



Distress

IRELAND'S CHILDREN

Quality of Life, Stress, and Child Development in the Famine Era

THOMAS E. JORDAN



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Table 1.1
Age Structure in Percent of Ireland 1841, 1851, and 1861¹

		Ages in Years										
		<1	1-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	>60
1841												
	Males	2.58	10.46	13.56	12.92	10.75	9.28	7.31	11.33	9.07	6.46	6.28
	Females	2.38	9.80	12.80	12.03	12.93	9.95	7.66	11.97	9.33	6.51	6.64
1851												
	Males	2.12	7.95	13.61	15.73	13.57	9.75	5.70	9.76	8.82	6.81	6.18
	Females	1.96	7.45	12.75	14.76	13.09	9.57	5.49	10.91	9.74	7.18	7.10
1861												
	Males	2.46	9.97	10.92	10.79	11.62	10.50	7.10	10.08	9.48	8.10	8.98
	Females	2.27	9.27	10.19	9.83	11.60	10.72	7.13	10.53	10.40	8.32	9.72

¹Developed from the 1861 census report, Table VII.

Introduction

11

assassins (State, 1845). Even benevolent landlords were not immune to violence; Charles Bianconi (1786-1875) was widely known for his charity and, for example, gave five shillings to the parents of each newborn child in his locality. Even so, Bianconi escaped an ambush only through the choice of an alternate, longer route to his home by his traveling companion (Bianconi and Watson, 1962). The newspapers of its day contained accounts of land agents attacked, and conspiracies to murder them, as well as riots such as that at Ballinhassig fair in July 1845, over the arrest of Thomas (Ranter) Sullivan. In time, there would come the nonviolent expression of popular, widespread disaffection named for a recipient, Captain Charles Boycott, of Mayo.

In many respects, Ireland related to the larger island across the Irish Sea as a Third World country relates today to industrialized states. That is, the substructure of social and physical elements that we take for granted--good housing and medical services, for example--were concentrated in centers of population when they existed at all. Unfortunately, most of the population lived in villages and in remote places. As a result, the context within which many children were born and developed was less than ideal. Until 1838, there was no Poor Law for Ireland, and the system that appeared four years after the reforms in the English Poor Law expressed the reactionary themes of 1834. Even advocates took pains to deny any right or entitlement to public assistance on the part of those they sought to help; this outlook in the harsh years before famine broke out in 1845 exacerbated later problems of administration.

FAMINE

The data points for this study are twenty years apart. In 1845, there began an initially modest and scattered failure of the potato crop; it would become a national tragedy, changing the nature of Irish life and sending emigrants as far as the Antipodes. It was not the first infestation of the potato, which failed in Germany in 1830 and, closer to Ireland, in Scotland in 1833, 1836, and 1837 (Withers, 1988). In Holland in 1845, as in America in 1844, the effects were less pronounced because of a more diversified diet. In Scotland, a greater degree of responsiveness from the establishment and from public subscriptions plus reliance on oatmeal, alleviated the condition of the poor.

The famine began sporadically in 1845. In some places, for example, in Ulster, the extent of the infestation was partial (Kinealy and Parkhill, 1996). The Armagh workhouse unions, according to Joseph Grant (1977), did not encounter difficulties due to a shortage of food or money until the winter of the following year, 1846. Even then, as in other places, the absence of potatoes from the market place was due, to a degree, to farmers holding back stocks in anticipation of a further rise in the price. In addition, the province, unlike the southern and western counties, had not abandoned cultivation of oats, so that in a time of dietary stress there was a fall-back position for families. However, when disease struck the potato plants, the crop was lost entirely.

In 1845, people thought the problem, while acute, was temporary and expected it would be balanced in the next year by a normal harvest. The summer of 1846, however, brought massive infection of the potato crop, and counties heavily dependent on the potato were left with no crop at the end of the inevitable period of hunger before a new crop could be lifted in the summer of 1846. The following year brought a little biological relief, but the crop was small, and frequently seed potatoes had been eaten. The next year, 1848, saw a large failure of the potato that was complicated by the outbreak of cholera that peaked in 1849.

In Ireland, the potato had been an easy crop to raise and confidence in its excellent nutritive powers had led to excessive dependence; the tuber could be prepared easily for the table, and the scraps would feed pigs and chickens. Joel Mokyr and Cormac O Grada (1984) placed the monetary value of the potato at one-fourth of Ireland's agricultural product, adding that it accounted for one-third of the ploughed acreage. Bourke (Hill & O Grada, 1973) estimated the national potato yield at about fifteen million tons just before the famine began in 1845. For the pre-famine years Bourke estimated that about one-half (47 percent) fed people, while an additional one-third (33 percent) fed animals. Thirteen percent was set aside as seed for the next spring, and two percent were available for export. The typical statute acre, a little smaller than the Irish acre, yielded about six tons of potatoes. By the time of the famine, the southwest half of Ireland had deemphasized cereals—mostly oats—in favor of the potato, but oats remained firmly in the diet in Ulster and parts of Leinster.

From the point of view of the quality of life, thoughtful people had been pointing out the potential dangers of a monodiet, especially the potato, with its history of failure from time to time in many localities. The state of Irish agriculture and the pattern of land tenure militated against reform. In most places, the agriculturist was a subtenant who bid for the right to grow a crop of potatoes and faced disincentives for improving his practices. Under the rundale system, his land would consist of several pieces of ground rather than one contiguous plot. Only in Ulster did local custom guarantee the food producer anything resembling rights as a tenant. For most people, raising a crop of potatoes to feed the family, with scraps for a pig, was enough of a challenge. That fragile system, in which the landlord seized the crop as well as the cabin on nonpayment of rent, would be swept away by the destruction of the potato crop beginning in 1845.

