigor, and, in the worst cases, to produce such complete organic exhaustion that it is impossible for her to bear a mature and fully developed infant.'[272] Irish women were berated, accused of risking miscarriage through continuous exertion in the home such as 'the heavy tasks of house-cleaning in the spring, house opening in the fall, water carrying, rug beating, furniture shifting, and so forth.'[273]

Many Irish wives led downtrodden lives, even in seemingly stable homes. Ten years after purchasing their home, Martin McHenry, the head of the McHenry-Malone family, was comfortable and satisfied with his lot. Martin McHenry wrote home in the 1880s that leaving Ireland had been the right choice: 'this is a good country. We are raising a family of 9 children, 5 boys and 4 girls and paid that amount of money in 10 years and still living here.'[274] They were able to pay off their lease and raise their ever-growing family. Martin described his wife, Mary, as 'in good health and looking well and she weighs about 200 pounds.'[275] Indeed Mary McHenry was in such good enough physical health that she was able to give birth to three more children. By the 1890s, they were parents to 13 living

[272] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 163-167.
[273] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 20-21.
[274] Martin McHenry, 12 Mar. 1883, TLRW, AIA.082.
[275] Mary McHenry, 11 Apr. 1870, TLRW, AIA.082.

children. Having spent the majority of her married life pregnant, Mary was in charge of all domestic labour, from the laundry to the cooking and cleaning. She also managed the various boarders and lodgers taken in by the family. Despite some respite in the mid-1880s, when her eldest daughters were still at home and assisted with cooking, cleaning and childcare, by the end of the decade they had moved to New York to find service work, leaving Mary at the end of her tether. She continued her daughterly duties to her parents back home, providing them with emotional and financial support through her letters and remittances. Very occasionally, her brother Daniel took over the letter-writing, informing their parents that 'Mary had not time to rite any in this letter is washing day with her and it was raining very hard' and 'Mary wants you to let her know how her father and mother are getting she is going to write herself in a few days she is kept pretty busy with the young.'[276] Mary wrote to her parents of her financial concerns and the difficulties of asking Martin for money: 'I have a very large family to take care of myself, it is very hard to ask for money to take care of another family dear parents I will try to do for ye as well as I know how.' Financial concerns were alleviated by the 1890s as Martin has finally paid off an outstanding loan. Life for his wife is still 'a chore' and Mary had a 'good deal on my care.' Mary's domestic duty as a daughter was interrupted by her duty as a mother as her letter was cut short, 11-month-old Florence was 'uneasy and want(s) me to take her.'[277]

[276] Daniel Malone, 21 Mar. 1871, TLRW, AIA.082.
[277] Mary McHenry, 1 Dec. 1891, TLRW, AIA.082.

Conclusions

Life for many Irish middle-aged women was hard and precarious. They were often married to men who had unstable jobs with relatively low wages. Their work in the home was arduous and they raised large families – as it was for most married women in Ireland. Many married women worked in the formal labour market, but their work was restricted to a narrow range of occupations. Their wages were essential for the household finances but, even when combined with the wages of husbands and children, were often insufficient to keep their families above the breadline. Many women carefully used such institutions as temporary means of support as they navigated their families through difficult times. Some women remained single; but although they did not embrace the shackles of marriage and motherhood their lives often became more difficult. Remaining single was stigmatised, job opportunities were limited and wages tended to fall with age. Whatever their marital status, Irish women were living difficult lives in middle-age. And for many, as the next chapter shows, their lives became even more difficult.

Chapter 8
In their Ashes lived their Wonted Fires: Mature and Elderly Irish Women in New York

Take a random sample of women aged 45 years and over from New York City in 1880: what nationality predominated? American born? No. Irish. Older age came in emerald hue. This chapter considers how older Irish women survived in New York City from 1850 until 1915.[278] Irish women became adept at negotiating three different, albeit interconnected, survival strategies to reduce damage of ageing to their wellbeing. First, many elderly women continued their employment in or re-entered the formal labour market although this was often contingent on their marital status. Second, women used family and social networks, particularly their children, to provide shelter, food, financial and emotional support. Third, they (often reluctantly) sought assistance from the city's municipal and religious institutions. The relationships with such institutions were often reciprocal and interdependent as these organisations depended on the Irish community for funding and support. In examining these survival strategies, key themes that underpinned Irish women's wellbeing in New York emerge, including the reciprocal and dynamic nature of the relationship between multiple institutions and their employees, families, and individual women. It is, moreover, apparent that older women were adept at negotiating sometimes complementary, sometimes competing, understandings of what it meant to be an Irish woman in an Irish and American city.

[278] Here the term 'mature' refers to ages 45 to 64, and 'elderly' to those 65+.

Demographics

In reporting on abnormal deaths in the city throughout 1878, New York City's Coroner drew attention to the deaths of fifteen men and women, whose ages at the time of death was said to be 100 years or more. The majority of the 'alleged centenarians' were Irish women.[279] At 106 years old, Mary Mernea was the oldest of the group. While it was unusual to live to over 100 years of age (and the accuracy of the Coroner's information is questionable) it was not unusual for Irish women to reach an old age in late-nineteenth-century New York. In 1880, there were numerically more Irish women in the older age groups in New York City than white or Black women. Women also comprised the majority of elderly Irish people, at 63 percent.[280] It was common to see and hear elderly Irish women in the streets of New York, despite their invisibility in history.

Mature Irish women, born between the end of the Napoleonic War through to the mid-1830s, were directly impacted by famine. While it is not known at what age women emigrated, the prominence of this group of women is strongly suggestive of famine migration. Like their counterparts who were assisted to Australia, these women lived long lives.[281] Many Irish women lived a relatively long life but declining earning power, waning physical health, and the loss of spousal support meant that the latter stages of their lives were characterised by difficulties and suffering. As shown in Table 38, 46 percent of mature Irish women in New York were married with spouse present, some 11 percentage points fewer

[279] 'Married and Died: Vital Statistics of the Metropolis for 1878', *NYT* (1 Jan. 1878), 2.

[280] There were numerically more Irish women than white American or Black American women in the 30 to 44, 45 to 64, and 65 plus age groups. Just over one-quarter of Irish women were aged in the mature age group, making up over one-third of this female age group in the city. Only 6 percent of Irish women were elderly, they also comprised over third of that female age group. Only 5 percent of Irish men in 1880 were aged 65 plus, comprising 29 percent of the male age group.

[281] Cormac Ó Gráda, ''The Next World and the New World: Relief, Migration, and the Great Irish Famine', *Journal of Economic History,* 79/2 (2019), 345. The average age at death of Ó Gráda's cohort was 62.6 years.

than other women. They were more likely to be widowed or single. Overall, 13 percent of Irish-born women in the mature age category in New York were single and never married compared to 9 percent of all women. In Ireland, 16 percent of Irish-born women in this age category in were single and never married in 1881. The increasing incidence of widowhood with age is illustrated in Table 39, the rate nearly doubling for elderly women: 74 percent of elderly Irish women in New York were widows compared with 38 percent of mature Irish-born women. These rates of widowhood were higher than those prevalent in Ireland in 1881 where 58 percent of elderly women and 28 percent of mature women were widows.[282] Old age has been synonymous with hardship, poverty, and loneliness throughout history.[283] Perhaps this was especially the case for women who had already survived the famine.

Table 38. Marital Status of Mature (aged 45-64) Women, All and Irish (New York 1880)

	All		Irish-born	
Marital status	No	% of all	No	% of Irish-born
Married, spouse present	66,710	54.93	20,611	46.00
Married, spouse absent	3,005	2.47	1,026	2.29
Divorced	196	0.16	59	0.13
Widowed	40,509	33.35	17,174	38.33
Never married/single	11,030	9.08	5,932	13.24
Total	121,450	100.00	44,802	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.

[282]The data for the Irish women in Ireland is from census data in William Vaughan and André Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), 88.

[283] Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic Poor: Poverty in Independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017), 17. See also: Samantha Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law* (Suffolk, 2011), 125.

Table 39. Marital Status of Elderly (aged 65+) Women, All and Irish (New York 1880)

	All		Irish-born	
Marital status	No	% of all	No	% of Irish-born
Married, spouse present	1,744	20.49	1,408	15.08
Married, spouse absent	176	2.07	160	1.71
Divorced	7	0.08	4	0.04
Widowed	5,637	66.22	6,877	73.64
Never married/single	948	11.14	890	9.53
Total	8,512	100.00	9,339	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Overall, 30 percent of mature Irish women were 'head of household', higher than all mature women and other main comparator groups, with the exception of Black women. Furthermore, 16 percent of mature Irish women were classified as 'non-relatives, higher than all mature women and other main comparator groups, with the exception of Black women.[284]

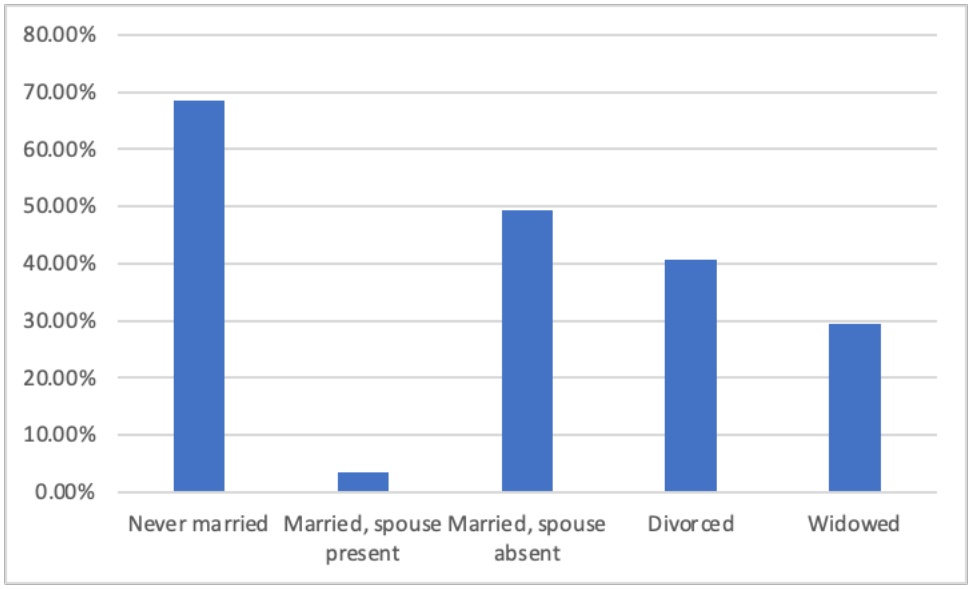
Labour

The majority of Irish women in the older age categories were 'unoccupied' or 'keeping house' according to the 1880 census. Figure 20 and 21, however, report participation rates of Irish women in the formal labour market, show that there were significant variations according to marital status. Only 3 percent of both mature and elderly Irish women who were married with their spouse present were occupied in the formal labour market. This compares with 68 percent of mature Irish women, and 31 percent of elderly Irish women, who were not or had not been. Figures 20 and 21 also show that women who whose marriage was terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce) had a relatively high labour force participation compared to married women. For instance, 29 percent of mature

[284] See Appendix B, Table B10.

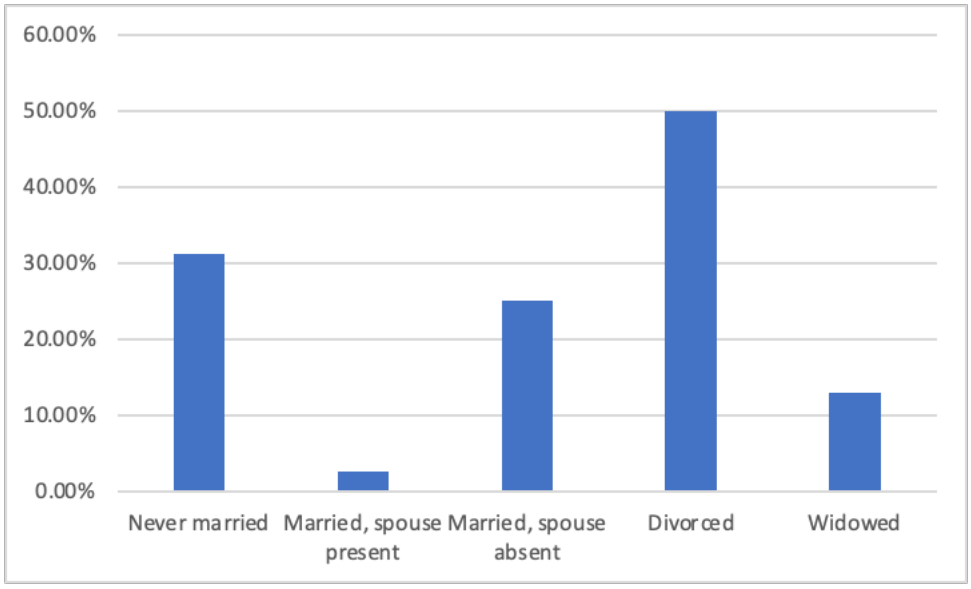
widows and 13 percent of elderly widows were working in the formal labour market; and 49 percent of mature women and 25 percent of elderly women, whose spouse was absent were working in the formal labour market.

Figure 20. Mature Irish (aged 45-64) Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rates, by Marital Status (New York 1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

Figure 21. Elderly Irish (aged 65+) Women's Enumerated Labour Force Participation Rates, by Marital Status (New York 1880)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

Participation in the formal labour market contracted as women aged. As shown in Tables 40 and 41, 79 percent of both mature and elderly Irish women in the formal labour market were working in just three occupations: domestic servants; laundresses; and milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses. Overall, 62 percent of mature Irish women and 54 percent of elderly Irish women in the formal labour market were in domestic service. The labour market was as heavily concentrated for mature and elderly, young and middle-aged Irish women, as service continued to be the most important occupation. Laundry work did, however, become increasingly important for women as they aged.[285]

As shown in Tables 40 and 41, 93 percent of mature and 92 percent of elderly Black women were enumerated in just three occupations: domestic servants; laundresses; and nurses. Overall, 62 percent of mature white women were enumerated in three occupations:

[285] See Tables 30, 37, 42, and 43.

domestic servants; milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses; and nurses. Furthermore, 69 percent of elderly white women were enumerated in three occupations: domestic servants; milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses; and boarding and lodging-house keepers. White American women were employed in a wider range of occupations compared with Black American and Irish women. Older age narrowed employment opportunities for all women, but a racial and migration dimension remained.

