

**A CRITIQUE OF SELECTED SOURCES OF MORAL
THEOLOGY IN THE IRISH CONTEXT FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF ONE SOCIALLY-EXCLUDED,
INNER CITY DUBLIN COMMUNITY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a contribution to the field of social ethics. Employing a process of ethnographic ethics, it provides an analysis of inner city ethics, within the Irish context. Taking the case of the Fatima Mansions social housing estate, inner city Dublin, the thesis examines whether one socially excluded, inner city community has distinctive moral values, codes and practices, which, when systematically documented and analysed, might provide the basis of a critique of selected formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context.

The thesis begins with an overview of the context of research, both at the micro level of the Fatima Mansions community and at the macro level of Irish society (chapter one). A geographical, historical, social and religious profile of the Fatima Mansions community is provided in order to locate its distinctive value system and moral practice. An overview of dominant values in wider Irish society follows, which acts as a foundation for a subsequent critique of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context. A detailed justification of the practical, theoretical and ethical dimensions of the multi-method ethnographic research methodology employed in this thesis is outlined (chapter two). An analysis of the primary research data is then presented in the form of an original ‘thick description’ of inner city ethics, based upon recurring cultural themes (chapter three). This analysis is further illuminated by a dialogue with *mujerista* and womanist theologies (chapter four). Finally, an in-depth critical examination of *two* selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context is conducted, from the perspective of the hermeneutic of a Fatima ethics (chapters five and six). The selected sources are publications by the Irish Roman Catholic Episcopal Conference and publications in selected Irish theological journals. The concluding chapter (seven) examines the wider relevance of the research.

This thesis identifies a *communitarian survival ethics* operative in Fatima Mansions, which differs from that of the dominant value system in Irish society. Moreover, the community’s values and moral practice are shown to have an inherent logic within the context of social exclusion. The thesis also confirms and critically explores the failure of selected formal sources of moral theology, critiqued in this work, to engage with central values, moral insights and moral experiences of the inner city. The wider relevance of this research, with respect to formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context, inner city ethics and a contextual theology/spirituality of the Irish inner city (and beyond), is examined in some detail. Finally, the replicability of the research process, as a “cultural themes process model”, is outlined.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADC	Anti Divorce Campaign
ANCO	An Chomhairle Oiliuna (<i>Gaelic</i>)
AONTAS	Irish National Association for Adult Education
BIG	Basic Income Guaranteed
CADP	Children and Adults Development Project
CAFOD	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CAN	Community Action Network
CCP	Canal Communities Partnership
CE	Community Employment (Scheme)
CCMA	Catholic Clerical Managers Association
CMCSS	Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools
CMRS	Conference of Major Religious Superiors
CORI	Conference of Religious of Ireland
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
DC	Dublin Corporation
D&L	Doctrine and Life
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (<i>Gaelic</i>)
FAST	Fatima Advisory Strategy Team
FDG	Fatima Development Group
FGU	Fatima Groups United
FRB	Fatima Regeneration Board
FRT	Fatima Regeneration Team
FTF	Fatima Task Force
ITQ	Irish Theological Quarterly
MS	Milltown Studies
NDP	National Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLAC	Pro-Life Amendment Campaign
RAPID	Revitalizing Areas by Planning Investment and Development
RQF	Research Questionnaire Finding
RYP	Rialto Youth Project
SIP	Social Integrated Project
SIPTU	Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

INTRODUCTION

*Wisdom calls aloud in the streets,
She raises her voice in the public squares,
She calls out at the street corners,
She delivers her message
At the city gates...*

(Proverbs 1:20)

This thesis is an original contribution to the field of social ethics. It involves a critical examination of the invisibility within Irish society, and academic discourse, of the values and moral practice of the Irish inner city. Central to this thesis is a process of ethnographic ethics, namely the application of ethnography to the ‘everyday ethics’ of the research context. The research involves an in-depth ethnographic case study of one Dublin inner city estate, namely, Fatima Mansions.¹ Specifically, it seeks to examine the relationship between Fatima’s everyday ethics and its context of social exclusion, as an inner city community. While there is a precedent for the application of ethnography to ‘everyday ethics’ in other fields, its application to the value systems of the inner city, as is demonstrated in this work, is unique.²

In order to provide the necessary contextual background for this thesis and to situate myself as a researcher, an initial summary description of the research context, as well as a brief biographical account, is required.³ My research originated from my lived experience as a resident in the Fatima social housing estate, Dublin, during the seven-year period 1995-2002. The estate, established in 1949 by the Dublin Corporation local authority, is situated two miles South-West of Dublin city centre and accommodates one of a number of socio-economically disadvantaged inner city communities in Dublin city (appendix A).⁴ Historically this community has suffered profound social exclusion with respect to wider Irish society. This defining experience of social exclusion is reflected in the historical, geographical, economic, political and cultural aspects of the community’s life (chapter one). Unlike the vast majority of

¹Fatima Mansions will be referred to as Fatima throughout this thesis (since in common usage).