Two travelers who saw the onset of the potato blight were the Cork reformer Father Theobald Mathew and Mr. James Brown of Tyrone county. Father Mathew rode to Dublin passing fields that in July 1845 promised a fine potato harvest. On his return, one week later, he beheld fields in which the green tops of the potato plants were rotten. A few days later, Mr. Brown returned, after three days in Bundoran, to Donaghmore and passed fields of rotten, blackened vegetation (Jordan, 1997c). The outbreaks were not universal but would become so in the following summer. It should be pointed out that localized failures of the potato crop were common, so that the total disaster of 1846 was not expected. Had the

practice of planting turnips as a substitute been more universally undertaken, as reported by Alexander Somerville from Carlow (Somerville, 1852), the loss of the potato crop might have been reduced. However, most of the people totally dependent on the potato were not likely to adopt innovative husbandry in their competition for land on which to raise a crop of potatoes. Somerville also noted that one variety of potato, the English Red rather than the common Lumper, was a little more resistant to the potato blight and was grown in Carlow.

When it became apparent in 1845 that blight (*Phytophthora infestans* Mont.) was destroying the potato crop, Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel sent the chemist Lyon Playfair and the botanist John Lindley to investigate. Their reports addressed to the Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, described their travels and then stated that "we can come to no other conclusion than that one half of the actual potato crop of Ireland is either destroyed or remains in a state unfit for the food of man!"

The prime minister, Robert Peel, to be succeeded in 1846 because of repeal of the Corn Laws by the far less responsive Lord John Russell, moved quickly. In November 1845, Peel proposed a commission to expand public aid in Ireland. The commission quickly imported North American corn (maize), a cereal the population thought fit for feeding chickens and which they accepted reluctantly and temporarily. In fact, their post-Famine diet, as surveyed by Dr. Edward Smith (*Sixth Report*, 1864), remained heavily dependent on the potato. In addition to selling or giving away food, the government in Westminster also instituted public works. In that enterprise it was joined by the few large landowners with a sense of responsibility, such as the Earls of Kingston and Shannon in Cork (Foster, 1988).

In 1846, the potato blight, a fungus that spread explosively, appeared again in July, but on a less scattered basis and with devastating results. When nature's malevolence was combined with the less unorthodox version of laissez-faire espoused by Lord John Russell and at the Treasury by Charles Trevelyan, the Irish population from infancy to old age encountered disaster. Children and adults simply ran out of food; their resistance to infection fell, and typhus and relapsing fever frequently killed before starvation. Across the famine years deaths from fevers and dysentery amounted to 3.2 million, and death was attributed to literal starvation in the case of twenty thousand persons (MacArthur, 1957). Kenneth Connell (1950) identified children under five in 1840, especially those in urban areas, as the age group with the highest mortality; Munster was the province with highest mortality rate under age five. While the age structure of the deaths during the Famine is not apparent, it seems likely that children and old people died in disproportionate numbers.

The geographic pattern of mortality varied year by year. For 1847, S. H. Cousens's (1960) research indicated the highest overall rate of excess mortality was in the southeast and west; the decline in infant baptisms was greatest in the southwest and in Mayo and Roscommon. In 1848 and 1849 excess mortality was highest in the west, in Galway and Connemara. By 1850, the rate of excess deaths had declined and was greatest in Clare, to the south of Galway.

The 1850s brought relief from the immediate effects of famine on the survivors. In the broader perspective Ireland was a shaken society. A visitor in 1849 observed that the countryside appeared to have been visited by a destroying angel. A few years later, in 1856, Friederich Engels wrote to Karl Marx conveying his impressions. He reported that whole villages were devastated, and that "The land is an utter desert." He found the land owners, "haven't a penny and live in dread of the Encumbered Estates Court" (Ellis, 1996). To the pre-famine poverty experienced by children and adults was added the effects of the famine, especially on Ireland's rural fabric:

In Mokyr's opinion, based on extensive research, Ireland's poverty was due to several factors that in turn led to the poor developing an excessive dependence on the unreliable potato as the major, and sometimes sole, source of nutrition. Mokyr observed that prices had risen during the French wars and then fell dramatically. Also, Ireland failed to mechanize its industries, an example being changes in Cork (Bielenberg, 1991). Ulster was an exception, however; its linen and metal fabricating operations became quite efficient. As Ireland's domestic economic integration under the Union Jack developed, her products faced competition. An example would be the modernization of spinning technology in Lancashire and its reduction of prices. Ireland's domestic economy lacked an efficient distribution network of wholesalers and retailers outside the few centers of population. For potato-dependent families with money, there was not always a retailer of other foods, such as oatmeal, to supply alternative nutrients for parents and children. Rural families used money for rent and employed barter for many transactions.

At the best of times a portion of the population was in desperate poverty and on the edge of starvation even when the potato crop was good. When the potato harvest failed in all parts of Ireland in 1846, the perennially desperate were joined in beggary by previously marginal but surviving families. Ill-nourished by the annual cycle of months just before the potato harvest was usually lifted, the perennially hungry were ill-prepared to resist disease or to earn their daily bread—literally—at public works projects such as building walls, roads, and bridges. J. Dennis Willigan (1977) calculated that even had export of food ceased, non-potato nutrients were sufficient for only one million people.

Within the population were the age segments whose nutrition was vital at their stage of life. Willigan's (1977) analysis revealed that, in 1841, 48.10 percent of the population were age 19 or less; 25.1 percent were nine years or less. By 1851, this age segment had fallen slightly to 47.8 percent, and the group aged 10 to 19 had risen to 25.8 percent of the age pyramid. Put another way, about one half of the population was at a nutritionally sensitive stage of the life cycle, with one in four Irish people being in the teen years when nutrition is critical. It has generally been observed that diet in post-Famine Ireland deteriorated as tea, bread, and sugar replaced milk, potatoes, and oatmeal (Ward, 1993).

EMIGRATION

One effect of the Famine was to accelerate the rate of emigration above that of earlier years (Miller, 1985a, 1985b). Historically, young agricultural workers had migrated seasonally to England. Before 1820 and subsequently, seasonal migrants had stayed and then gravitated to centers of population such as Manchester, London (O'Neill, 1869; Jordan, 1998d) Bradford, and Glasgow. In the 1840s, the diffusion of population included North America (Schrier, 1970; Miller, 1989), and convicts were sent to Australia (Backhouse, 1843; Jordan, 1985a, 1991, 1993c; Fitzpatrick, 1994). It should be noted that these involuntary emigrants included boys (Jordan, 1985a); delinquent girls under 18 were legally ineligible for "transportation beyond the seas," but adolescent workhouse and orphan girls were sponsored by philanthropy for emigration to New South Wales.