Table 40 Women's work (aged 45-64) in New York (main occupations) – All and Main Comparator Groups

	All		American born White			American born Black			Irish-born			North American/Canadian			European			English		
	No	% of birthplace occupied	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation Total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	%of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total
Domestic servants	8,031	39.44	1,036	31.59	12.90	577	49.06	7.18	4,945	47.83	61.57	53	31.36	0.66	958	23.09	11.93	301	34.52	3.75
Launders and laundresses	3,642	17.89	124	3.78	3.40	467	39.71	12.82	2,197	21.25	60.32	19	11.24	0.52	741	17.86	20.35	56	6.42	1.54
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	2710	13.31	776	23.67	28.63	53	4.51	1.96	1,073	10.38	39.59	51	30.18	1.88	506	12.20	18.67	198	22.71	7.31
Tailors and tailoresses	968	4.75	121	3.69	12.50	1	0.09	0.10	237	2.29	24.48	2	1.18	0.21	575	13.86	59.40	29	3.33	3.00
Nurses	635	3.12	213	6.50	33.54	21	1.79	3.31	197	1.91	31.02	6	3.55	0.94	92	2.22	14.49	67	7.68	10.55
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	509	2.50	210	6.40	41.26	4	0.34	0.79	168	1.63	33.01	6	3.55	1.18	2	0.05	0.39	31	3.56	6.09
Teachers and scientific persons	317	1.56	206	6.28	64.98	1	0.09	0.32	44	0.43	13.88	4	2.37	1.26	45	1.08	14.20	8	0.92	2.52
Traders and dealers in groceries	291	1.43	12	0.37	4.12	1	0.09	0.34	162	1.57	55.67	0	0.00	0.00	108	2.60	37.11	5	0.57	1.72
Confectioners	227	1.11	21	0.64	9.25	2	0.17	0.88	143	1.38	63.00	1	0.59	0.44	38	0.92	16.74	17	1.95	7.49
Traders and dealers in dry foods, fancy foods, and notions	223	1.10	39	1.19	17.49	0	0.00	0.00	84	0.81	37.67	1	0.59	0.45	66	1.59	29.60	23	2.64	10.31
All Occupied	20363	100.00%	3279	100.00%	16.10%	1176	100.00%	5.78%	10338	100.00%	50.77%	169	100.00%	0.83%	4149	100.00%	20.38%	872	100.00%	4.28%
All	121450		30159			2,101			44,802			908			35185			5956		

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Table 41 Women's work (aged 65+) in New York (main occupations) – All and Main Comparator Groups

	All		American born White			American born Black			Irish-born			North American/Canadian			European			English		
	No	% of birthplace occupied	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total	No	% of birthplace occupied	% of occupation total
Domestic servants	1315	50.65	252	49.61	19.16	92	58.60	7.00	715	57.71	54.37	5	33.33	0.38	168	34.08	12.78	57	42.54	4.33
Launders and laundresses	322	12.40	19	3.74	5.90	47	29.94	14.60	178	14.37	55.28	1	6.67	0.31	71	14.40	22.05	3	2.24	0.93
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	203	7.82	54	10.63	26.60	1	0.64	0.49	85	6.86	41.87	3	20.00	1.48	37	7.51	18.23	18	13.43	8.87
Nurses	109	4.20	25	4.92	22.94	5	3.18	4.59	39	3.15	35.78	2	13.33	1.83	25	5.07	22.94	11	8.21	10.09
Tailors and tailoresses	87	3.35	16	3.15	18.39	1	0.64	1.15	15	1.21	17.24	0	0.00	0.00	51	10.34	58.62	4	2.99	4.60
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	73	2.81	42	8.27	57.53	0	0.00	0.00	18	1.45	24.66	2	13.33	2.74	7	1.42	9.59	3	2.24	4.11
Hucksters and peddlers	68	2.62	5	0.98	7.35	0	0.00	0.00	36	2.91	52.94	0	0.00	0.00	24	4.87	35.29	0	0.00	0.00
Teachers and scientific persons	28	1.08	16	3.15	57.14	0	0.00	0.00	4	0.32	14.29	1	6.67	3.57	3	0.61	10.71	3	2.24	10.71
Confectioners	27	1.04	6	1.18	22.22	0	0.00	0.00	14	1.13	51.85	0	0.00	0.00	5	1.01	18.52	2	1.49	7.41
Midwives	24	0.92	1	0.20	4.17	0	0.00	0.00	2	0.16	8.33	0	0.00	0.00	16	3.25	66.67	3	2.24	12.50
All Occupied	2596	100.00	508	100.00	19.57	157	100.00	6.05	1239	100.00	47.73	15	100.00	0.58	493	100.00	18.99	134	100.00	5.16
All	25944		8512			442			9339			164			5399			1485		

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

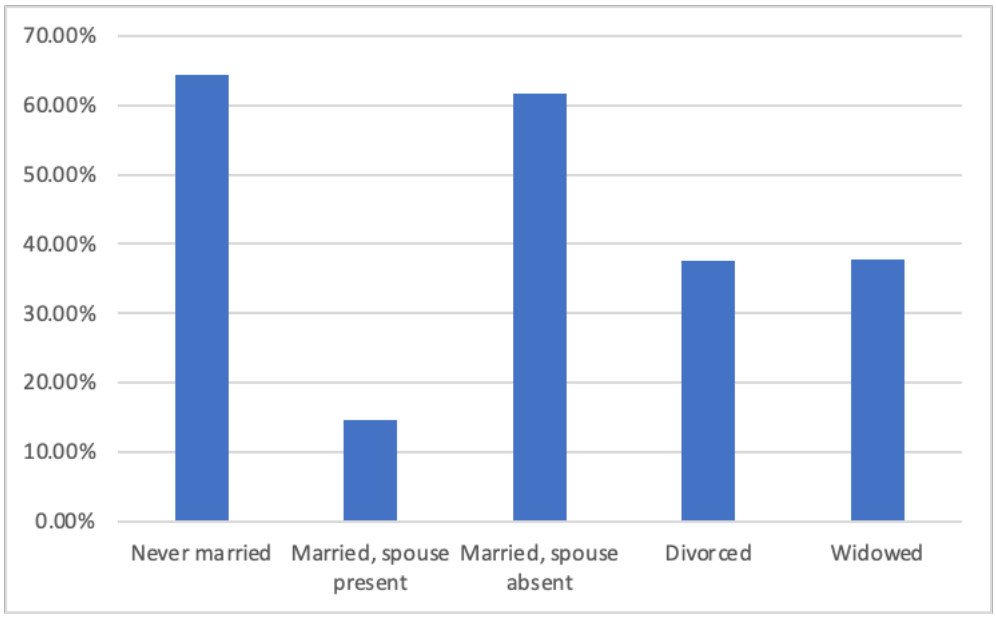
Domestic service remained the main occupation for both old and older Irish women, but the propensity to be employed in the occupation varied by marital status. As shown in Figures 22 and 23, 71 percent of mature Irish women and 62 percent of elderly Irish women, in the formal labour market who had never married worked in the sector. Mature Irish women whose marriage had been terminated (by abandonment, widowhood or divorce) also had a high propensity to work in service. In the mature age group, service was undertaken by 62 percent of those married (spouse absent); 38 percent of those divorced; and 38 percent of those widowed. In the elderly age group, service work was undertaken by 73 percent of those married (spouse absent); and 57 percent of those widowed. Some elderly women even travelled to New York to find service work on widowhood. Alice McDonald and Bridget O'Brien travelled from Ireland to the city in their sixties and eighties.[286] Elizabeth Feeney had left Sligo after her husband and two children died young. In the early years of her widowhood, she worked in service in England, before travelling to New York to again work in service until 'she became too feeble to do any more work.'[287] Feeney's situation indicates that Irish women were more likely to find paid work in urban America than in other areas of settlement – and were willing to travel in order to get it.

Elderly women were more likely to be found working as servants for low wages in institutions or commercial buildings, rather than in the security of private homes. They might have been visible in public buildings, not wanted in close quarters of New York's homes. They might, moreover, be in institutions exchanging their labour for accommodation and charity. One elderly Irish domestic, employed by a municipal industrial school in the city in the 1890s was (in contrast to other depictions of young Irish domestics) 'perfectly honest,

[286] Admissions, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. A. Vol. 119
[287] 'Over 107 Years Old', *NYT* (21 Feb, 1888), 5.

trustworthy and in every way respectable.' But she was also 'careless, forgetful and wanting in the qualities that make an efficient domestic. We have borne patiently with her faults for a long time at great cost to our service, dishes and patience.' The Irish woman's 'faults' were arguably simply the ageing process affecting her physical capacity to labour. The shaky hands of old age, rather than carelessness, smashed those dishes. The school board sacked the elderly woman, the school warden writing that she was 'perfectly willing to do, but incapable of doing.'[288] In contrast, an elderly Irish man employed as an orderly in the Alms House was also noted as 'incapacitated', but municipal employer did 'not care to ask for his resignation.'[289]

Figure 22. Proportion of Mature Irish Women Working in Service, by Marital Status (New York 1880) (% of those enumerated as occupied)

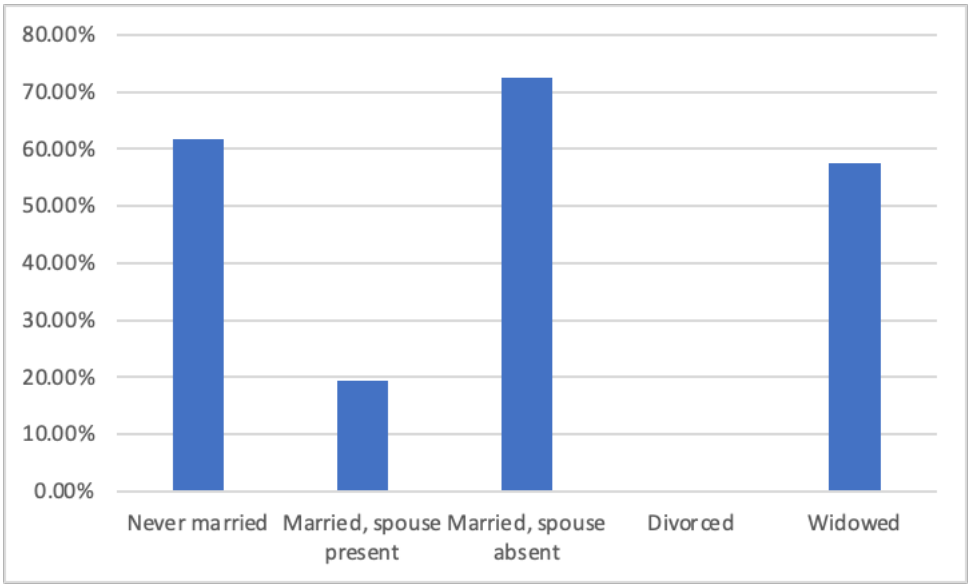


Source: IPUMS dataset.

[288] E.R. Downing, Superintendent to Morris Adlar, Acting President, 31 Jul. 1898, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series V. Vol. 23.

[289] John Terry ,Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, 15 Feb. 1896, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 319.

Figure 23. Proportion of Elderly Irish Women Working in Service, by Marital Status (New York 1880) (% of those enumerated as occupied)



Source: IPUMS dataset.

The second most prevalent job amongst elderly Irish women was working as a laundress. Many Irish widows maintained some financial independence by working in the city's laundries.Sue Ainslie Clark and Edith Wyatt's 1911 investigation revealed that elderly widows were the most likely to toil in dangerous environments and for little pay. The racial hierarchy of wages within laundries, of which Irish women were often found at the top, disappeared as women aged. The 'worst paid and the hardest worked' employees were older women of any nationality and 'many of all these laundry workers, probably a larger proportion than in any other trade, are widows with children to support… the lower the pay and the damper and darker the laundry, the older and worse off these women seem to be.'[290] These women were surely only working in these conditions out of financial necessity.

[290] Sue Ainslie Clark and Edith Wyatt, 'Women Laundry Workers in New York', *McClure's Magazine,* 36/4, (1911), 408.

Many old Irish widows pedalled goods, fruit and vegetables on the streets of New York. Amalgamating the data for hucksters, peddlers and traders in various goods indicates that 5 percent of mature Irish women, and 7 percent of elderly Irish women, in the formal labour markets were working in such jobs. The *NYT* described how,every evening on the lower West Side's Clinton Market throughout the 1880s, an 'army of housewives with baskets on their arms infest this market-place, making their purchases by the sickly light of flaring torches.' This legion of women were a motley crew, who seemed to differ 'greatly in appearance and character as did the marketers themselves.' Amongst the market-sellers were 'sharp young Yankees in checkered shirts and with lusty lungs' and there were middle-aged Italians who 'talked cautiously to their customers, as if they possessed little confidence to use the English tongue.' The oldest and the most fastidious sellers were the 'old Irish women with sleeves rolled up above the elbow who did a great deal of work, but were quite sparing in their talk' and 'sharp' in the handling of coins.[291]

One Irish widow, however, delighted in the opportunity to chat to their patrons and other market-sellers. Jane Noonan, the fruit-seller of Battery Park (see Chapter Five) was described as a 'Battery Park Landmark' by the NYT. She was affectionately known as 'Aunt Jane' to her local regulars, for her comforting (ever) presence and the kind words she offered to all who bought her fruit and vegetables. Noonan had left Cork for New York in 1866 with her husband and one of her four children. The other three stayed behind. Her husband died only a few months after arriving in the city and in the midst of trying to find work, Noonan lost touch with her children back home. Her daughter in the city quickly married, giving birth – the 'poor girl'– to seven children. In 1906 and at the age of 75, Noonan was without any

[291] 'A Market for the Poor: Scenes in the West Side of the City', *NYT* (24 Jul. 1882), 5.

relatives. Her husband, daughter, and grandchildren were all dead, while her son-in-law had 'skedaddled somewhere.' With the aid of a younger Irish man, whom she had helped on his arrival, Noonan was able to maintain herself through the fruit-stand. Away from some blood relations back in Ireland, the streets of New York offered some women the chance to 'create' their own families. Over time, Battery Park became the centre of Noonan's world, the other stand-owners and their relatives her 'ready-made family' abroad. As Aunt Jane, Noonan was able to act as an almost surrogate mother to her neighbours and fellow stand-owners, fulfilling her own maternal expectations as an Irish woman, as well as her financial needs.[292]

Yet Noonan's livelihood was under threat by the turn of the twentieth century, as municipal authorities intended to revoke her selling licence for the Park. The *NYT* asked if this meant the fruit-seller was, then, finally able to retire. To the reporter's surprise, however, Noonan was neither willing nor able to simply give up work. She was, instead, readying herself to move on to work as a basket-seller on-board ships docked at the city's port. While the fruit-seller's life was one of consistent toil, Noonan portrayed herself to the *NYT* as content. Her perspective on her own life was intimately influenced by her working environment, her customers who had just arrived in the city from distant shores. Noonan had, in her own words, 'seen many trials and sorrows, but they were not mine… they were only mine when I hadn't maybe an apple or a banana to give a poor baby.'[293]

[292] '"Aunt Jane," A Battery Park Landmark', *NYT* (15 April 1906), 8.
[293] '"Aunt Jane"'.

Income and Savings

As discussed in Chapter Seven, a woman's income was often important in providing a basic level of subsistence for the family. The wage data collected by Anthony on working mothers, who were primarily Irish and German, from the West Side of New York shows a major difference between incomes of families with widows with children at work and those with children too young to work.[294] As shown in Table 42, the average annual income of widows who were the sole 'bread winner' was $395. This comprised $353 from waged labour and $42 from other sources such as rent from lodgers, charitable sources of gifts from relatives.[295] The Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board in 1912 reported that the living minimum wage of women was between $9.00 and $11.00 but these women had an average weekly wage of $7.60 and also has two or three children to support.[296] The income of families with widows significantly increased when children went out to work. As shown in Table 42, the family income almost doubled when one or more of the children was at work. Furthermore, on average, a widow's contribution to the family income fell from 89 percent to 35 percent. The overall prosperity of the family, and of the widow in particular, was dependent on the waged labour of her children. But when the children started a family of their own, many withdraw their contributions from their mother's family income.

[294] Katharine Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn* (New York NY, 1914), 7.
[295] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 124.
[296] The average size of families where widows were the sole earners was 3.2.

Table 42. Average Annual Income of Families with Widows (New York (West Side), 1910-11)

	Widows with no children at work		Widows with children at work	
Source of income	Average annual income ($)	Percent	Average annual income ($)	Percent
Earnings of mother	353.08	89.34	276.64	35.23
Earnings of children	----	----	469.04	59.74
Other sources	42.12	10.66	39.52	5.03
Total	395.2	100.00	785.2	100.00
Number of families	55		70	

Source: Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 124.

In addition to widows, Anthony's analysis also identified that, in addition to the 55 widows, there were 101 other women in her sample who were the sole bread winner of their families. This group included: 30 deserted wives; 11 women with incapacitated husbands, five women whose husband had been idle for a year; and 46 others without a second wage earner. These women and their families were apparently living a 'starvation regime' where 'out of their meagre earnings they were compelled to feed, clothe, and shelter' their families.[297]

Many elderly single Irish women remained working in domestic service, although the proportion service declined with age as some women, such as the domestic employed in the industrial school above, could no longer undertake the arduous work and some employers were reluctant to employ elderly workers. Andrew Urban has noted that employment agents at Castle Garden were often unwilling to contract out older women as servants in the 1890s,

[297] Anthony, *Mothers Who Must Earn*, 126.

dismissed as too frail for work, women could 'lose both their status as dependents deserving protections and help finding work upon reaching a certain age.'[298] Other elderly domestics were punished for not being appropriately pious. The domestic who was sacked by the industrial school had also been reported by her municipal employers to the Catholic Committee of the Alms House Board of Managers in 1898 for consistently absenting herself from Mass.[299] The woman's situation reveals how elderly Irish women in New York were subject to scrutiny from multiple actors, and their ability to secure work was contingent on passing standards (both religious and work) set by both the religious and municipal authorities.

Many women who could no longer work depended on their accumulated savings to maintain their wellbeing. These women often lived alone, able to retreat to small rooms in the back of a tenement building, rather than disappear up the stairs of their employer's home. Their savings, however, did not lead to expenditure on the finer things in life. In some cases, frugality and thrift appears to have slipped into self-neglect. One former domestic who had 'lived in the greatest penury, buying barely enough of the necessities of life to keep herself alive' was found dead from chronic bronchitis in 1904, aged 58 years old. She had been in New York for 42 years, having arrived from Cavan. On inspection of her two small rooms, 'battered old satchel bank books showing deposits aggregating $8,500 and accrued interest of $2,000' were found: 'the savings of a life of drudgery as a servant.'[300] The newspaper report gave no mention of the beneficiary.

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[298] Andrew Urban, *Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York NY, 2017), 165. This 'certain age' appears to be 50 years old.
[299] Downing to Adler.
[300] 'Topics in New York', *The Sun,* (29 Dec. 1904), 3.

But why were they hoarding it in their old age? Were they still saving it to send to relatives and friends back in Ireland– if indeed, they had any left there, with their parents long-dead? Perhaps these women, by this stage of life, were so used to not spending on themselves that they saved out of habit rather than out of necessity. Many of these single women may have left Ireland to ease the burden on their ageing parents, but the lack of family and social networks for some may have made their own lives harder as they reached old age. Unlike Noonan, who worked in the streets amongst the crowds (albeit for low wages) working in institutions or households may have made it increasingly difficult for older women to maintain or forge social networks in the city. The physical labour wrought by a day's work and the decline of women engaging in social activities due to childcare commitments may have limited the energy or ability of many women to engage in social activities. Another former domestic, having lived to be eighty-three years of age and despite saving enough money to support herself, remained living in two 'squalid rooms' in the rear of a third-floor tenement apartment. The importance of material goods meant little to this woman without friends and family to share it with. Isolated and alone, the woman died by suicide.[301] Those women without family nearby and having lost contact with home, had perhaps lost all that tethered them to this life. The end of their life is reminiscent of those charwomen sisters in a Dublin tenement building in Chapter Two. Although the New York domestics died at an older age, they were found alone.

[301] 'Irish Woman's Suicide and Savings', *NYT* (7 Sept. 1893), 9.

Family and Social Networks

Support from family, friends and kin was essential for many women in old age, as Jane Noonan's 'chosen family' demonstrates. Many Irish widows headed households in New York filled with their adult children, relying on their children's labour and contribution to the home well into their children's adulthood. Such contributions could be short-lived, although some children did support their mother even when they had established families of their own. Adult men, both married and unmarried, were particularly likely to reside with their widowed mother in Irish families in New York. As well as reflecting women's need to rely on their children, some historians have suggested that female household headship reflected Irish women's 'assertive style of mothering.'[302] This motherly influence is often portrayed as inference and dictatorship, particularly over their adult sons' lives.[303] Rather than focusing on the idea of a sort of dependent dictatorship that can so often slip into sexist stereotype, it might be more productive to think about interdependency within the family. Living together was, for the Irish family abroad, often in the general interest. This might, in some way, explain some women's tendency to assert their authority in emotional matters, as a way to express their worth.

[302] Patricia Kelleher, 'Maternal Strategies: Irish Women's Headship of Families in Gilded Age Chicago', *Journal of Women's History,* 30/2 (2001), 92-96; Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983), 68. Both Kelleher and Diner have suggested their matriarchal influence was greater than that of mothers from other migrant groups.

[303] Gunja SenGupta, *From Slavery to Poverty: The Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918* (New York NY, 2009), 52. The same was true in other urban centres: Kelleher, 'Maternal Strategies', 95. This criticism of Irish mothers has persisted well into the late twentieth century. the anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes has even attributed high rates of schizophrenia among rural Irish men to the 'emasculation these men must have felt at the hands of their domineering mothers .'Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland*, 20th anniversary edition (Berkeley CA, 2001), 178, 196; Cara Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 2019), 113.

The physical presence of family in the city did not always equate to support. The same Catharine Connor who was living the typical life of an Irish mother in New York in 1860 was admitted to the Alms House in 1896. Her life had appeared as secure as it could be, with her husband and eldest sons out to work. This security did not last. In 1896, Connor, who was then in her mid-seventies, was admitted to the Alms House for the third time. She was described as a 'destitute, crippled widow and former domestic.'[304] But while Connor struggled, her sons had steadily progressed up the occupational ladder. One worked as a fireman and the other as a 'proprietor of a Rook and Paper stand.' Yet, Connor believed it was their intention to leave her to die and be buried in a pauper's grave, having stolen her bank book, money and clothing. The Superintendent of the New York Alms House wrote that Connor claimed she should have access to around '$2000.00 deposited in a Savings Bank (name of Bank unknown), but the location of the Bank, is #53 Chamber St, NY. City.' While his letter to the Board of Charities was tinged with suspicion, it is unclear whether the Superintendent was sceptical about Connor's claim that she should have these funds or that her sons had stolen her money and left her to die.

There is, however, evidence that Connor shared an account with her husband at the Emigrant Savings Bank (address: 53 Chamber Street). The bank's ledger books reveal that Catharine had travelled from Ireland alone, arriving in the city six years before the rest of her family. It is likely that Catharine had left them behind in order to secure steady employment, probably in service, in order to afford her husband and children's passage. Once the whole family had arrived in the city, the family built up their savings and their estate: in 1860, the census recorded Connor's husband as holding a personal estate of only $100, a rather smaller

[304] John Terry ,Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, 21 Aug. 1896, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 319.

figure than the $2000 that Connor thought she had in 1896. The children were able to find decent work once in New York. The fireman may have benefited from the Irish-controlled political machine, Tammany Hall, which ensured that Irish men were disproportionately hired by the police and fire departments. By entering city occupations Irish men gained the 'power to shape the way that racial and class boundaries were drawn and enforced "on the ground",' while simultaneously securing steady work and a pension.[305] Connor described her sons as 'prosperous and well able to care for her even if she did not have the money above described.'[306] If, as Diner has argued, Irish mothers had a 'fierce determination to sustain their families and to ensure some degree of upward movement', this could be, as in Connor's case, to their detriment.[307]

Catharine Connor was not alone in her claims of filial negligence. The Superintendent's letter books were filled with stories of elderly Irish women abandoned by their adult children, who ignored their mothers' pleas for support. When her husband passed, Margaret Gallagher had reached out to her adult son for aid, but his refusal forced her back into service work on the West Side. Too feeble to toil – and despite her son earning a decent living as a marine – Gallagher was left to rely on institutional aid.[308] Both Connor and Gallagher shared the expectation that they would be cared for (at least financially) by their adult children who, thanks to their elderly mothers' early sacrifice of travelling abroad and working hard, were now financially stable and flourishing in their new country. If women gave up much of their lives to raise and care for their offspring, they then expected this care

[305] Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race: Irish Immigrant and Southern Black Domestic Workers* (New Brunswick NJ 2020), 117
[306] Terry, 21 Aug.
[307] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 65.
[308] John Terry ,Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, 30 July 1897, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series V. Vol. 321.

to be reciprocated in their old age. But this implicit family contact was frequently broken. The changing circumstances show that women's wellbeing evolved through their life and was often contingent on the actions of others – both individuals and institutions.

Irish women's frustration at the inability or unwillingness of their children to care for them was particularly targeted at their adult daughters rather than their sons. Rebecca Gray, a forty-five-year-old widow, was incarcerated despite her previous employment in service and the presence of three adult children in the city. Despite Gray's best efforts at motherhood, her two daughters had only 'partially' helped to maintain the family household while residing with their mother. On reaching adulthood, they left her 'alone and destitute', even though one of her daughters married a middle-class shop-owner.[309] Left without filial support, Gray was forced to sell her effects and petition for welfare relief to survive. Women's wellbeing was subject to rapid change, contingent on those around them.

Rebecca Gray's situation also points to the different milieus in which she and her first-generation daughters grew up. As Irish mothers aged, there was an increasing schism between the cultural expectations that they were inculcated with as children and which they had tried to pass on, and the expectations and needs of their daughters, which were shaped by different social and economic conditions. The mother-daughter relationship was, Delay argued, crucial to the intergenerational transmission of Catholic domestic values in nineteenth and twentieth-century Ireland.[310] An essential facet of Irish motherhood was to instil their daughters with the 'skills and confidence' to create their own Irish Catholic households.[311]

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[309] John Terry ,Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, 28 August 1896, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 319.

[310] Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism,*113; Cara Delay, 'Holy Water and a Twig: Catholic Households and Women's Religious Authority in Modern Ireland', *Journal of Family History,* 3/3, (2018), 302-319.

[311] Delay, 'Holy Water and a Twig', p. 303.

Outside Ireland, the transmission of Catholicism from mother to daughter was not only a matter of religious and devotional practice, but also of domestic labour. Mothers expected their daughters to care for them in their old age as a sign not only that their daughters were 'good', obedient and practising Irish Catholics abroad, but also that the mothers themselves had fulfilled their domestic duties adequately. To be a good Catholic mother was to have a good Irish Catholic daughter, who would continue the transmission of Irish values abroad. If Irish mothers left rural Ireland to support their parents – and felt persistent pressure in doing so – they often heaped the same expectations and pressures of domesticity and care on their American-raised daughters.[312] But, as Gray's situation demonstrates, this intergenerational transmission could be reoriented by different family circumstances, external pressures and cultural expectations. In leaving her childhood home in New York to start a life with her (financially-secure) husband, Gray's daughter was upwardly mobile and fulfilling her duty as a young woman to marry. In doing so, she 'left' her mother behind. If Gray's daughter did not 'see' her mother support those back home (if Gray did not, perhaps, discuss sending remittances home), how was she to replicate that aid for Gray?

Institutions

Hidetaka Hirota has argued that widowhood 'practically meant admission to the almshouses' for Irish women, but as their frequent recourse to paid labour shows, women's

[312] It was not only elderly Irish mothers in the Alms House who relied on their adult daughters. Patrick Gannon, a sixty-one-year old Irish widower and former labourer had previously turned to his daughter for help. As his daughter was out of work and her husband only intermittently employed as a waiter, Gannon 'tried to aid them to maintain him by picking drift wood, cinders and coal, but could not remain with them longer for they were about destitute themselves.' It was only then that he turned to his son, who earned over five times as much as his daughter's husband, on an annual salary of $1400 as a policeman. Like Catharine Connor's sons, however, Gannon's son 'would do nothing for him but put him on the Island.' Despite his daughter's precarious economic position, Gannon still expected her to provide domestic support. Unlike many Irish mothers in the Alms House Gannon did not express feelings of disappointment towards his daughter, which he saved for his son. See: John Terry, Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, 9 Sept. 1896, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 319.

entry into institutions was not quite this clear cut.[313] The third strategy of 'last resort' was to seek institutional aid. As discussed in Chapter Five over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Alms House emerged as a relief agency for needy citizens of the city, rather than a 'punitive preserve of idle wasters.'[314] This was largely due to the Irish influence over the municipal legislature. In a sarcasm-filled editorial, the *NYT* stated that 'the idea that the Irishman was born to fill office needs amendment. He not only fills *our* offices with wonderful facility, but he fills the hand of the Police, the station-houses, the court-rooms, the asylums, and the alms-houses.'[315]

By the end of the century, many male inmates appeared able to engage and negotiate terms of their stay with Alms House authorities. In 1897, the Superintendent wrote to the Alms House Board on behalf of an elderly Irish inmate and veteran, John Fagan pensioned at the rate of $30.00 per month: 'he has been here since September last, together with his wife; he is a cripple, having lost his left arm; his wife is somewhat sickly. He informed me to-day that he has not drawn his pension for the past six months, therefore the U.S. Government owes him two quarters' pension, amounting to $180.00; he stated that he would like to remain here with his wife until Spring.'[316] Emphasising his veteran status, Fagan was able to not only stake his claim as a legitimate US citizen, but have the Warden advocate on his – and his wife's – behalf. Although the Alms House was initially created to ensure that the Irish and other migrants would become legitimate citizens who contributed to the city's economy,

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[313] Hidetaka Hirota, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy* (Oxford, 2017), 8.

[314] The success of Irish people in negotiating the Alms House and other institutions carried consequences for other groups, particularly Black Americans, who were driven out. For more, see SenGupta, From Slavery to Poverty.

[315] 'The Ruling Race and Sect: What Ireland Has Done In and For New York', NYT (8 June 1879), p. 5. Emphasis Added.