To the stress of hunger, disease, and eviction for young people was added the stress of leaving the familiar for the unknown. In many cases, emigration to England, Scotland, Canada, and the United States was a great strain. In the case of travel to the New World, as opposed to a brief ride across the Irish Sea followed by a walk to join family in Manchester or Glasgow (Jordan, 1994a), further travel began in Liverpool, the port for emigration. There, people who might never have seen even the Irish Sea began the dangerous North Atlantic crossing or headed for the remote Antipodes. Apart from the natural stress of the elements, there was stress due to traveling in close quarters, plus the resultant spread of disease. Edward Laxton (1997) gave the example of the ship, *Virginus*, which left Liverpool with 476 passengers. Of that number 155 died at sea, and 106 reached Grosse Isle with fever. A doctor recorded that of the rest, "not more than six or eight were really healthy."

For many coffin ship passengers, the Canadian station at Grosse Isle north of Quebec City became both their terminus and their burial plot. Today, there are francophones in Quebec with Irish names who are descendants of children orphaned on the voyage who were placed with local families. For them, accumulated stresses were compounded by the prevalence of the French language and mitigated by the familiarity of Catholicism and the kindness of their foster parents. One emigrant to Canada was young Herbert Samuel Holt (1898-1941), born in King's county (Offaly) who became a successful captain of industry (Regehr, 1992).

The two decades between 1841 and 1861 saw the culmination of trends in Irish life whose trigger was the failure of the potato crop for several years beginning in the summer of 1845. The trends were several, and two in particular are relevant here. One was the trend to what nutritionists call a monodiet, based on decreasing cultivation of cereals and increasing reliance on potatoes. The other was the growth of the population of Ireland and the comparatively low age of the population. In this book I address through social indicators and other data the welfare of the young, an expanding segment of Ireland's population as mid-century approached.

overcrowding. Secondary to that came problems of sanitation and health. Whitelaw's study may be found in Wall (1974). Across the decades, the condition of Dublin's poor was a recurring theme. Shortly before the Famine, in 1845, Thomas Willis completed a study of the area north of the Liffey.

For children, according to Dr. Wilde in 1843, the healthiest months were May to July; November to March, excepting February, were the deadly months. The weather in February being typical of Ireland's cloudy, cold, and wet climate suggests that Dr. Wilde's dispensation for February was, perhaps, overly generous.

It seems likely that the many children not in school would have been a floating population, some of whom worked while others played in the streets or begged. Jobs were not plentiful because Dublin was a port city and capital and not a manufacturing center. That characteristic at mid-century was in the process of evolving in Belfast. There, the young could find work, if of the right persuasion, in metal fabrication and spinning mills.

Cork

Prior to the period of central interest in this work, Cork had grown into a substantial point of export to England and across the Atlantic. Engineering, shipbuilding, textile, and brewing had grown, and the region around Cork, according to Bielenburg (1991), provided the agricultural base for exports. The textile jobs vanished, and Ulster achieved hegemony in linen fabrication. Brewing shrank in the face of the Guinness expansion in Dublin, but production and export of butter expanded. The general economy of Cork and job opportunities for the young failed to match the technological change of the rest of the British union across the nineteenth century.

In 1841, Cork city had a population of 80,270 persons. A decade later it stood at 85,732. That apparent growth is misleading, however. The county population went from 723,398 down to 563,576, a decline of 27.13 percent across a decade. The Famine did severe damage to the social fabric of the region, and the town of Skibbereen was reduced from a pleasant place to a human catastrophe. The minuscule social services provided by charities were overwhelmed by the disaster. The quality of life experienced by children in County Cork, as elsewhere, deteriorated sharply with the failure of the potato crop in 1845, and many children died in subsequent years of shortage. The region around Cork had a large population, and land was diverted into pasture from which milk and butter were generated. Landowners and farmers continued to export food products throughout the Famine, while competition for North American grain was fierce because of crop failures elsewhere. In the years 1851 to 1891, according to Andy Bielenburg (1991), the population would decline further, to less than 439,000 people.

Beyond the environs of Cork, Dublin, and subsequently Belfast, which would grow rapidly as an industrial center, life sometimes continued as it had done in the eighteenth century. Considering childhood in that setting requires that we acknowledge an outlook quite different from that of middle-class Victorians and

even more so from our own. To a considerable extent, the structure of this chapter is, explicitly and implicitly, that of the current era. We have a view of the world that is generally modern in its ethos; that is, we emphasize the values of secularism and explain events by chance or rationalism and not by superstition, for the most part. We employ the English language to represent reality in our thinking, a cognitive structure whose lexicon encourages subtlety and whose syntax favors the active voice and its implicit inner locus of control. We accept change as a given and, while possibly too optimistic, consider it, on the whole, a good thing. Our outlook is that of the global village, and we sympathize via television with people at the Antipodes as we see victims of natural disasters reel in the face of adversity. We see the metaphoric death of kings as distant events that have become the detail of our hourly news reports. Public expectation is that the keenest edge of our adversity will be softened by philanthropic programs of government to which people feel they have an inherent right or by the assistance of organized, private philanthropy ready to assist us and others, even in distant corners of the world.

THE ETHOS

Childhood in Ireland, as well as on John Bull's larger island, occurred within a single set of government-related policies. They influenced society from the top down and provided a framework within which the privileged structured the conditions of life. The principles caught the Victorian ethos in a fashion that clashes with some contemporary values, and which may be used to make them explicit. Within Victorian political economy it was taken for granted, especially by the privileged, that people needed to fit into the class-based system of the day. The whole was felt to be almost natural in its format, and persons who did not fit into the socio economic system were thought out of step. Today, we think people come first, and expect to see social justice enforced by government as a basic responsibility. In parallel fashion, the Victorians thought the politico economic system to be an objective, justified reality, beyond criticism; today, many expect to see the moral calculus applied to social institutions and to protect families.