[316] John Terry, Warden of Alms House to Silas C. Croft, President of Department of Charities, 13 Feb, 1897, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series V. Vol. 321.

mature and elderly Irish men turned this on its head by invoking their past labour and national service. Egan's situation also suggests that it was not just single and widowed Irish women who were forced to resort to the alms house, but elderly husbands and wives. Some of these men, however, were particularly angered by this. Patrick Gannon was defensive in staking his claim for aid, stating that he would 'make a sworn statement of his case if necessary, and that his only desire is to have his son care for him until such times as he is able to secure work and care for himself.' Gannon declared he had always been 'sober and industrious, never was arrested, or an inmate of any institution prior to his admission here.'[317] For Gannon, the institution was only a pit-stop.

If Irish men were reluctant to 'settle' in the Alms House, Irish women were portrayed as more comfortable, used to their surroundings. The *NYT* reporting on a concert held at the Alms House in the winter of 1897 provides some insight. Gathering to hear the music of the Bayne's Sixty-ninth Regiment Band and the songs of the People's Glee Club of New York, some nineteen hundred paupers were described as: 'equal proportion of men and women, and the lame, the halt, and the blind, morally, mentally, and physically, of many varieties. Nearly all the heads were gray. Every imaginable type of misfortune, wickedness, ugliness, and deformity was illustrated among them.' The portrayal of the elderly pauper women varied from sympathy to disdain, to wonderment of the women's ability to find joy, to smile and to laugh, in the face of institutionalisation:

> [regardless of the] state of life to which the Blackwell's Island people have been called or thrown or driven or have taken themselves, as cases may be… On hearing the opening chords of an Irish jig, these elderly women incited each other and actually with their skinny hands upon their hips shuffled their venerable feet and essayed a jig, in demonstration of the truth that in their ashes lived their wonted fires.[318]

[317] Terry, 9 Sept.
[318] Paupers in Jolly Mood'.

Irish men were key architects in the maintenance of New York's relief, but it was Irish women who were the most common recipients (and distributors) of welfare. Irish women were disproportionately found in institutions, compared with Irish men and other groups of women. Irish women were more likely than Irish men to be institutionalised.[319] Institutional data for 1860 to 1872 shows that, on average there were 13,087 Irish women in alms houses, compared with 2685 American women, and 703 German women. In the city's hospitals, there were 33,357 Irish women, compared with 10,054 American women, and 2940 German women. Irish women's institutional presence was disproportionately high.[320] The *NYT* stated that the newspaper had:

> read in a sketch of a lecture or sermon by an Irish speaker a broad claim for the gentle sex of the Ever Green Isle to a higher degree of religious and social virtue than could justly be awarded to any other people… We cannot fail to observe a remarkably wide difference in regard to the daughters of Erin, a difference that certainly does not warrant such boasting as we have referred to on the part of their friends and champions.[321]

The use of institutions by Irish women reflects three inter-related factors. First, the material realities of Irish old age abroad. Second, the limited ability of their family members to provide support, and the unwillingness of employers to hire older women. Institutions, however, were in plentiful supply. Third, these older women had the wherewithal and skills necessary to engage with these institutions and access their resources.

First, many Irish women were simply old and alone. American Protestant press attributed the overrepresentation of Irish women to their lack of virtue, although it is clear

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[319] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, p.65; p. 109; Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender and Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens GA, 2017), 93

[320] 'The Ruling Race and Sect: What Ireland Has Done In and For New York', NYT (8 June 1879), 5. Reporting on institutional statistics for the years between 1860 to 1872. The article stated that proportionately distributed, it should be: 3,602 Irish women, 9,618 American women, and 2,784 German women in the alms houses; and 10,260 Irish women, 25,659 American women, and 7,931 German women in the city's hospitals.

[321] 'The Ruling Race and Sect'.

that women entered institutions because of their material reality. Irish women were more likely to live long enough to need institutional support compared to their husbands and brothers, many of whom had already died, after labouring in precarious, dangerous and menial employment. In an Alms House Admissions sample (between 1881 and 1885), the majority of the Irish women inmates were widows (68 percent) followed by single women (17 percent), and married (15 percent).[322] While some women may have lied about their marital status out of shame, the dominance of widows in the Alms House is unsurprising given the inmates' age composition: although women's ages ranged from 20 to over 90 years old, the average age at admission of those Irish women sampled was 56 years old. The majority (60 percent) were admitted to the Alms House for destitution, although 30 percent were confined for disorderly conduct. Older women were more likely to be committed for destitution compared with younger inmates.[323] Welfare was often a matter of need rather than sectarian or communal identity. Irish women did not only turn to institutions that supported the Irish Catholic community; they also sought – and found – assistance from American Protestant institutions, too. New York's Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor did not accept municipal aid and was almost entirely funded by voluntary American Protestant contributions. Around eighty percent of recipients were Irish Catholics.[324]

Moreover, elderly women had to overcome multiple obstacles to receive adequate institutional care, regardless of the institutions. Like the tenement buildings they often arrived from, Irish women on Blackwell's Island resided in over-crowded, ill-equipped, and

[322] Admissions, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. A. Vol. 119

[323] 70 percent of Irish women aged 45 and over were admitted due to destitution, compared with 31 percent of Irish women 44 years old and under. Over half of the younger women were admitted to the Alms House for disorderly conduct, compared with just 21 percent of the older group.

[324] 'The Charities of New-York: Who Shall Have Their Disbursement', NYT (17 Feb, 1872), 11.

unsanitary accommodation, and these conditions worsened over the second half of the nineteenth century. The Superintendent's 1895 reports estimated that 'at the present rate of growth unless more room is provided in the near future many worthy persons must be denied of a home here.' The constant internal movement of inmates only exacerbated the problems with hygiene. Five patients admitted to the Insane Asylum from the Alms House in 1895 were so 'infested with vermin that they had to be isolated immediately upon their arrival into the reception ward, and their clothing hurridly [sic] removed outside the building to prevent contamination.' Elderly women would queue for their meals outside in the cold, and the distance between the lavatories and the sleeping quarters 'no doubt contributed somewhat to the number of deaths from pneumonia.' Poor accommodation and facilities led many of the able-bodied poor to become susceptible to illness, limiting their ability to support themselves independently and forcing them to remain reliant on institutional support. If (or when) an inmate was taken ill, there were insufficient beds and supplies for adequate treatment. Even those who were fortunate enough to have beds and medical treatment were in some cases 'forced to sleep three in two beds, on tables &c, thus greatly overcrowding poorly ventilated wards and greatly hampering the work.' Partially due to lack of resources, elderly women's access to medical care and treatment was also contingent on external evaluation of their health. The Superintendent was, moreover, concerned that elderly inmates were nutritionally deprived, as the physician would not 'find time' to visit them. The physician, however, had apparently retorted that his schedule was not only full enough as it is, but that the elderly did not need more food, particularly as the women were not 'sick enough' – yet. One wonders how he knew.

Once institutionalised, older women were also more likely to stay institutionalised. One elderly inmate diagnosed with heart and kidney disease had been transferred from

Blackwell's hospital to the Alms House as 'she will never improve… it is only a question of time as to the end, that she will grow worse in a short time, and virtually is in a helpless condition.' The Incurable Hospital rather than the Alms House was more appropriate but was at capacity. The elderly woman was to live out her last days in a cramped dormitory.[325]

Second, there was limited support from many other channels including family and the formal labour market, in contrast to the support available from religious and municipal institutions. As discussed above many Irish women found it difficult to find paid work as they got older and their income was dependent on having children in the household who were working. Municipal and religious aid was a last resort. Those aforementioned two women, 65- year-old Alice McDonald and 80-year-old Bridget O'Brien, who had travelled to New York in their old age to find employment, ended in failure. By the 1890s they were both desperate to leave their homeland – alone – only to arrive and fail to settle in, falling to the mercy of the municipal authorities. Bridget had only been in the country for one year but had entered the city's Alms House twice.[326] Their plan had not been to enter an institution, but their material realities likely forced that outcome on them. Elizabeth Feeney travelled to New York to find work in service, and it was only when she 'became too feeble to do any more work' that she entered an institution.[327]

For lone elderly women in New York, such as domestics who were no longer able to work, religious institutions were also a crucial means of support. Catherine Conway arrived in New York from Kilkenny in 1870 as an 'ambitious young girl' who 'on landing in this city

[325] Report by the Warden of Alms House, 1895, NYCMA, Almshouse Ledger Collection, Series IV. Vol. 319.
[326] Almshouse Admission Ledger.
[327] 'Over 107 Years Old'.

resolved to support herself as a domestic servant.' While Conway had arrived with her sister and had three siblings already in the US, the family rarely saw or heard from each other – quite different from what they might have expected from a hypothetical life *in* Ireland – as they all sought employment and followed their own individual paths. After working for 25 years in service among various New York families, Conway spent the last 14 years of her life from 1895 until 1909 in the Catholic St Joseph's Home for the Aged. Almost all of the residents in St Joseph's were Irish women and former servants. Although some elderly women continued to rely on their waged service work in order to survive, for many this was simply not possible.

The relationship between Irish elderly women inmates and institutions was interdependent, interactive, and dynamic. Men may have been active in more formal political spaces, but women still played a vital role in fundraising for local Catholic institutions. Catherine Conway's Will demonstrates the value she placed on the church in her life.[328] The former domestic's small social network also remained important, and she left money behind for two friends. Catherine (like other domestics) refused to spend money on herself, stipulating that 'not over $200' be spent on her funeral. She left, moreover, about two-thirds of her savings (around $2,000) to various New York Catholic charities, including Francis Xavier's Church, St Joseph's Home for the Aged, The Home for Aged of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. By leaving money to the church and to charities, Conway's reputation as a pious and respectable woman who served others in both life and death was ensured. Meanwhile, in maintaining elderly single women who had, until physically unable, steadily laboured in domestic work, the church strengthened its hold over the diaspora.

[328] 'Servant Girl Wills $2000 to Charity', *NYT* (25 Dec. 1909), 4.

Elderly women were able to access three Catholic homes specifically for elderly women in New York, compared with just one for men. It might be the case that the uneven provision of welfare had unintended and indirect consequences for the wellbeing of both Irish men and women. Although men were supported in finding paid work by their local community, the paucity of institutional support may have had an adverse impact on Irish men's wellbeing especially in later life. Additionally, this lack of tailored educational, medical and emotional support might have unwittingly contributed to men's deaths, leaving many women widowed and in need.

Third, Irish women had aptitude and adaptability in engaging with institutions. The ability of many to navigate institutions reflected their experiences in Ireland, on their journey, and arriving in New York. Those women had spent much of their life negotiating with the church. Such negotiations reflected a complex religious contract that encompassed belief, attendance at mass and gendered roles. The balance of power may have remained in the church's favour but many women knew how best to use the resources of the church in exchange for their piety, religious observance and raising a Catholic family. Furthermore, many Irish women had made the migration journey alone, unlike many other women. Travelling alone was fraught with difficulties and challenges, but it instilled a robustness in many women – particularly in dealing with organisations and bureaucracy, usually controlled by men. Additionally, when women arrived in the US (and especially New York) some were early users of the formal and informal institutions that supported arrivals. The habitual use of institutions created both know-how and skill in how to engage with others.

Elderly Irish Catholic women believed they deserved aid, from their institutions and their families. Despite their age, low status, and often physical and mental exhaustion, many women within institutions in the 1880s and 1890s pushed for better care. Women inmates lobbied the Alms House Superintendent, wanting the institution to provide them with money or to use its resources to find their adult children. By asking the municipal authorities for support, elderly women employed rhetorical strategies similar to those used by their contemporaries in Ireland. In their analyses of women's correspondence with Catholic clergymen within Ireland, Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Cara Delay have shown how women used their status as good mothers to bargain with the church and receive institutional support, in the form of money and contacts.[329] In New York, the women emphasised their respectable habits and behaviours and their attempts to provide their children with domestic comforts regardless of poverty. Catharine Connor informed the Superintendent that she was 'temperate in her habits', had frequently given money to her children, and had always treated them 'kindly, giving them a comfortable home.'[330] Rebecca Gray, meanwhile, declared that she had 'always provided for her children, giving them a good education, keeping a nice home for them.' Gray despaired that in leaving their home, her daughters had left her 'alone and destitute.'[331] Like their non-migrant counterparts back in Ireland who wrote to Dublin's Archbishop in the 1880s, Connor and Gray exploited gendered norms to their own ends. By calling on the tropes of abandonment and 'suffering widowhood' and, in doing so, laying claim to 'traditional membership in the ranks of the deserving poor.[332] Women abroad also emphasised abandonment in their letters to the Alms House, but expanded this to include

[329] Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism,* 125; Lindsey Earner-Byrne, ' "Shall I Take Myself and My Family to Another Religion [?]": Irish Catholic Women, Protest, and Conformity, 1920—1940' in Christina Brophy and Cara Delay (eds), *Women, Reform, and Resistance in Ireland, 1850-1950* (New York NY, 2015), 124.
[330] Terry, 21 Aug.
[331] Terry, 28 Aug.
[332] Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism*, 125-126.

their children who had, in abandoning their mothers, also abandoned Irish understandings of care. Moreover, by invoking feelings of abandonment, almost betrayal, elderly women appealed to institutional employees' sense of humanity. Despite the work she put into mothering, Catharine Connor despaired that her children 'never visited her, nor in any way contributed, towards her comfort'. She was at a 'loss to understand her treatment, now that she is old and feeble.' Catharine's sons' refusal to help meant she could only turn to the Alms House.[333]

Most elderly Irish women carefully adapted their rhetoric to appeal to those with resources. But as Catharine laid bare her anguish, some scepticism remained. Unlike his other letters to the Department of Public Charities, which began with 'I have the honor of', the Superintendent introduced Catharine's testimony to his seniors with 'I have to inform your Honorable Board' that 'she desired me to interest my-self in her behalf, giving me the following history of her-self.' While the Superintendent declared Rebecca Gray deserving of all support, as 'She appears to be a diligent woman of good habits willing to perform such work as [we have] required of her,' he placed a question mark over Catharine's destitute status.[334] Perhaps Catharine had asserted her right to aid too strongly. Catharine was an exception and Rebecca the norm. Unlike women in Ireland writing to religious authorities for aid, Irish women in New York did not reference their devotion to Catholicism, nor did the Superintendent always vouch for their piety in his letters to the Board of Charities. In their negotiations with the municipal – rather than *explicitly* religious – authorities, elderly women emphasised their role in the city's development. As the mothers of home-owners, government workers, and tax payers with considerable pensions and job security, Irish women were

[333] Terry, 21 Aug.
[334] Terry, 21 Aug; 28 Aug.

mothers to productive and essential citizens of New York. Their skills and sacrifice, not only in leaving their country of origin, but having been left by their children, resulted in their entitlement to rest and support from the city. Social care was moved out of the family and into the community abroad.

James Barrett has argued that Americanisation should be conceived of as the 'broader acculturation of immigrants, the day-to-day process by which they came to understand their new situations and to find ways of coping with it.' In their old age, Irish migrant women used their understandings of Irish Catholic communitarianism and adapted it to their new surroundings, to a future-orientated city which valued individualism and industry. 'Americanism' was, Barrett continued, a 'contested idea. There were numerous understandings of what it meant to be American, divergent values associated with the concept, and so, many ways that an immigrant might "discover" America.'[335] In late-nineteenth-century New York, elderly woman made it clear that they might have been migrants, but they were also certainly American.

Conclusions

In middle-age many Irish women lived a precarious life. And as they entered old age, their quality of life tended to deteriorate further. The means of survival were few and the means of prosperity were fewer. Irish women endured three main difficult paths into old age. First, some continued to work in the formal labour market. This was a market that was segmented by sex and by migrant status. It was further segmented by age – work for old and older women was largely limited to domestic service, laundry and peddling in its various

[335] James Barrett, *History from the Bottom Up and the Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History* (Durham NC, 2017), 123.

forms. The work was hard and arduous, it was often irregular and unstable, and wages tended to fall with age. The wages of many women were insufficient to provide then with a basic level of subsistence and they often had children to feed and house – they lived in a 'starvation regime.'

Family and social network provided a second means of support. The prosperity of a family with children who were working was much higher than that of a family with children who were not working. But the level of prosperity of the former was often ephemeral as children grew older, left home and started their own families. Some children who had started their own families continued to support their parents, particularly if their mother was widowed. Such support was, however, not uniform and the idea that is was widespread reflecting the domineering matriarchy of Irish motherhood is an unhelpful trope.

A third, and often the final, route to survival was recourse to help from institutions. The demand for help from institutions was large, particularly from old Irish women who had very few other sources of help. Similarly, the supply of institutional support was widespread helped by funding from migrants and the mission creep of the Catholic church. Life in institutions was often grim and unhygienic and accessing support was not a simple market transaction. It needed skills and acumen. And many Irish women had accumulated such attributes through: a life time of engagement with the Catholic church; by navigating the migration journey – often alone; and though a life-time of engagement with institutions. Old Irish women used their agency but it was severely constrained by a society that was not only

patriarchal but also ageist. Living a long life may be one measure of wellbeing.[336] But for many Irish women, old age could be a time of misery and destitution.

[336] One measure in the Human Development Index (HDI) is life expectancy.

Conclusion

> She was a saint, an angel, both my uncle, my grandmother's son, and my father, my grandmother's other son, said about both their mother and my mother, respectively, at their funerals, one having died of an astonishing old age, and the other, at a sudden and tragic middle age. I didn't recognize who they were talking about. All I recognized was the empty monologue of Catholicism, which serves to erase by anointing the woman at home, who only exists in service to others but not to herself. Does she even exist, I often have wondered, to herself?[1]

Ireland was a 'land where emigrants are born'.[2] But those emigrants lived their lives in different lands. The stories of such lives have tended to focus on men and ignore women. By focusing on women's experiences in the United States between 1850 and 1914, this thesis has redressed some of this imbalance. In particular, it has shifted the focus away from the Irish men of New York, making women of all ages visible in the history of Irish migration and the development of the metropolitan centre of the United States.

Many Irish Catholic women in both Ireland and in the United States lived difficult lives. They were not alone. Many women from different countries suffered hardship and marginalisation but the experience of Irish-born women reflected the interaction of seven main factors: sex, nationality, religion, history, opportunities, family and age.[3] This research has emphasised the importance of a mixed methodology approach, combining 'numbers'

[1] Kate Zambreno, 'How a Woman Becomes a Piece of Furniture', *The Paris Review* (17 Sept. 2021) https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2021/09/17/how-a-woman-becomes-a-piece-of-furniture/ (Sept. 2021).

[2] Raymond Crotty, 'Eire: a land where emigrants are born', *The Times of London,* 3 July 1972.

[3] Reflecting on her own work, Hasia Diner stated that a 'study like this could be repeated for Italian women, German women, and French-Canadian women as well as for internal female migrants who abandoned the rural South to make their way to the urban North': *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore MD, 1983),160.

(census data) with ‘narratives’ (qualitative data) to provide insights on agency, causality, and impact.

Irish women in post-famine Ireland lived in a country of contrasts. While some areas of the country were industrialising and growing other areas stagnated. Some women were afforded some of the benefits of living in a (somewhat) industrialising country, particularly through the expansion of education and welfare schemes, but they were marginalised in the formal labour market. Women’s ability to provide was confined to the domestic sphere, as both paid and unpaid workers. The dominant separate spheres ideology, centred on the idealized housewife and mother, was promoted by all echelons of society from the rural Catholic farming communities of the west to the urban Protestant mercantile middle-classes of the north. Yet the ability to marry and mother (whether women wanted to or not) was increasingly unattainable for a large section of the female population within Ireland. An aspiration gap characterised women’s lives in post-famine Ireland.

Migration to the US was the channel to try and realise the aspirations of Irish women. Many women in Ireland believed that life in America offered some betterment, be that in employment or marriage. This belief was entrenched thanks to the long history of Irish migration to the American continent. The persistence of emigration from before the famine-era had inculcated a culture of emigration. Although rhetoric persistently disparaged women’s decision to leave home, migration was a process engrained in Irish families and implicitly sanctioned by the country’s leading religious and political institutions. Women’s decision-making was made through a gendered lens – it was rarely a break from their responsibilities as daughters, sisters, mothers, and aunts. To emigrate was to continue a woman’s responsibilities to her family, to provide security and support for both the migrant

and for their relatives in their new home and for those in Ireland. Letters sent home to Ireland were not simply conveying information they were means of fulfilling family' obligations including deference to parents and the transfer of remittances. Many women determinedly undertook these obligations, at least in the initial years of their move overseas.

Were Irish women successful in supporting themselves and their families? Were they able to settle into their new homes? Despite challenges of poverty and prejudice, there were opportunities for many Irish women in the United States. Strong established Irish communities in the United States – and especially in New York – provided help and continuity with life and family in Ireland. Moreover, the US economy was both industrialising and urbanising in the nineteenth century and it provided significant employment opportunities for young Irish women. The formal labour market in the US was highly segmented by sex and by migrant status. But the high demand for domestic servants meant that many young and unmarried Irish women worked in domestic service - a job that offered wages and board and lodgings. For many, life was better than the alternative of staying at home in Ireland. Service provided a crucial space for young Irish women to make their own choices, as well as to secure decent living conditions for themselves and their families back home in Ireland.

The realisation of the aspirations of Irish women was, however, shortlived. Life for many Irish-born women in New York deteriorated and became more precarious as they aged. In middle-age, they were often married to men who had unstable jobs with relatively low wages and their work in the home was arduous and they raised large families. Many married women worked in the formal labour market as their wages were often essential for the household finances but were still often insufficient to keep their families above the breadline.

And for many women, as they entered old age life became more even more difficult as they depended on the limited opportunities in the formal labour market; welfare from institutions; and support from families and friends. For many, the latter became increasingly fragmented as their children moved for work and started their own families. The idea of old Irish women enjoying a long and powerful widowhood may have been appropriate in Ireland, but it was far less common in the United States where many widows were destitute and alone.

Irish women's lives were characterised by precarity and responsibility, but they also showed resilience and adaption. This thesis has identified the various strategies that Irish women used to survive in Ireland, on the journey overseas, and throughout their lives. The Catholic church played a dominant and often overbearing role in the lives of Irish women in both Ireland and in the United States. But in return for devotion and prayer, the church provided services – such as help with employment and welfare provision for the destitute. An implicit socio-religious contract emerged whereby Irish-born women in New York would go to mass and raise their children as Catholics in return for help and welfare when in need. Many Irish women developed negotiating skills that enabled them to effectively access resources to support their families (both at home and abroad), as well as themselves. Migrant women were quick to adapt their skills to their new surroundings, ensuring to reach out to municipal, as well as religious, authorities.

This thesis has shown how the wellbeing of Irish women was multidimensional, and shifted throughout their life course, contingent on multiple factors, from family and relationships, through to occupation, age, and location. It shows the enmeshment of Irish family life, across space and over generations. Emigration was not always an 'escape' from a country reeling in the aftermath of the famine as women sought a better life abroad. Many

young Irish women found independence and a better quality of life in the United States compared with what they would have achieved in Ireland. Throughout their lives, Irish women persistently showed resilience: a capacity to try to take control of their own lives and to confront arduous circumstances. Resilience is a dynamic and context-specific process. The quality of life of many Irish women deteriorated with age, and many older women were left alone and destitute. Their willingness to confront adversity did not mean they could always overcome it.

Further research will address the limitations of this study. First, the tracking of a cohort of Irish migrants to evaluate how their wellbeing evolved over their life course, as well as a cohort of similar women who remained in Ireland. As noted above (see Chapter One) this is not an easy task when analysing women as many changed their surname and there are problems when tracking immigrants. Second, analysis of the children of Irish migrants, in particular to analyse the life course of daughters and how they fared compared to other groups. Third, consideration of the intergenerational transfer of trauma, and particularly the passing down of gendered expectations onto American-born daughters. Fourth, analysing data from a series of censuses to analyse how labour market participation of Irish women evolved over time.

The research agenda is ambitious – and is important - as the activities of migrant women have been obscured by the focus on the male migrant or buried in aggregate economic data. Even today, the economic behaviour of migrants is often misunderstood or misrepresented.[4] The productive activities of women have become more visible in the study

[4] Scott Blinder, 'Imagined immigration: the impact of different meanings of 'immigrants' in public opinion and policy debates in Britain', *Political Studies,* 63/1, (2013), 80–100.

of modern economic history.[5] And this visibility will become clearer as the experiences of different groups of women are better understood.

[5] See Jane Humphries, 'The Ellen McArthur Lectures 2016. Gendering Economic History', Faculty of History, Cambridge, at: https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/2242267 (Dec. 2021)

Appendices

Appendix A. Women's Work in the United States, 1880

Table A1. Women's work (main occupations) - Irish-born and all

	Irish women						All women		
Occupation	No	% of total	% of occupied	% of all women occupied	MOQ1	MOQ2	No	% of all total	% of all occupied
Agricultural laborers	291	0.03	0.13	0.08	0.01	0.01	365402	2.4	14.27
Farmers and planters	1808	0.19	0.82	2.31	0.37	0.27	78282	0.51	3.06
Actors	37	0	0.02	2.2	0.35	0.25	1685	0.01	0.07
Artists and teachers of art	15	0	0.01	0.74	0.12	0.09	2038	0.01	0.08
Barbers and hairdressers	87	0.01	0.04	3.21	0.52	0.37	2707	0.02	0.11
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	2152	0.23	0.97	13.41	2.16	1.55	16043	0.11	0.63
Clergy	1566	0.17	0.71	26.04	4.18	3.01	6014	0.04	0.23
Clerks and copyists	19	0	0.01	1.68	0.27	0.19	1134	0.01	0.04
Clerks in government offices	15	0	0.01	1.28	0.21	0.15	1173	0.01	0.05
Domestic servants	131167	13.85	59.3	13.6	2.18	1.57	964770	6.34	37.68
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	4228	0.45	1.91	20.16	3.24	2.33	20976	0.14	0.82
Hotel keepers	281	0.03	0.13	8.61	1.38	1	3263	0.02	0.13
Laborers (not specified)	1151	0.12	0.52	0.89	0.14	0.1	128680	0.85	5.03
Launders and laundresses	15560	1.64	7.03	14.18	2.28	1.64	109744	0.72	4.29
Midwives	62	0.01	0.03	2.27	0.37	0.26	2728	0.02	0.11
Musicians (professional) and teachers of music	172	0.02	0.08	1.09	0.17	0.13	15815	0.1	0.62
Nurses	2796	0.3	1.26	10.86	1.74	1.26	25755	0.17	1.01
Officials of government	14	0	0.01	1.4	0.22	0.16	1003	0.01	0.04
Physicians and surgeons	30	0	0.01	1.58	0.25	0.18	1897	0.01	0.07
Restaurant keepers	100	0.01	0.05	9.23	1.48	1.07	1083	0.01	0.04
Teachers and scientific persons	2361	0.25	1.07	1.54	0.25	0.18	153595	1.01	6
Bookkeepers and accountants in stores	29	0	0.01	1.04	0.17	0.12	2790	0.02	0.11
Clerks in stores	593	0.06	0.27	2.85	0.46	0.33	20843	0.14	0.81
Hucksters and peddlers	651	0.07	0.29	25.43	4.09	2.94	2560	0.02	0.1
Officials and employees of telegraph companies	19	0	0.01	1.31	0.21	0.15	1452	0.01	0.06
Porters and laborers in stores warehouses	359	0.04	0.16	7.92	1.27	0.92	4531	0.03	0.18
Salesmen and saleswomen	435	0.05	0.2	5.35	0.86	0.62	8128	0.05	0.32
Saloon keepers and bartenders	687	0.07	0.31	26.41	4.24	3.06	2601	0.02	0.1
Traders and dealers (not specified)	946	0.1	0.43	22.27	3.58	2.58	4247	0.03	0.17
Traders and dealers in dry foods, fancy foods, and notions	648	0.07	0.29	16.99	2.73	1.97	3815	0.03	0.15
Traders and dealers in groceries	2309	0.24	1.04	39.18	6.29	4.53	5894	0.04	0.23
Artificial-flower makers	160	0.02	0.07	6.48	1.04	0.75	2470	0.02	0.1