Within the *laissez-faire*, *laissez-passer* environment, the Victorians believed that there were some losers. That was unfortunate, but the poor who were respectable could look to private charities to assist them in preserving their work ethic and its moral foundation. In time they would add social Darwinism to this rationale, while also becoming a little more generous with public assistance. It may be noted that social commentaries in the 1840s for example, Joseph Kay in 1846, observed with concern much like today's that the cost of public welfare was rising at an alarming rate; education, he asserted, would make the poor more employable. Today, we expect public policy to put a safety net under all and to help people get back on their feet. In the modern view, poverty begets poverty, and children especially must be given a way to become self-sufficient or to acquire marketable skills in a world of high technology. We see unions as necessary to promote social justice, although perhaps less so than in earlier decades; in contrast, the Victorian

Piaget's stages and Erik Erikson's themes possibly have relevance, if in only the guise of an outline or skeletal structure. More feasible is the possibility of inferring behavior from Robert Havighurst's (1965) notion of developmental tasks. While not literally applying those mid-twentieth century tasks to mid-nineteenth, and in a quite different cultural setting, we can, by analogy, identify Victorian developmental tasks from what we know of most cultures around the world and, more particularly, what we know of the culture of Ireland in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

For example, all societies require children to master their bowel and bladder functions, and they tend to insist on earlier completion in strata of society below the middle class. Deference to parents is a traditional theme, as is an authoritarian value system in which children play the role of a minority with few prerogatives. Today, lower-class parents often see young children as unteachable and may learn with surprise that middle-class people incorporate the role of child developer within their formulation of parenthood. It seems likely that the appearance of language and reaching other developmental milestones occurred mostly in the absence of deliberate child-centered stimulation in Irish peasant families. This not to assert an absence of love, but to delineate an element in the role of parent that has tended to be less evident among the poor. The impression of children's socialization shifts when we consider youngsters at age five. For some of them, probably a minority in the 1830s and 1840s, entry into school radically altered the process of socialization. The developmental tasks became more formal and were tied to expectations for the end of each school year.

COPING WITH STRESS

Attention to child development in the middle decades of the nineteenth century is occasioned by the onslaught of Nature on a population frequently consuming a monodiet. That tragedy is a population-based formulation of stress that has grown out of my attention in other works to biosocial stress and socio economic stress in Victorian Britain. In all instances we consider lives in progress as children moved toward maturity within the circumstances of their lives.

In the case of Ireland's children, we examine lives in an era far removed from our own. Even so, it seems appropriate to attempt to understand how children reacted to the great disaster in a place and time when child development was perennially at risk. The famine did not originate stress in children's lives; rather, it magnified it to a degree leading to death in many cases, while leaving shattered lives and a legacy of bitterness among survivors.

Life Processes

Life for children in Victorian-colonial Ireland was a series of processes. One was that of meeting the developmental tasks society set for each child-age; an example is the expectation that children contribute to the family economy. Another set of processes consisted of interacting with parents, family members, ordinary people, and status figures in the community such as the landlord or his agent, the

priest or minister, the teacher, and the doctor.

To the non-Famine stresses of daily life children brought some attributes that today's research suggests might have been relevant; in preferring them I recognize the hazard of speculating about life in an earlier era. At the best of times childhood is subject to a variety of stresses. With all the resources of our century, and a comparatively high quality of life for children in many parts of the world stress has not been eliminated; indeed, some novel forms of stress have appeared. Construction of a new airport in Germany created a good deal of noise for children living thirty five kilometers from Munich. The research of Evans, Bullinger, and Hygge (1998) examined the impact of construction noise which doubled in volume over two years. One of two groups of fourth grade children, the experimental group, demonstrated symptoms of physiological stress; the symptoms presented were heightened blood pressure and elevated levels of epinephrine and norepinephrine. Based on her own broad research and that of others Werner (1995b) concluded that today's children marshal resilience when they encounter stress. As babies they tended to be, "active, affectionate, cuddly, good natured, and easy to deal with;" being alert and easy to sooth were also important. In the preschool years children resistant to stress combined autonomy with the ability to ask for help. In middle childhood and adolescence stress-resistant children were those who could correctly appraise situations, related well to other youngsters, and communicated effectively.

Tolerance for stress may well be constitutional in part, and to that extent would probably have been evident in the developmental patterns of Irish children in the nineteenth century. In social terms a close bond with a family member is an asset when that person is stable. A trait relevant to nineteenth century Ireland in Werner's research is the habit of turning to others for counsel. That pattern implies good emotional ties and trust (Werner, 1995). It also suggests a degree of extroversion and of confidence in people with whom a child interacts. These comments are speculative and I mean merely to indicate broadly the mechanisms of current society which probably apply to Victorian Ireland's children and their social context.

For Victorian Ireland we can only speculate about the ways in which varieties of stress affected children. However, it seems likely that males and females, at a time of narrowly specified gender roles, would react in role-related ways to stress. For boys and girls, a persisting intra-family problem would probably have been to cope with parents who themselves were subject to a range of stresses. Originating in the struggle to survive, parents' relation to each other would itself constitute a process influencing their children's reactions to commonly shared stress in a process of mutual, reciprocal exchanges. For example, parents' evident degree of distress probably, then as now, generated a degree of anxiety in their children. When combined with recourse to alcohol—the stress on children would have risen. In times of stress, such as eviction, parents were a resource that mitigated the stress in children's lives. Parents, one or both, disabled by drink, complicated children's

life processes hour by hour in the daily routine and also in broader rhythms of life's processes.

Of course, children differ in their personal resources; some have little capacity to foresee or to plan. Others approach the day as a combatant who has tactics for coping with the world. The degree of that personal resource would have determined how the challenges of pre-Famine and post-Famine life were met. To a degree, attendance at school, an experience of a minority in most places, would have created a sense of competence, and so a degree of self-confidence, with which to face life's challenges.