Apprentices to trades	102	0.01	0.05	2.47	0.4	0.29	4126	0.03	0.16
Bakers	115	0.01	0.05	8.43	1.35	0.98	1364	0.01	0.05
Bookbinders and finishers	379	0.04	0.17	6.75	1.08	0.78	5618	0.04	0.22
Boot and shoemakers	1061	0.11	0.48	5.14	0.83	0.6	20622	0.14	0.81
Box factory operatives	319	0.03	0.14	4.7	0.76	0.54	6783	0.04	0.26
Button-factory operatives	233	0.02	0.11	10.08	1.62	1.17	2311	0.02	0.09
Carpet makers	1217	0.13	0.55	17.48	2.81	2.02	6961	0.05	0.27
Cigar makers	84	0.01	0.04	1.88	0.3	0.22	4479	0.03	0.17
Clock and watchmakers and repairers	41	0	0.02	2.45	0.39	0.28	1675	0.01	0.07
Confectioners	568	0.06	0.26	23.42	3.76	2.71	2425	0.02	0.09
Corset makers	316	0.03	0.14	8.66	1.39	1	3650	0.02	0.14
Cotton-mill operatives	11996	1.27	5.42	13.95	2.24	1.61	86017	0.57	3.36
Flax dressers	300	0.03	0.14	28.79	4.63	3.33	1042	0.01	0.04
Glove makers	56	0.01	0.03	2.77	0.44	0.32	2024	0.01	0.08
Gold and silver workers and jewellers	70	0.01	0.03	4.82	0.77	0.56	1453	0.01	0.06
Hat and cap makers	356	0.04	0.16	6.81	1.09	0.79	5229	0.03	0.2
Hosiery and knitting mill operatives	279	0.03	0.13	4.47	0.72	0.517	6247	0.04	0.24
Lace makers	90	0.01	0.04	8.43	1.35	0.98	1068	0.01	0.04
Mill and factory operatives (not specified)	1099	0.12	0.5	10.6	1.7	1.23	10369	0.07	0.4
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	16625	1.76	7.52	6.12	0.98	0.71	271765	1.79	10.61
Paper mill operatives	1572	0.17	0.71	24.59	3.95	2.85	6394	0.04	0.25
Printers, lithographers, and stereotypers	95	0.01	0.04	2.85	0.46	0.33	3338	0.02	0.13
Rubber factory operatives	219	0.02	0.1	13.22	2.12	1.53	1656	0.01	0.06
Sewing machine operators	199	0.02	0.09	11.88	1.91	1.38	1675	0.01	0.07
Shirt, cuff, and collar makers	1141	0.12	0.52	12.05	1.94	1.4	9467	0.06	0.37
Silk mill operatives	708	0.07	0.32	8.94	1.44	1.04	7918	0.05	0.31
Straw workers	43	0	0.02	2.42	0.39	0.28	1777	0.01	0.07
Tailors and tailoresses	3242	0.34	1.47	6.6	1.06	0.76	49155	0.32	1.92
Thread makers	258	0.03	0.12	13.91	2.23	1.61	1855	0.01	0.07
Tobacco factory operatives	270	0.03	0.12	5.38	0.86	0.62	5017	0.03	0.2
Woolen mill operatives	3859	0.41	1.74	14.67	2.36	1.7	26301	0.17	1.03
Others in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining industries	125	0.01	0.06	7.36	1.18	0.85	1698	0.01	0.07
Others	3,416	0.40	1.74	9.51	1.6	1.07	35938	0.25	1.62
TOTAL (excluding 'unoccupied')	221201	23.36	100	8.64		1.00	2560535		100
Keeping house	592664	62.58		6.87	1.1		8623814	56.68	
At home	6175	0.65		4.21	0.68		146554	0.96	
Student	1241	0.13		0.51	0.08		245040	1.61	
Retired	548	0.06		5.87	0.94		9328	0.06	
Sick, disabled	154	0.02		6.02	0.97		2559	0.02	
Institutional inmate	808	0.09		14.67	2.36		5508	0.04	
Gentleman	146	0.02		5.27	0.85		2773	0.02	

Other non-occupational response	7777	0.82		4.43	0.71		175747	1.16	
Other	2032	0.21		6.53	1.05		31102	0.2	
Blank	114251	12.06		3.35	0.54		3411075	22.42	
TOTAL	946997	100			1.00		15214035	100	

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Notes

1. Irish-born: % of total - percentage of Irish-born women in each category as a share of all Irish-born women (occupied and unoccupied)
2. Irish-born: % of occupied - percentage of Irish-born in each category as a share of all Irish-born occupied women
3. Irish-born: % of all women occupied -percentage of Irish-born women in each category as a share of all women in that category
4. MOQ1 - the concentration of Irish-born women in different occupational classes with all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator
5. MOQ2 - the concentration of Irish-born women in different occupational classes with occupied women as the denominator
6. All: % of total - percentage of all women in each category as a share of all women (occupied and unoccupied)
7. All: % of all occupied - percentage of all occupied women in each category as a share of all occupied women

Table A2. Women's work (main occupations) – white American-born and All

	American born (White)						All women		
Occupation	No	% birthplace total 1	% birthplace total 2	% of women's occupation total	MOQ 1	MOQ 2	No	% of all total	% of all occupied
Agricultural laborers	53305	0.51	4.11	14.59	0.21	0.29	365402	2.4	14.27
Farmers and planters	48786	0.46	3.77	62.32	0.9	7.32	78282	0.51	3.06
Actors	1314	0.01	0.1	77.98	1.13	9.16	1685	0.01	0.07
Artists and teachers of art	1855	0.02	0.14	91.02	1.32	10.69	2038	0.01	0.08
Barbers and hairdressers	1687	0.02	0.13	62.32	0.9	7.32	2707	0.02	0.11
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	10713	0.1	0.83	66.78	0.97	7.84	16043	0.11	0.63
Clergy	3009	0.03	0.23	50.03	0.72	5.88	6014	0.04	0.23
Clerks and copyists	1035	0.01	0.08	91.27	1.32	10.72	1134	0.01	0.04
Clerks in government offices	1116	0.01	0.09	95.14	1.38	11.17	1173	0.01	0.05
Domestic servants	481506	4.58	37.17	49.91	0.72	5.86	964770	6.34	37.68
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	10600	0.1	0.82	50.53	0.73	5.93	20976	0.14	0.82
Hotel keepers	2330	0.02	0.18	71.41	1.03	8.39	3263	0.02	0.13
Laborers (not specified)	13533	0.13	1.04	10.52	0.15	1.24	128680	0.85	5.03
Launders and laundresses	14219	0.14	1.1	12.96	0.19	1.52	109744	0.72	4.29
Midwives	664	0.01	0.05	24.34	0.35	2.86	2728	0.02	0.11
Musicians (professional) and teachers of music	14230	0.14	1.1	89.98	1.3	10.57	15815	0.1	0.62
Nurses	12094	0.12	0.93	46.96	0.68	5.51	25755	0.17	1.01
Officials of government	933	0.01	0.07	93.02	1.35	10.92	1003	0.01	0.04
Physicians and surgeons	1591	0.02	0.12	83.87	1.21	9.85	1897	0.01	0.07
Restaurant keepers	466	0	0.04	43.03	0.62	5.05	1083	0.01	0.04
Teachers and scientific persons	141718	1.35	10.94	92.27	1.34	10.84	153595	1.01	6
Bookkeepers and accountants in stores	2571	0.02	0.2	92.15	1.33	10.82	2790	0.02	0.11
Clerks in stores	18162	0.17	1.4	87.14	1.26	10.23	20843	0.14	0.81
Hucksters and peddlers	429	0	0.03	16.76	0.24	1.97	2560	0.02	0.1
Officials and employees of telegraph companies	1352	0.01	0.1	93.11	1.35	10.94	1452	0.01	0.06

Porters and laborers in stores warehouses	3585	0.03	0.28	79.12	1.15	9.29	4531	0.03	0.18
Salesmen and saleswomen	7056	0.07	0.54	86.81	1.26	10.19	8128	0.05	0.32
Saloon keepers and bartenders	619	0.01	0.05	23.8	0.34	2.79	2601	0.02	0.1
Traders and dealers (not specified)	2030	0.02	0.16	47.8	0.69	5.61	4247	0.03	0.17
Traders and dealers in dry foods, fancy foods, and notions	1979	0.02	0.15	51.87	0.75	6.09	3815	0.03	0.15
Traders and dealers in groceries	1451	0.01	0.11	24.62	0.36	2.89	5894	0.04	0.23
Artificial-flower makers	1911	0.02	0.15	77.37	1.12	9.09	2470	0.02	0.1
Apprentices to trades	3657	0.03	0.28	88.63	1.28	10.41	4126	0.03	0.16
Bakers	723	0.01	0.06	53.01	0.77	6.22	1364	0.01	0.05
Bookbinders and finishers	4852	0.05	0.37	86.37	1.25	10.14	5618	0.04	0.22
Boot and shoemakers	17804	0.17	1.37	86.33	1.25	10.14	20622	0.14	0.81
Box factory operatives	5965	0.06	0.46	87.94	1.27	10.33	6783	0.04	0.26
Button-factory operatives	1878	0.02	0.14	81.26	1.18	9.54	2311	0.02	0.09
Carpet makers	4685	0.04	0.36	67.3	0.97	7.9	6961	0.05	0.27
Cigar makers	2159	0.02	0.17	48.2	0.7	5.66	4479	0.03	0.17
Clock and watchmakers and repairers	1471	0.01	0.11	87.82	1.27	10.31	1675	0.01	0.07
Confectioners	1070	0.01	0.08	44.12	0.64	5.18	2425	0.02	0.09
Corset makers	3022	0.03	0.23	82.79	1.2	9.72	3650	0.02	0.14
Cotton-mill operatives	48614	0.46	3.75	56.52	0.82	6.64	86017	0.57	3.36
Flax dressers	519	0	0.04	49.81	0.72	5.85	1042	0.01	0.04
Glove makers	1772	0.02	0.14	87.55	1.27	10.28	2024	0.01	0.08
Gold and silver workers and jewellers	1222	0.01	0.09	84.1	1.22	9.88	1453	0.01	0.06
Hat and cap makers	4511	0.04	0.35	86.27	1.25	10.13	5229	0.03	0.2
Hosiery and knitting mill operatives	5257	0.05	0.41	84.15	1.22	9.88	6247	0.04	0.24
Lace makers	823	0.01	0.06	77.06	1.12	9.05	1068	0.01	0.04
Mill and factory operatives (not specified)	7298	0.07	0.56	70.38	1.02	8.27	10369	0.07	0.4
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	215068	2.05	16.6	79.14	1.15	9.29	271765	1.79	10.61
Paper mill operatives	4162	0.04	0.32	65.09	0.94	7.64	6394	0.04	0.25
Printers, lithographers, and stereotypers	3034	0.03	0.23	90.89	1.32	10.67	3338	0.02	0.13
Rubber factory operatives	1270	0.01	0.1	76.69	1.11	9.01	1656	0.01	0.06

Sewing machine operators	1261	0.01	0.1	75.28	1.09	8.84	1675	0.01	0.07
Shirt, cuff, and collar makers	7610	0.07	0.59	80.38	1.16	9.44	9467	0.06	0.37
Silk mill operatives	5437	0.05	0.42	68.67	0.99	8.06	7918	0.05	0.31
Straw workers	1650	0.02	0.13	92.85	1.34	10.9	1777	0.01	0.07
Tailors and tailoresses	34823	0.33	2.69	70.84	1.03	8.32	49155	0.32	1.92
Thread makers	1249	0.01	0.1	67.33	0.97	7.91	1855	0.01	0.07
Tobacco factory operatives	2091	0.02	0.16	41.68	0.6	4.89	5017	0.03	0.2
Woollen mill operatives	17473	0.17	1.35	66.43	0.96	7.8	26301	0.17	1.03
Others in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining industries	1305	0.01	0.1	76.86	1.11	9.03	1698	0.01	0.07
Others	23906	0.23	1.87	66.52	0.92	1.15	35938	0.25	1.62
Total (excluding unoccupied)	1295490		100			1.00	2560535		100
Keeping house	5967515	56.76		69.2	1.00		8623814	56.68	
At home	118174	1.12		80.64	1.17		146554	0.96	
Student	224048	2.13		91.43	1.32		245040	1.61	
Retired	6891	0.07		73.87	1.07		9328	0.06	
Sick, disabled	1921	0.02		75.07	1.09		2559	0.02	
Institutional inmate	3282	0.03		59.59	0.86		5508	0.04	
Gentleman	2370	0.02		85.47	1.24		2773	0.02	
Other non-occupational response	139086	1.32		79.14	1.15		175747	1.16	
Other	22874	0.22		73.55	1.06		31102	0.2	
Blank	2731239	25.98		80.07	1.16		3411075	22.42	
Total	10512890	100		69.1	1.00		15214035	100	

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Notes

1. American born (White): % of total - percentage of American born (White): women in each category as a share of all Irish-born women (occupied and unoccupied)
2. American born (White): % of occupied - percentage of American born (White): in each category as a share of all Irish-born occupied women
3. American born (White): % of all women occupied - percentage of American born (White): women in each category as a share of all women in that category
4. MOQ1 - the concentration of American born (White) women in different occupational classes with all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator
5. MOQ2 - the concentration of American born (White) women in different occupational classes with occupied women as the denominator
6. All: % of total - percentage of all women in each category as a share of all women (occupied and unoccupied)
7. All: % of all occupied - percentage of all occupied women in each category as a share of all occupied women

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Table A3. Women's work (main occupations) – Black American-born and All

	American born (Black)						All women		
Occupation	No	% birthplace total 1	% birthplace total 2	% of women's occupation total	MOQ 1	MOQ 2	No	% of all total	% of all occupied
Agricultural laborers	309227	16.75	39.81	84.63	6.97	2.79	365402	2.4	14.27
Farmers and planters	22167	1.2	2.85	28.32	2.33	5.55	78282	0.51	3.06
Actors	4	0	0	0.24	0.02	0.05	1685	0.01	0.07
Artists and teachers of art	5	0	0	0.25	0.02	0.05	2038	0.01	0.08
Barbers and hairdressers	553	0.03	0.07	20.43	1.68	4	2707	0.02	0.11
Boarding and lodging-house keepers	361	0.02	0.05	2.25	0.19	0.44	16043	0.11	0.63
Clergy	19	0	0	0.32	0.03	0.06	6014	0.04	0.23
Clerks and copyists	1	0	0	0.09	0.01	0.02	1134	0.01	0.04
Clerks in government offices	5	0	0	0.43	0.04	0.08	1173	0.01	0.05
Domestic servants	230675	12.49	29.69	23.91	1.97	4.68	964770	6.34	37.68
Employees of hotels and restaurants (not clerks)	3636	0.2	0.47	17.33	1.43	3.39	20976	0.14	0.82
Hotel keepers	23	0	0	0.7	0.06	0.14	3263	0.02	0.13
Laborers (not specified)	111686	6.05	14.38	86.79	7.15	17	128680	0.85	5.03
Launders and laundresses	70326	3.81	9.05	64.08	5.28	12.55	109744	0.72	4.29
Midwives	817	0.04	0.11	29.95	2.47	5.87	2728	0.02	0.11
Musicians (professional) and teachers of music	172	0.01	0.02	1.09	0.09	0.21	15815	0.1	0.62
Nurses	7442	0.4	0.96	28.9	2.38	5.66	25755	0.17	1.01
Officials of government	4	0	0	0.4	0.03	0.08	1003	0.01	0.04
Physicians and surgeons	45	0	0.01	2.37	0.2	0.46	1897	0.01	0.07
Restaurant keepers	194	0.01	0.02	17.91	1.48	3.51	1083	0.01	0.04
Teachers and scientific persons	3110	0.17	0.4	2.02	0.17	0.4	153595	1.01	6
Bookkeepers and accountants in stores	6	0	0	0.22	0.02	0.04	2790	0.02	0.11
Clerks in stores	83	0	0.01	0.4	0.03	0.08	20843	0.14	0.81
Hucksters and peddlers	491	0.03	0.06	19.18	1.58	3.76	2560	0.02	0.1
Officials and employees of telegraph companies	0	0	0	0	0	0	1452	0.01	0.06
Porters and laborers in stores warehouses	56	0	0.01	1.24	0.1	0.24	4531	0.03	0.18