The Famine

The preceding speculations may be applied cautiously to the lives of Irish children before and after the famine years. For the period 1846-1850 and beginning in 1845 in selected rural areas, the scope of Nature's wrath exceeded human capacity to cope. At first, the problem seemed merely one more localized problem to be balanced by next year's successful harvest of potatoes. Realization that the annual summer period of scarcity would not end was a sensation of horror. Perception of stress by children and adults was probably overwhelming. Recourse to charity, to the Poor Law commissioners, and to the Divinity were ineffectual. If hunger and disease would not go away, families reasoned, they would emigrate, a process that replaced a known, specific anxiety with a more diffused anxiety, but one tinged with hope of a better life. They would be strengthened by what modern analysts called "resilience" (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1982, 1995a,b).

FAMILY LIFE

Family life in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, as in our own context, varied greatly. Children growing up in Georgian houses lacked for very little, although money and social position were no guarantee of protection from disease. At the other end of the scale were children living on the streets of towns or in the fourth-class housing-one room dwellings sometimes lacking a window. For rural children a landlord's agent might decide to clear a settlement. In Dromore, in 1834, all families were evicted when a new lessee took over the land. In data summarizing evictions assembled by O'Day and Stevenson (1992) there were 63,256 evictions in the five years 1849-1853. In the remaining years until 1861, which end the core years of this book, the maximum number of evictions was 2,150 in 1854, and the annual average until 1861 was 1,091.

During his 1847 visit to Ireland, Alexander Somerville, who had been a ploughboy, encountered families in distress. Near Longford, according to Somerville, Patrick Mullinhiff was evicted, although he could produce evidence that his family had paid the rent on time for 60 years. In some cases of eviction, the goal was two-fold; in addition to removing the tenant the agent also took the crops under a court order. Somerville, a farsighted agriculturist (Somerville, 1852; Snell, 1994), grasped that the fundamental problem with rural life was the lack of tenure, with people holding a scrap of land under layers of subleases. Under the

system, to become the domestic Irish issue in the post-Famine years, to improve buildings and land was to invite eviction, putting children and parents out under the stars and exposed to the elements; the reason for discouraging improvements was that they raised the landlord's taxes. In 1844, a woman in Galway with a 15 year old boy told Mrs. Asenath Nicholson (1847, 1850) of New York, on her visit to Galway, "If I make the dwelling look nice outside, the agent would put a pound more rent on me, or turn me out and my little things; and I couldn't pay the pound."

Over the early decades of the nineteenth century, families had grown in size; according to the 1841 census report of 1843 the average family in 1821 consisted of 5.18 persons. In 1831 it had risen to 5.61, and then declined slightly to 5.55 persons, while still remaining above the 1821 figure.

The Home

The physical characteristics of homes, even now as then, influence the quality of life for children. A dwelling of the fourth class was a structure barely capable of providing protection from the elements and frequently shared with a domestic animal known in the vernacular as "the gint that pays the rent," not a pet or food but a vital element of the family economy to be sold in timely fashion to meet the rent on a quarter acre or so.

Although the dwelling gave protection from wind and rain, the interior of a residence of the poor was cluttered. Accounts of the period by travelers indicate that many fourth-class cabins were dark and contained little furniture. The interior was unstimulating and possibly wet because of a leaky roof and dirt floor. The room was dirty and crowded when all were indoors. The noise level was high and the air quality poor as a little turf burned quietly in the hearth. However, there were worse habitations, and some people dwelt in holes and excavations.

The psychological atmosphere of the typical dwelling was uncondusive to child development. Emotionally stressed parents who had married young, in accordance with custom and practice, coped with the struggle to find land to grow food at the best of times. Parents' abuse of alcohol was denounced by Father Theobald Matthew of Cork, to some benefit, but children regularly met drunken abuse from parents who had limited ways to cope with life's stresses.

Speaking when spoken to was a maxim Victorian parents backed up with slaps and more calculated punishment. Poor people, as today, probably did not see themselves as educators, within their roles as parents, whose stimulation would encourage language and intellectual growth (Clark, 1983). Living amidst disorganization during periods of stress, for example, the months before the next crop of potatoes could be lifted, children may not have internalized constructive routines or evolved values leading to self-improvement. Angry outbursts on all sides probably constricted children's emotional development.

On the other hand, the joys of music and the ceilidh or dance to traditional instruments and the consolations of religion soothed the strains to a degree. In his

Irish Sketch Book William Makepiece Thackeray (1842) noted the high spirits and jolly fellowship that characterized fairs and gatherings. A naturally linguistic people, the Irish beggars recorded beseeching, had poetry in it as "your Honour" was asked for a donation "for the love of God and the Saints." Beggars' children on the streets of towns became fluent and shrewd in the style of Charles Dickens's Artful Dodger.

In 1850, William Balch noted crowds of beggars including, "a gang of smutty children, with bare legs and half-naked bodies, crawling about like a race of inferior beings, more degraded in their appearance, and less cared for than the negroes of Georgia." A decade later, in 1861, Mark O'Shaughnessy addressed the Dublin Statistical Society; in his report he described 59 boys and 66 girls under 10 years of age. All were arrested for vagrancy, an act that tells us as much about social policy as about the children. Eight of the boys were additionally charged as disorderly, one charged with gambling and another with drunkenness.

A source of psychological stress to children was the death of a parent; this was the experience of many youngsters who found themselves orphaned. The eight children of Michael Gormley were early victims, and in late 1846 they subsisted on porridge. In early 1847, Michael Gormley left Sylane, intending to sell a load of turf in Tuam. He did not reach the town but died about a mile before he got there. What became of his widow and children is not known (Flynn, 1991). We may surmise that to their evident nutritional stress was added the pain and anxiety of their loss.

Life for the poor was lived on the edge; one of Mrs. Nicholson's hosts in 1844 lost a sixpence. The woman, the widow of an army officer, was reduced to living in a simple, rented dwelling. The small coin, which Mrs. Nicholson replaced, was for rent due the next day, "or I shall lose my cabin tomorrow." Despite the keen edge of adversity, hospitality was a rural tradition. In her walking tour Mrs. Nicholson noted her safety and the many invitations to sit and rest her feet extended by cottage dwellers across Ireland.

HOUSING

The quality of housing in which Ireland's children grew up in the middle decades of the nineteenth century was poor. Quality was formulated as follows by the 1841 census Commissioners led by Captain Thomas Larcom: "In the lowest, or fourth class, were comprised all mud cabins having only one room; in the third, a better description of cottage, still built of mud, but varying from two to four rooms and windows; in the second, a good farm-house, or in towns, a house in the small street, having from five to nine rooms and windows; and in the first, all houses of a better description than the preceding classes."

In the years before the Famine, accounts of travelers (Alexis de Tocqueville [Larkin, 1990], and Gustave de Beaumont [Taylor, 1839], in 1835, Alexander Somerville in 1843 [1852], Mr. & Mrs. Hall in 1841[1984], and Mrs. Asenath Nicholson in 1844 [1850]), reported squalid circumstances in which children and

animals shared the same roof. Invariably, there was a manure pile outside the door accumulating for application in the fields. The 1835 report on the condition of the Irish poor gave a brief account of the parish of Ballinacarrig in County Westmeath. There were, "twenty poor widows who are in a very wretched condition. Their houses are extremely miserable, not high enough in the center for a man to stand erect in, and scarcely more than six feet square." Of several accounts, that of Mrs. Nicholson is quite vivid; she ran out of money on occasions during her tour and recounted spending sixpence for a night's lodging on several occasions when she exhausted her funds or was delayed by weather.

After the usual salutations, the girl was bidden to go out and dig some potatoes; the pot was hung over the fire, the potatoes were boiled and a touch from the finger of the matron was the signal for me to follow her into supper. On a naked deal (pine) table stood a plate of potatoes . . . must be eaten from the hand, and the milk taken in sups from the mug. It must be remembered that a sup of sweet milk among the poor in Ireland is a rarity and a luxury. I ate plentifully, both from hunger and from courtesy I fell asleep, nor did the barking of the dog, the squealing of the pig, or the breathing of man, woman or child arouse me.

At a more detached level, we may consider the quality of Ireland's housing stock in terms of census data from the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

1841

In the years before the Famine most Irish families lived in terrible housing. In 1841, using Captain Larcom's system, which would survive, fundamentally, into the twentieth century, the average proportion of fourth-class houses was 40.46 percent; above that appalling level were the third-class dwellings—40.97 percent; this means that four-fifths of the dwellings were of the two lowest levels of quality. Second class houses were 16.96 percent of the whole, and the quite superior homes of the first class constituted 1.40 percent of Irish housing stock.

1851

At the end of the tumultuous years begun in 1845, housing had changed. Fourth-class structures—one hesitates to consider them homes—had fallen to 21.91 percent of housing, and third class dwelling had risen to 50.54 percent. One-quarter of available housing was in the second class—24.72 percent, and the proportion of first-class residences had doubled to 2.83 percent. These changes in proportions should not be misconstrued to mean that conditions for the poor had improved. Many fourth-class houses were pulled down, leaving families without shelter. Census data demonstrate that, for Ireland as a whole, the number of families per house rose from 111 per 100 houses to 115 families; it was least in Ulster, where families per 100 houses rose from 106 in 1841 to 108 in 1851. The increase was greatest in Munster and Leinster, where the proportion rose across the decade of the 1840s from 114 to 170 families. In a few places no change, good or bad, was evident; things remained stable in the competition for housing in counties Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, and Donegal. There was slight improvement in the ratio of families to

versus role confusion. In famine Ireland, the non-mastery of this theme was evident in the collapse of public, externally oriented, morality. Driven desperate by hunger, people stole to feed their children. They did so at a time when punishment was harsh, to a degree that created criminals whom we would treat mildly as first offenders. Adults and children-including females over age 18-were eligible for transportation to Australia, a subject I have addressed elsewhere (Jordan, 1985a, 1991, 1993b). In 1856, the British Association held its annual meeting in Dublin, and James M. Wilson reviewed the statistics of crime in the period 1842-1856. His sophisticated analysis yielded a picture of crime by gender among young persons. For males the greatest risk for crime was between the ages of 16 and 21 years. For females the greatest risk was between twenty one and thirty years. Juvenile crime was more likely to be a male adolescent phenomenon and to consist of crime against property. Between ages twelve and sixteen years males were four times more likely than females to commit crimes (Wilson, 1857).

In the last years of the Famine, the cumulative effects of hunger were addressed in a Parliamentary inquiry into the Irish Poor Law of 1838 and its effectiveness. From Mayo, Mr. Mark O'Shaughnessy, an Assistant Barrister, advised the Select Committee of the social stress on youth induced by social disintegration in Mayo, and Clare Island in particular (O'Shaughnessy, 1849).

At the sessions that have just terminated I have had very distressing instances before me of persons to be transported. This occurred the week before last at Westport. Dominic Ginely was indicted for larceny of hempen ropes and convicted. I asked him if he wanted to be transported, and he said 'yes,' he would do the same thing again if let go. He said he would have pleaded guilty, but he was afraid he would not be transported if he did. He was transported for seven years. He was a young person about seventeen years old.

Martin McGunty, John McGrone, and John English were indicted for stealing a quantity of hemp, and were convicted. They were about 17 years of age; they requested to be transported as they had no means of living, and must do the same thing again.

Owen Eady pleaded guilty to stealing linen; he was about 18 years only and wished to be transported; he said he should rob again if let out. I asked him if he knew what transportation was; he said he knew he would be kept at work for seven years and that at the end he would have his liberty in another country, which would be better than starving and sleeping out at night; he was told he might have chains on his legs. "If I have," he said, "I will have something to eat." He was transported for seven years.