Salesmen and saleswomen	31	0	0	0.38	0.03	0.07	8128	0.05	0.32
Saloon keepers and bartenders	41	0	0.01	1.58	0.13	0.31	2601	0.02	0.1
Traders and dealers (not specified)	137	0.01	0.02	3.23	0.27	0.63	4247	0.03	0.17
Traders and dealers in dry foods, fancy foods, and notions	10	0	0	0.26	0.02	0.05	3815	0.03	0.15
Traders and dealers in groceries	80	0	0.01	1.36	0.11	0.27	5894	0.04	0.23
Artificial-flower makers	9	0	0	0.36	0.03	0.07	2470	0.02	0.1
Apprentices to trades	64	0	0.01	1.55	0.13	0.3	4126	0.03	0.16
Bakers	50	0	0.01	3.67	0.3	0.72	1364	0.01	0.05
Bookbinders and finishers	1	0	0	0.02	0	0	5618	0.04	0.22
Boot and shoemakers	36	0	0	0.17	0.01	0.03	20622	0.14	0.81
Box factory operatives	5	0	0	0.07	0.01	0.01	6783	0.04	0.26
Button-factory operatives	6	0	0	0.26	0.02	0.05	2311	0.02	0.09
Carpet makers	30	0	0	0.43	0.04	0.08	6961	0.05	0.27
Cigar makers	12	0	0	0.27	0.02	0.05	4479	0.03	0.17
Clock and watchmakers and repairers	0	0	0	0	0	0	1675	0.01	0.07
Confectioners	39	0	0.01	1.61	0.13	0.31	2425	0.02	0.09
Corset makers	10	0	0	0.27	0.02	0.05	3650	0.02	0.14
Cotton-mill operatives	215	0.01	0.03	0.25	0.02	0.05	86017	0.57	3.36
Flax dressers	0	0	0	0	0	0	1042	0.01	0.04
Glove makers	6	0	0	0.3	0.02	0.06	2024	0.01	0.08
Gold and silver workers and jewellers	1	0	0	0.07	0.01	0.01	1453	0.01	0.06
Hat and cap makers	5	0	0	0.1	0.01	0.02	5229	0.03	0.2
Hosiery and knitting mill operatives	42	0	0.01	0.67	0.06	0.13	6247	0.04	0.24
Lace makers	4	0	0	0.37	0.03	0.07	1068	0.01	0.04
Mill and factory operatives (not specified)	389	0.02	0.05	3.75	0.31	0.73	10369	0.07	0.4
Milliners, dressmakers, and seamstresses	10477	0.57	1.35	3.86	0.32	0.76	271765	1.79	10.61
Paper mill operatives	4	0	0	0.06	0.01	0.01	6394	0.04	0.25
Printers, lithographers, and stereotypers	5	0	0	0.15	0.01	0.03	3338	0.02	0.13
Rubber factory operatives	1	0	0	0.06	0	0.01	1656	0.01	0.06
Sewing machine operators	0	0	0	0	0	0	1675	0.01	0.07

Shirt, cuff, and collar makers	24	0	0	0.25	0.02	0.05	9467	0.06	0.37
Silk mill operatives	5	0	0	0.06	0.01	0.01	7918	0.05	0.31
Straw workers	0	0	0	0	0	0	1777	0.01	0.07
Tailors and tailoresses	149	0.01	0.02	0.3	0.02	0.06	49155	0.32	1.92
Thread makers	0	0	0	0	0	0	1855	0.01	0.07
Tobacco factory operatives	2246	0.12	0.29	44.77	3.69	8.77	5017	0.03	0.2
Woollen mill operatives	22	0	0	0.08	0.01	0.02	26301	0.17	1.03
Others in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining industries	32	0	0	1.88	0.16	0.37	1698	0.01	0.07
Others	1522	0.12	0.21	4.24	0.48	0.13	35938	0.25	1.62
Total (excluding unoccupied)	776818		100			1.00	2560535		100
Keeping house	749797	40.61		8.69	0.72		8623814	56.68	
At home	8059	0.44		5.5	0.45		146554	0.96	
Student	11138	0.6		4.55	0.37		245040	1.61	
Retired	306	0.02		3.28	0.27		9328	0.06	
Sick, disabled	257	0.01		10.04	0.83		2559	0.02	
Institutional inmate	625	0.03		11.35	0.93		5508	0.04	
Gentleman	17	0		0.61	0.05		2773	0.02	
Other non-occupational response	11462	0.62		6.52	0.54		175747	1.16	
Other	2775	0.15		8.92	0.74		31102	0.2	
Blank	285212	15.45		8.36	0.69		3411075	22.42	
Total	1846466	100		12.14	1.00		15214035	100	

Source: IPUMS dataset

Notes

1. American born (Black): % of total - percentage of American born (Black): in each category as a share of all Irish-born women (occupied and unoccupied)
2. American born (Black): % of occupied - percentage of American born (Black): in each category as a share of all Irish-born occupied women
3. American born (Black): % of all women occupied - percentage of American born (Black): women in each category as a share of all women in that category
4. MOQ1 - the concentration of American born (Black): women in different occupational classes with all women (occupied and unoccupied) as the denominator
5. MOQ2 - the concentration of American born (Black): women in different occupational classes with occupied women as the denominator
6. All: % of total - percentage of all women in each category as a share of all women (occupied and unoccupied)
7. All: % of all occupied - percentage of all occupied women in each category as a share of all occupied women

Appendix B. Supplementary Data Tables

Table B1. Relationship to Household Head, Females in 1880, by Birthplace (United States)

	All		United States - White		United States - Black		North American/Canadian		American/ Caribbean		Irish		European		English		Scottish		Welsh	
Relationship to household head	No	% of total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total
Head/ householder	963,456	4.53	676,056	3.71	217,511	6.56	16,171	4.84	4,230	10.79%	130,470	13.52	98,955	7.64	25,744	8.81	7,529	10.06	3,328	8.91
Spouse	7,135,231	33.52	5,368,349	29.44	942,363	28.43	156,801	46.97	18,156	46.30%	518,710	53.74	839,652	64.79	165,968	56.78	40,890	54.63	22,545	60.38
Child	10,210,061	47.96	9,813,530	53.81	1,517,929	45.8	94,288	28.25	9,306	23.73%	56,014	5.8	162,232	12.52	53,023	18.14	12,207	16.31	6,802	18.22
Child-in-law	109,095	0.51	100,160	0.55	10,921	0.33	2,265	0.68	280	0.71%	1,425	0.15	3,425	0.26	1,154	0.39	251	0.34	95	0.25
Parent	252,446	1.19	184,862	1.01	40,137	1.21	4,084	1.22	645	1.64%	22,710	2.35	31,247	2.41	6,110	2.09	2,025	2.71	640	1.71
Parent-in-law	161,921	0.76	116,499	0.64	21,221	0.64	2,676	0.8	434	1.11%	14,073	1.46	21,705	1.67	4,679	1.6	1,354	1.81	441	1.18
Sibling	294,037	1.38	252,516	1.38	38,253	1.15	5,212	1.56	727	1.85%	18,087	1.87	12,073	0.93	3,661	1.25	1,298	1.73	308	0.82
Sibling-in-law	142,241	0.67	121,377	0.67	16,103	0.49	3,307	0.99	354	0.90%	7,182	0.74	7,103	0.55	2,106	0.72	581	0.78	165	0.44
Grandchild	262,953	1.24	259,854	1.42	85,451	2.58	959	0.29	248	0.63%	399	0.04	803	0.06	462	0.16	82	0.11	68	0.18
Other relatives	379,419	1.78	349,047	1.91	97,737	2.95	3,830	1.15	894	2.28%	9,889	1.02	11,173	0.86	3,096	1.06	947	1.27	335	0.9
Partner, friend, visitors	18,500	0.09	15,215	0.08	4,965	0.15	351	0.11	60	0.15%	1,008	0.1	1,440	0.11	293	0.1	71	0.09	41	0.11
Other non-relatives	1,346,293	6.32	971,323	5.33	320,559	9.67	43,710	13.09	3,847	9.81%	183,407	19.00	105,399	8.13	25,788	8.82	7,543	10.08	2,555	6.84
Institutional inmates	11,453	0.05	8,270	0.05	1,461	0.04	157	0.05	34	0.09%	1,869	0.19	781	0.06	233	0.08	66	0.09	17	0.05
Total	21,287,106	100	18,237,058	100	3,314,611	100	333,811	100	39,215	100.00%	965,243	100	1,295,988	100	292,317	100	74,844	100	37,340	100

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table B2. Relationship to Household Head, Males in 1880, by Birthplace (United States)

	All		American - White		American – Black		North American/ Canadian		American/ Caribbean		Irish		European		English		Scottish		Welsh	
Relationship to household head	No	% of total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total	No	% of birthplace total
Head/ householder	7,818,107	35.17	5,573,805	29.96	1,059,206	32.66	173,519	45.33	24,805	48.33	601,947	67.82	1,104,414	65.57	233,771	62.77	58,819	61.35	28,402	61.44
Spouse	8,322	0.04	5,089	0.03	3,805	0.12	174	0.05	58	0.11	1,248	0.14	1,268	0.08	360	0.1	76	0.08	24	0.05
Child	10,915,300	49.1	10,446,522	56.16	1,548,914	47.75	101,521	26.52	11,062	21.56	63,960	7.21	208,285	12.37	58,626	15.74	13,534	14.12	8,655	18.72
Child-in-law	86,805	0.39	74,440	0.4	10,627	0.33	2,175	0.57	285	0.56	2,385	0.27	4,874	0.29	1,931	0.52	462	0.48	187	0.4
Parent	80,343	0.36	53,121	0.29	4,531	0.14	1,564	0.41	147	0.29	6,162	0.69	15,381	0.91	2,721	0.73	773	0.81	295	0.64
Parent-in-law	49,448	0.22	32,114	0.17	2,456	0.08	911	0.24	96	0.19	4,036	0.45	9,613	0.57	1,890	0.51	538	0.56	230	0.5
Sibling	238,158	1.07	188,712	1.01	30,667	0.95	5,915	1.55	802	1.56	14,223	1.6	21,231	1.26	3,902	1.05	1,243	1.3	501	1.08
Sibling-in-law	98,470	0.44	80,279	0.43	11,050	0.34	2,183	0.57	293	0.57	5,495	0.62	7,614	0.45	1,739	0.47	542	0.57	227	0.49
Grandchild	268,502	1.21	265,215	1.43	89,198	2.75	1,022	0.27	260	0.51	360	0.04	866	0.05	503	0.14	132	0.14	66	0.14
Other relatives	350,831	1.58	319,669	1.72	85,978	2.65	3,638	0.95	982	1.91	7,443	0.84	13,862	0.82	3,214	0.86	863	0.9	414	0.9
Partner, friend, visitors	19,224	0.09	14,991	0.08	4,152	0.13	349	0.09	79	0.15	849	0.1	1,775	0.11	375	0.1	96	0.1	42	0.09
Other non-relatives	2,277,253	10.24	1,533,747	8.25	388,148	11.97	89,485	23.38	12,259	23.89	177,028	19.95	293,188	17.41	62,892	16.89	18,629	19.43	7,142	15.45
Institutional inmates	19,558	0.09	13,573	0.07	4,769	0.15	317	0.08	191	0.37	2,390	0.27	1,967	0.12	502	0.13	175	0.18	40	0.09
Total	22,230,321	100	18,601,277	100	3,243,501	100	382,773	100	51,319	100	887,526	100	1,684,338	100	372,426	100	95,882	100	46,225	100

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table B3. Number of own family members in household in 1880 (aged 15+), all and Irish-born (United States)

	All						
Number	Male	% of male total	% of family size	Female	% of female total	% of family size	Total
1	2633286	16.64	65.58	1382121	9.08	34.42	4015407
2	1479918	9.35	46.28	1717824	11.29	53.72	3197742
3	1988013	12.57	47.55	2192811	14.41	52.45	4180824
4	2181175	13.79	48.37	2328520	15.30	51.63	4509695
5	2043577	12.92	48.97	2129890	14.00	51.03	4173467
6	1724758	10.90	49.49	1759954	11.57	50.51	3484712
7	1343371	8.49	49.95	1345892	8.85	50.05	2689263
8	979633	6.19	50.44	962604	6.33	49.56	1942237
9	655752	4.14	50.82	634549	4.17	49.18	1290301
10+	791753	5.00	51.02	760166	5.00	48.98	1551919
Total	15821236	100.00	50.98	15214331	100.00	49.02	31035567

	Irish-born						
Number	Male	% of male total	% of family size	Female	% of female total	% of family size	Total
1	192404	22.13	50.21	190777	20.15	49.79	383181
2	85929	9.88	42.46	116466	12.30	57.54	202395
3	91315	10.50	44.66	113137	11.95	55.34	204452
4	101564	11.68	46.80	115455	12.19	53.20	217019
5	103684	11.93	47.99	112386	11.87	52.01	216070
6	93768	10.79	48.81	98324	10.38	51.19	192092
7	75697	8.71	49.52	77179	8.15	50.48	152876
8	54951	6.32	50.06	54813	5.79	49.94	109764
9	34768	4.00	50.38	34249	3.62	49.62	69017
10+	35239	4.05	50.74	34211	3.61	49.26	69450
Total	869319	100.00	47.86	946997	100.00	52.14	1816316

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table B4. Number of own children in household in 1880 (aged 15+), all and Irish-born (United States)

	All							
Children	Male	% of male	% of children type	Female	% of female	% of children type	Total	% of total
0	8564478	54.13	55.75	6796742	44.67	44.25	15361220	49.50
1	1859744	11.75	43.13	2451732	16.11	56.87	4311476	13.89
2	1580157	9.99	46.24	1837421	12.08	53.76	3417578	11.01
3	1260625	7.97	47.28	1405903	9.24	52.72	2666528	8.59
4	950982	6.01	47.91	1034074	6.80	52.09	1985056	6.40
5	672712	4.25	48.39	717362	4.72	51.61	1390074	4.48
6	441657	2.79	48.77	464003	3.05	51.23	905660	2.92
7	259211	1.64	49.04	269310	1.77	50.96	528521	1.70
8	134943	0.85	49.27	138917	0.91	50.73	273860	0.88
9+	96727	0.61	49.45	98867	0.65	50.55	195594	0.63
Total	15821236	100.00	50.98	15214331	100.00	49.02	31035567	100.00

	Irish-born							
Children	Male	% of male	% of children type	Female	% of female	% of children type	Total	% of total
0	361528	41.59	50.31	357135	37.71	49.69	718663	39.57
1	91215	10.49	40.00	136847	14.45	60.00	228062	12.56
2	91525	10.53	45.35	110291	11.65	54.65	201816	11.11
3	90477	10.41	47.23	101084	10.67	52.77	191561	10.55
4	79733	9.17	48.28	85427	9.02	51.72	165160	9.09
5	62141	7.15	49.12	64358	6.80	50.88	126499	6.96
6	43282	4.98	49.75	43709	4.62	50.25	86991	4.79
7	26156	3.01	50.27	25873	2.73	49.73	52029	2.86
8	13675	1.57	50.76	13268	1.40	49.24	26943	1.48
9+	9587	1.10	51.57	9005	0.95	48.43	18592	1.02
Total	869319	100.00	47.86	946997	100.00	52.14	1816316	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table B5. Residence by institutional type (IT) in 1880 (aged 15+), all and Irish-born (United States)