Margaret Heston and Mary Walsh, two young girls, were convicted of stealing two heifers; they said they took them to get into gaol and be transported, and should do the same thing again if let out; they pleaded guilty. They said they did not know what transportation was, but that anything was better than hunger; they were transported.

These anecdotes show how the quality of social life was undermined by acute distress. In the case of Clare Island crime arose among people credited at the time

with a high degree of honesty. Acute stress breached the strictures of morality and crime became a way to qualify for "transportation beyond the seas," usually to Australia; Irish Catholics appear to have been sent less frequently to Van Diemen's Land-Tasmania envisaged as a non-Catholic enclave. At a time when the views of Mary Carpenter (Manton, 1977), James Kay-Shuttleworth, and others were only beginning to influence public policy, the legal system gave little flexibility to magistrates. Judicial leniency on the recommendation of the jury was extended at Derryginola, near Clifden, Mayo, to two persons with bad reputations. Michael Ward and Ellen Reilly stole, and probably sold as meat, the foal of Anne Kinealy. They went to jail for six weeks. Some judges found transportation a practical and relatively benign solution for juveniles. In the case of one of the leading Irish figures of the 1840s, William Smith O'Brien (Touhill, 1981), penal exile for him and his revolutionary companions was a life-saving alternative. For most criminals their way of life was part of a social complex in which illiteracy seemed the prime aspect to the Victorians. The absence of this quality of life element in the lives of many children was thought to set the stage for a criminal career.

In 1856, J.C. Connellan and F. F. W. Hervey summarized the court records and background of juveniles in the justice system. The Bridewells in which many were held were reported as, "exhibiting for the most part, defects of the greatest character, both material and moral." Many lacked water and sewerage, and in others, "the sleeping rooms of one sex having to be passed through to arrive at those of the other." In such places children were housed.

With regard to children up to age 16, one-third had lost both parents, and only one-third had two living parents. The proportion of total illiterates in 1856 was 43.12 percent, while only 19.92 percent -- one in five -- could read and write. A high proportion of the young offenders were vagrants, a group we would consider children in need of care rather than imprisonment. However, many of them "continue to use the gaol as their home. About one-fifth of those between 10 and 16 years were imprisoned for vagrancy. However, sentences were brief, and four out of five young offenders served less than a month; the average was about 18 days. In the fashion of the era, Connellan and Hervey emphasized the incidence of illiteracy. They found, "that the terms of imprisonment were too short to render it possible to impart any real educational instruction to the great majority of them."

NOTE

ON VISITING THE GRAVE OF MY STILLBORN LITTLE GIRL

Sunday, July 4th, 1836

I made a vow within my soul, O child,
When thou wert laid beside my weary heart,
With marks of Death on every tender part,
That, if in time a living infant smiled,
Winning my ear with gentle sounds of love
In sunshine of such joy, I still would save

the poor access to his land to plant potatoes. The Irish landlord class had a well-deserved reputation for indifference to the poor.

However, balance required acknowledgment of the good works of enlightened landlords. From Ballymacward, Galway, Flynn (1991) cited the generosity of the Earl of Clancarty; he subvented two-thirds of the cost of building cottages on his lands. Clancarty also sponsored good practices in the form of rotation of crops. When famine struck, he employed one hundred extra men in order to assist his dependents. Another example of good landlord-tenant relations before the famine is recorded in Thackeray's *Irish Sketch Book* (1842). A Mr. Crofton in Mayo purchased meal for his tenants in the annual period of hunger before the potato crop was lifted. In October he instructed his steward to hire labourers. In a few hours the potatoes were lifted and stored in pits, and the harvesters would accept no wages having "taken a liking to this good landlord." An example of private, local charity came from Ballymacward in east Galway (Flynn, 1991). There, the Donelan sisters gave assistance to Michael Gormley, his wife, and their eight children. The Donelan's charity supplemented Gormley's intermittent employment on public works.

The Irish Society of Friends was greatly respected for its selfless zeal on behalf of the starving masses. It appears that introduction of soup to feed the poor began with the English Quakers in Somersetshire, according to Samuel Fox in a letter to Charles Trevelyan (Correspondence, 1847). On the "2nd of Second Month, 1847," Sylvanus Fox sent his uncle the recipe for one gallon of soup costing three farthings per quart. It included "Beef (American), 8 lb. At 3-1/2 d." (3.5 pennies). The Quakers fed the poor and presented a model of charity that others emulated and all respected.

A perversion of religious charity was known as *souperism*. Joseph Robins (1980) gave several examples of non-Catholic groups-bible societies-which set up schools in which starving children were fed. The impoverished west was a targeted area, and orphans and destitute children were amenable to religious instruction in the context of a meal. Robins credited the Reverend Edward Nangle with the operation of 34 schools where religious instruction and a meal were provided. Thus, to nutritional stress was added family stress as parents faced the dilemmas of faith versus survival. Research indicates that *souperism* was rarely as simple as the style represented by Nangle. There were programs established by Anglican ministers without sectarian motives, and the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whateley, denounced *souperism* (Akenson, 1981). Quaker programs of relief operated as charitable enterprises expressing the corporal work of mercy to feed the poor and cloth the naked.

Soup Kitchens

As various modes of distributing food were tried, cornmeal (maize) which people detested, cereals of several kinds, especially nutritious oatmeal, and various concoctions under the general heading of "stirabout," it became clear that a Quaker innovation, the soup kitchen, was efficient and cost-effective. In the spring of 1847

Parliament passed a relief act that authorized Poor Law officials to move from road and drainage works to provision of food, of which soup was a frugal variety. An innovation creditable to the Quakers was the introduction of facilities for preparing and distributing cooked food. Parallel to schools' provision of breakfasts, these facilities developed food in bulk, so that large vats of "stirabout" based on the detested cornmeal and soups were available. Cost rather than nutrition tended to prevail. The chef to the Reform Club, Alexis Soyer, developed a soup that cost one pound (£1) per one hundred gallons. The *Lancet* referred to relief in this mode as *quackery*. For two gallons of soup, Soyer employed four ounces of leg of beef and two ounces of dripping fat; to that he added eight ounces of flour and a half-ounce of brown sugar. This concoction was served to the hungry near the Phoenix Park in Dublin (O'Rourke, 1874). The value of this and similar nostrums for adults and growing children may be appraised by considering caloric requirements and by contrasting Soyer's use of meat with that of the Quakers.