	All							
Institutional type (IT)	Male	% of male	% of IT	Female	% of female	% of IT	Total IT	% of birthplace total
Non-group quarters	15158322	95.81	50.35	14947776	98.25	49.65	30106098	97.01
Correctional institution	43317	0.27	90.48	4557	0.03	9.52	47874	0.15
Mental institutions	14740	0.09	51.11	14098	0.09	48.89	28838	0.09
Institutions for the elderly, handicapped, and poor	30724	0.19	49.93	30804	0.20	50.07	61528	0.20
Non-institutional	30293	0.19	58.23	21730	0.14	41.77	52023	0.17
Military	22223	0.14	97.92	472	0.00	2.08	22695	0.07
College dormitory	6715	0.04	73.13	2467	0.02	26.87	9182	0.03
Rooming house	370783	2.34	72.75	138884	0.91	27.25	509667	1.64
Other non-institutional and unknown	144119	0.91	72.91	53543	0.35	27.09	197662	0.64
Total	15821236	100.00		15214331	100.00		31035567	100.00

	Irish-born							
Institutional type (IT)	Male	% of male	% of IT	Female	% of female	% of IT	Total IT	% of birthplace total
Non-group quarters	797988	91.79	46.93	902463	95.30	53.07	1700451	93.62
Correctional institution	2853	0.33	76.88	858	0.09	23.12	3711	0.20
Mental institutions	1809	0.21	41.14	2588	0.27	58.86	4397	0.24
Institutions for the elderly, handicapped, and poor	7006	0.81	51.51	6594	0.70	48.49	13600	0.75
Non-institutional	4797	0.55	47.74	5252	0.55	52.26	10049	0.55
Military	3213	0.37	97.04	98	0.01	2.96	3311	0.18
College dormitory	541	0.06	65.74	282	0.03	34.26	823	0.05
Rooming house	37446	4.31	65.64	19604	2.07	34.36	57050	3.14
Other non-institutional and unknown	13666	1.57	59.61	9258	0.98	40.39	22924	1.26
Total	869319	100.00	47.86	946997	100.00	52.14	1816316	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table B6. Relationship to household head, females (15+) in 1880, by birthplace (New York)

	All		White American		Black American		North American/ Canadian		American Caribbean		Irish		European		English		Scottish		Welsh	
Relationship to household head	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	& of birth place total	No	% of birth place total
Head/ Householder	58085	9.31	15961	5.54	1632	13.96	528	10.25	151	10.03	23714	14.78	12516	9.76	2694	12.11	766	13.15	94	13.58
Spouse	278,890	44.69	99878	34.70	3784	32.38	2392	46.45	544	36.15	71987	44.86	85480	66.64	11402	51.27	2970	50.98	314	45.38
Child	128,121	20.53	107234	37.25	1187	10.16	708	13.75	240	15.95	7482	4.66	7743	6.04	2870	12.90	512	8.79	55	7.95
Child-in-law	2,823	0.45	2328	0.81	33	0.28	30	0.58	6	0.40	143	0.09	195	0.15	70	0.31	16	0.27	2	0.29
Parent	7,919	1.27	2351	0.82	148	1.27	65	1.26	35	2.33	2681	1.67	2079	1.62	434	1.95	114	1.96	11	1.59
Parent-in-law	6,654	1.07	2119	0.74	139	1.19	54	1.05	20	1.33	1914	1.19	1921	1.50	363	1.63	108	1.85	12	1.73
Sibling	13,239	2.12	7079	2.46	167	1.43	149	2.89	60	3.99	3853	2.40	1412	1.10	389	1.75	115	1.97	11	1.59
Sibling-in-law	6,373	1.02	3675	1.28	76	0.65	79	1.53	17	1.13	1335	0.83	894	0.70	216	0.97	63	1.08	13	1.88
Grandchild	1,230	0.20	1121	0.39	25	0.21	9	0.17	5	0.33	35	0.02	19	0.01	13	0.06	2	0.03	0	0.00
Other relatives	9196	1.47	5673	1.97	175	1.50	92	1.79	51	3.39	1805	1.12	995	0.78	302	1.36	86	1.48	7	1.01
Partner, friend, visitors	1,262	0.20	662	0.23	27	0.23	14	0.27	5	0.33	255	0.16	233	0.18	53	0.24	10	0.17	2	0.29
Other non-relatives	109,436	17.54	39477	13.71	4255	36.41	1021	19.83	370	24.58	44916	27.99	14709	11.47	3394	15.26	1055	18.11	168	24.28
Institutional inmates	842	0.13	313	0.11	39	0.33	9	0.17	1	0.07	345	0.22	83	0.06	40	0.18	9	0.15	3	0.43
Total	624070	100.0	287871	100.0	11687	100.0	5150	100.0	1505	100.00	160465	100.0	128279	100.0	22240	100.0	5826	100.0	692	100.0

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Table B7. Relationship to household head, males (15+) in 1880, by birthplace (New York)

	All		White American		Black American		North American/Canadian		American Caribbean		Irish		European		English		Scottish		Welsh	
Relationship to Household head	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	%of birth place total	No	%of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total
Head/ Householder	302611	52.46	90470	34.04	4250	50.55	2623	52.82	973	45.45	77403	69.39	107690	70.61	14199	61.70	4089	62.12	405	65.32
Spouse	1,290	0.22	473	0.18	66	0.78	19	0.38	4	0.19	325	0.29	325	0.21	60	0.26	13	0.20	2	0.32
Child	136647	23.69	113529	42.71	962	11.44	661	13.31	241	11.26	8024	7.19	9443	6.19	3099	13.47	530	8.05	56	9.03
Child-in-law	4,524	0.78	3188	1.20	54	0.64	55	1.11	27	1.26	337	0.30	644	0.42	166	0.72	43	0.65	5	0.81
Parent	1,860	0.32	451	0.17	11	0.13	9	0.18	3	0.14	518	0.46	715	0.47	103	0.45	45	0.68	5	0.81
Parent-in-law	1,601	0.28	471	0.18	12	0.14	11	0.22	1	0.05	420	0.38	550	0.36	100	0.43	30	0.46	5	0.81
Sibling	9,915	1.72	4837	1.82	83	0.99	100	2.01	42	1.96	2408	2.16	2047	1.34	255	1.11	82	1.25	8	1.29
Sibling-in-law	4,732	0.82	2595	0.98	44	0.52	48	0.97	18	0.84	998	0.89	795	0.52	161	0.70	67	1.02	4	0.65
Grandchild	1,185	0.21	1075	0.40	35	0.42	4	0.08	2	0.09	23	0.02	29	0.02	14	0.06	2	0.03	0	0.00
Other relatives	6861	1.19	4106	1.54	95	1.13	62	1.25	45	2.10	1109	0.99	1126	0.74	186	0.81	58	0.88	6	0.97
Partner, friend, visitors	1,081	0.19	550	0.21	18	0.21	8	0.16	6	0.28	188	0.17	248	0.16	41	0.18	17	0.26	2	0.32
Other non-relatives	103864	18.01	43740	16.46	2755	32.77	1359	27.37	775	36.20	19583	17.56	28790	18.88	4609	20.03	1597	24.26	122	19.68
Institutional inmates	688	0.12	301	0.11	23	0.27	7	0.14	4	0.19	209	0.19	113	0.07	20	0.09	9	0.14	0	0.00
Total	576859	100.0	265786	100.0	8408	100.0	4966	100.0	2141	100.0	111545	100.0	152515	100.0	23013	100.0	6582	100.0	620	100.0

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Table B8. Residence by institutional type (IT) in 1880 New York (aged 15+), all and Irish-born (New York)

	All							
	Male			Female			Total	
Institutional type (IT)	No	% of male	% of IT	No	% of female	% of IT	No	% of birthplace total
Non-group quarters	535,285	92.78	47.43	593,239	95.05	52.57	1,128,524	93.96
Correctional institution	891	0.15	77.08	265	0.04	22.92	1,156	0.10
Mental institutions	673	0.12	52.54	608	0.10	47.46	1,281	0.11
Institutions for the elderly, handicapped, and poor	1,279	0.22	30.12	2,968	0.48	69.88	4,247	0.35
Non-institutional	3,467	0.60	44.88	4,258	0.68	55.12	7,725	0.64
Military	451	0.08	98.47	7	0.00	1.53	458	0.04
College dormitory	144	0.02	93.51	10	0.00	6.49	154	0.01
Rooming house	29,689	5.15	62.35	17,925	2.87	37.65	47,614	3.96
Other non-institutional and unknown	5,047	0.87	50.82	4,884	0.78	49.18	9,931	0.83
Total	576,926	100.00	48.03	624,164	100.00	51.97	1,201,090	100.00

	Irish-born							
	Male			Female			Total	
Institutional type (IT)	No	% of male	% of IT	No	% of female	% of IT	No	% of birthplace total
Non-group quarters	103,387	92.69	40.86	149,639	93.25	59.14	253,026	93.02
Correctional institution	208	0.19	58.92	145	0.09	41.08	353	0.13
Mental institutions	214	0.19	42.89	285	0.18	57.11	499	0.18
Institutions for the elderly, handicapped, and poor	387	0.35	26.58	1,069	0.67	73.42	1,456	0.54
Non-institutional	1,070	0.96	34.28	2,051	1.28	65.72	3,121	1.15
Military	99	0.09	97.06	3	0.00	2.94	102	0.04
College dormitory	44	0.04	86.27	7	0.00	13.73	51	0.02
Rooming house	4,783	4.29	47.69	5,246	3.27	52.31	10,029	3.69
Other non-institutional and unknown	1,353	1.21	40.11	2,020	1.26	59.89	3,373	1.24
Total	111,545	100.00	41.01	160,465	100.00	58.99	272,010	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.

Table B9. Relationship to Household Head, Females (aged 30-44) in 1880 New York, by Birthplace

	All		White American		Black American		North American/Canadian		Irish		European		English	
Relationship to household head	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total
Head/householder	17455	8.95	5298	8.21	620	16.28	203	10.52	6733	10.50	3580	7.13	755	10.00
Spouse	130336	66.81	39578	61.34	1722	45.22	1231	63.78	38808	60.52	41907	83.46	5225	69.21
Child	9831	5.04	6963	10.79	144	3.78	72	3.73	1525	2.38	649	1.29	351	4.65
Child-in-law	704	0.36	540	0.84	6	0.16	7	0.36	65	0.10	58	0.12	19	0.25
Parent	189	0.10	74	0.11	8	0.21	3	0.16	53	0.08	40	0.08	8	0.11
Parent-in-law	202	0.10	79	0.12	13	0.34	4	0.21	64	0.10	30	0.06	7	0.09
Sibling	3875	1.99	1786	2.77	50	1.31	50	2.59	1423	2.22	388	0.77	114	1.51
Sibling-in-law	1820	0.93	964	1.49	18	0.47	25	1.30	469	0.73	239	0.48	74	0.98
Grandchild	41	0.02	33	0.05	1	0.03	1	0.05	5	0.01	0	0.00	1	0.01
Other relatives	1239	0.64	730	1.13	26	0.68	16	0.83	315	0.49	94	0.19	34	0.45
Partner, friend, vistors	438	0.22	204	0.32	13	0.34	6	0.31	97	0.15	95	0.19	17	0.23
Other non-relatives	28774	14.75	8241	12.77	1177	30.91	310	16.06	14477	22.58	3104	6.18	938	12.42
Institutional inmates	175	0.09	33	0.05	10	0.26	2	0.10	89	0.14	29	0.06	7	0.09
Total	195079	100.00	64523	100.00	3808	100.00	1930	100.00	64123	100.00	50213	100.00	7550	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Table B10. Relationship to Household Head, Females (aged 45-64) in 1880 New York, by Birthplace

	All		White American		Black American		North American/ Canadian		Irish		European		English	
Relationship to household head	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total
Head/ householder	29608	24.38	6322	20.96	647	30.79	238	26.21	13238	29.55	7157	20.34	1431	24.03
Spouse	64483	53.09	15152	50.24	551	26.23	443	48.79	20260	45.22	23694	67.34	3208	53.86
Child	907	0.75	641	2.13	20	0.95	6	0.66	146	0.33	47	0.13	34	0.57
Child-in-law	65	0.05	42	0.14	2	0.10	1	0.11	6	0.01	10	0.03	4	0.07
Parent	3523	2.90	986	3.27	76	3.62	33	3.63	1135	2.53	1012	2.88	204	3.43
Parent-in-law	3168	2.61	936	3.10	85	4.05	23	2.53	902	2.01	987	2.81	170	2.85
Sibling	2470	2.03	1022	3.39	27	1.29	19	2.09	1007	2.25	225	0.64	117	1.96
Sibling-in-law	973	0.80	484	1.60	10	0.48	10	1.10	271	0.60	122	0.35	53	0.89
Grandchild	3	0.00	3	0.01	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Other relatives	1142	0.94	456	1.51	23	1.09	10	1.10	387	0.86	175	0.50	63	1.06
Partner, friend, visitors	265	0.22	96	0.32	3	0.14	3	0.33	90	0.20	55	0.16	12	0.20
Other non-relatives	14657	12.07	3990	13.23	646	30.75	120	13.22	7251	16.18	1680	4.77	648	10.88
Institutional inmates	186	0.15	29	0.10	11	0.52	2	0.22	109	0.24	21	0.06	12	0.20
Total	121450	100.00	30159	100.00	2101	100.00	908	100.00	44802	100.00	35185	100.00	5956	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset.
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

Table B11. Relationship to Household Head, Females (aged 65+) in 1880 New York, by Birthplace

	All		White American		Black American		North American/Canadian		Irish		European		English	
Relationship to household head	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total	No	% of birth place total
Head/householder	7169	27.63	2180	25.61	121	27.38	39	23.78	3054	32.70	1224	22.67	372	25.05
Spouse	4638	17.88	1505	17.68	41	9.28	25	15.24	1296	13.88	1351	25.02	313	21.08
Child	9	0.03	7	0.08	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.01	0	0.00	1	0.07
Child-in-law	2	0.01	1	0.01	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.02	0	0.00
Parent	4204	16.20	1288	15.13	64	14.48	29	17.68	1493	15.99	1026	19.00	222	14.95
Parent-in-law	3275	12.62	1099	12.91	41	9.28	26	15.85	945	10.12	904	16.74	185	12.46
Sibling	538	2.07	287	3.37	7	1.58	1	0.61	179	1.92	36	0.67	19	1.28
Sibling-in-law	191	0.74	119	1.40	1	0.23	1	0.61	43	0.46	12	0.22	8	0.54
Grandchild	2	0.01	1	0.01	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.01	0	0.00	0	0.00
Other relatives	1218	4.69	481	5.65	23	5.20	7	4.27	366	3.92	243	4.50	64	4.31
Partner, friend, visitors	49	0.19	23	0.27	0	0.00	0	0.00	14	0.15	5	0.09	4	0.27
Other non-relatives	4432	17.08	1438	16.89	132	29.86	34	20.73	1865	19.97	578	10.71	282	18.99
Institutional inmates	217	0.84	83	0.98	12	2.71	2	1.22	82	0.88	19	0.35	15	1.01
Total	25944	100.00	8512	100.00	442	100.00	164	100.00	9339	100.00	5399	100.00	1485	100.00

Source: IPUMS dataset
Note: some migrant groups are excluded where the absolute numbers are low.

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