Modern research on nutrition can help us understand the caloric requirements of the body and the manner in which caloric intake is employed by the human constitution. According to Robert Fogel (1994), a small adult-a 25 year old male, Asian farmer-uses over 70 percent of his caloric intake to maintain the body; only 21 percent is drawn on for work. A survival diet is 1.27 times the base metabolic rate. Ireland's soup kitchens frequently provided a quart of soup, every other day, whose caloric value was probably 10 percent of any day's requirements. Children's needs, while less, had to build a growing body and not merely maintain it. Their caloric deficit had much greater significance and more fatal consequences (O Grada, 1988), since much of famine mortality involved little children, especially infants in the first twelve months of life. As an example of the scope of soup kitchens, the Drogheda union in 1847 fed 12,702 people in one day; that number constituted one-quarter of the population of 52,251 persons (McHugh, 1971).

circumstances. Many children, initially, did not attend school, and for those who did attendance was brief and irregular. For the small middle class, education was already a given, and the 1841 census noted that some of the most economically favored left Ireland to attend school (Jordan, 1998); Daniel O'Connell is an example from an earlier period.

It seems reasonable to infer that the modernism of today's Ireland has its antecedents in the Victorian era. Despite the enormity of the years of famine, school enrollments expanded, and each generation became less illiterate and more attuned to the values of modernity. Depending on the breadth of the traits one chooses to define modernity, the process of acculturation into modernity appears, proportionately, desirable. My purpose here is to note that schooling had effects beyond the three R's. It set nineteenth-century Ireland on the road to its present state in the contemporary world through not wholly foreseen outcomes in the socialization of children. Concurrent with the school's acculturation into modernity was transmission of values constituting the heritage of church and home. Progressive attention to the Irish language as national educational policy in later decades considered the heritage of the past with exposure to the future.

SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

Slowly, the developmental tasks of the schools were extended to more and more children. In Cork, for example, the proportion of children eligible for school who actually attended was, in 1841, 29.5 percent; by 1861, it had risen to 41.6 percent, and, 30 years later, had reached 61.3 percent, or two out of three children, in 1891 (Donnelly, 1975). From the schools flowed children socialized into roles which were sectarian and uniformly respectful to authority. Even so, there was turmoil within the Irish breast that sought release in the bottle or outbreaks of violence. Socialization channeled pent-up resentments but did not extinguish them. On the positive side, it seems likely that growing literacy in the face of economic disparities advanced the national agenda from restoration of political autonomy to the call for political independence, as the decades passed.

It is commonly observed that school and society reflect each other; beyond the level of a cliché about our own times there is a deeper meaning, namely, that whatever the institution of schooling may be, the condition of society will mediate the input variables that public policy generates. However, that axiom is not self-evident. Ireland in the middle decades of the nineteenth century was a setting in which public policy toward education was expansive, while the nation in its several manifestations was less uplifting. Irish society was riven by sectarian tensions, and the continuity of national life was unhinged by what an observer at the time called "the wrath of God" -- the Famine of 1845-1849. Nineteenth-century Ireland, at mid-century, allows examination of the effects of differential rates of social change in a people, their children, and education.

At any point before "the great contrast," as Registrar-General Dr. Thomas

Grimshaw (1889) described conditions before and after the Famine, life was hard for the Irish people. Children and adults inured to an annual period of hunger immediately before a new crop of potatoes could be lifted faced an immediate crisis of boundless proportion. Temporary hunger became starvation, and begging from nondistressed neighbors eventually became fruitless. Those who could fled to the cities in search of charity, while other migrated to England, Scotland, and North America. Compounding the misery was the tension between tenants and landlords, many of whom used non-payment of rent, or merely prior strategy, to evict cottage dwellers. The landlords' goal was to convert land to pasture as a form of progressive land management (Jackson, 1995). From the stricken land a million people disappeared despite government schemes including road works.

The Irish Quakers led the movement of private philanthropy, an innovation later adopted by government. In Drogheda, schools became the site of free or inexpensive food for children at a time when perhaps one-fourth of the town's population depended on charity for their daily bread (McHugh, 1971). However, charity was limited and children died. O Grada (1988a) estimated Famine era-mortality in children under nine years at 472,000; 60 percent of them were under age four years.

By the time of the 1851 census, the Famine was over. However, children who had been malnourished for years were reported at the time to be mentally impaired. Their educability was greatly reduced, and their health was poor. It seems likely that what we would today label pervasive learning disabilities would have impeded their progress toward literacy. Hunger lowers resistance to disease, and fevers of many kinds -- typhus, typhoid and, in 1849, cholera-ravaged young and old. Among the torments of children and their parents was the occasional practice of requiring the Catholic young to receive religious instruction in an alien religion in order to qualify for food -- soupsterism. For children who survived at mid-century, the modest quality of many lives was reduced to naught by hunger, disease, destruction of housing, and the occasional burden of religious exploitation. In their later years, according to E. Margaret Crawford (1989), there would be a rise in psychiatric disorders traceable, perhaps, to pellagra and a deficiency of vitamin B.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Housing and Health

Housing was linked to child welfare in Victoria's reign by a series of specific findings applicable to the smaller of the British Isles. The information was the work of reformers who, in the Victorian mold, were quite empirical, as opposed to ideological. From their tradition later emerged the Fabians, who added some intellectualism to the practicality of labor leaders. In the generalized context of John Bull's larger island, investigators documented life in the London slums of St. Giles, the Wynds of Edinburgh, the Gorbals in Glasgow, "Devilsgate" (Deansgate) in Manchester (Smith, 1979), and Boot and Shoe Yard in Leeds (Jordan, 1987). The presence of Irish immigrants in those centers of overcrowding and poor