² For example, this methodology is found in the field of health care; see Colleen Varcoe, *et al.*, “Health Care Relationships in Context: An Analysis of Three Ethnographies” in *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 13, No.7 (2003) 957-973, and Bethel Ann Powers, “Ethnographic Analysis of Everyday Ethics in the Care of Nursing Home Residents with Dementia: A Taxonomy” in *Nursing Research*, 50(6), Nov.-Dec. 2001, 332-339.

³ I concur with the view that given the impossibility, and indeed undesirability, of arguing a value-free science, the biography of the researcher is methodologically significant, hence this summary account. See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, Third printing, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999) 13-56.

⁴ Dublin Corporation is now officially known as Dublin City Council. I use the former term here since it was the term operative in community narratives and in the literature at the time of research.

residents, I came into the Fatima estate from privileged positions of choice, education and financial security. In 1994, while a member of the Roman Catholic Religious order of women, the Loreto Sisters, I formally applied to Dublin Corporation for a flat in Fatima. My role there was to be one of supportive educational work with children and adults in the estate.⁵ My entry into the community was vetted by two official gatekeepers: the Fatima Vetting Committee (FVC) (a partnership between Dublin Corporation and local residents) and representatives of Dublin Corporation. My tenancy was agreed and I obtained a flat in June 1995.

In dialogue with the local community, and Dublin Corporation, I clearly understood my commitment to the community to include non-involvement with drugs or other anti-social behaviours, pro-active care of children, provision of educational supports, and an active involvement in local community development. In fact, my contribution to the estate was largely (though not exclusively) focused on the area of educational disadvantage. This seven-year immersion was highly intensive. Together with a colleague, Aisling Deignan, I co-founded, on behalf of the Loreto Sisters, an educational and training project for children and adults in the estate, namely The Children and Adults Development Project (CADP). During the period 1996-2000, I was also a voluntary member of Fatima Groups United (FGU), an umbrella group of community project representatives, which was involved in negotiations between community residents and outside bodies, particularly in relation to the regeneration of the Fatima estate. These community development involvements, and perhaps even more so, the daily lived life as a Fatima resident and neighbour, led me directly into intimate spaces in the lives of numerous Fatima women, children and men.

Significantly, an explicitly public religious role within the community was not communicated to me, either formally or informally, as an expectation.⁶ Indeed, overt spiritual and/or church-related roles were generally pro-actively discouraged by significant gatekeepers (though not residents themselves), with very real implications for my research methodology. During the formal vetting procedures by officials of Dublin Corporation, for example, the problematic of potential 'moralising' and/or 'prosletising' on my part (as a Religious Sister) was explicitly raised. To this end I gave reassurances that my input into the community life would be in the field of community education.

⁵ My initial role in Fatima was explicitly educative. The role of research which later evolved was also vetted by local gatekeepers.

⁶ Participant observation indicated that *explicitly* spiritual and religious roles were primarily assumed by, and reserved for, local priests known to be committed to Fatima.

Another factor which played an important role in the shaping of both my religious positioning within the community and my subsequent research was the prior presence of widely respected faith initiatives and processes within the Fatima community. These included, among others:

- community development initiatives and theological writings by Fr. John O'Brien, a former Fatima community leader and author of *Seeds of a New Church* (1994)⁷;
- biblical faith reflections by *The Fig Tree*, facilitated by local resident and community leader, Gemma McKenna, including the *Buttonhole Gospels* (2008)⁸, and
- transformatory faith initiatives, *Partners in Faith and Training for Transformation* (Ireland), inspired and facilitated by Gemma McKenna, Ciaran Earley and colleagues.⁹

While a resident I was privileged to participate in both *The Fig Tree* faith reflection group and a Fatima-based *Training for Transformation* programme. These experiences profoundly influenced my religious perspective and directly informed my own research decisions. Central to this was the pivotal research decision to focus my research on the area of ethnographic ethics, rather than on a Fatima contextual faith theology *per se*. At that time, given that my area of professional expertise was in the field of moral theology (ethics), a precise investigation of the moral dimension of Fatima life was my predominant research interest. However, there was also, in my view, an ethical requirement to respect the Fatima theo-politics. I had no desire to act in any separatist or divisive fashion with respect to the faith reflection processes already established in Fatima. Instead, I preferred to adopt a dialogical approach to these processes. This resulted in the methodological decision to include both the *Fig Tree Group* and *Training for Transformation* facilitators, as ethnographic focus groups, in my research (chapter two).¹⁰

As indicated above, my area of professional expertise is primarily in the field of moral theology. While a Fatima resident, I was employed as a lecturer in moral theology in All Hallows College and, for a period, in the Milltown Institute of Theology and Spirituality, Dublin. Lecturing within these academic settings, I simultaneously became increasingly immersed in the daily life and culture of Fatima, both as a resident and as a community worker.

⁷ John 'O'Brien, *Seeds of a New Church*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1994).

⁸ This is a published collection of notes on the four gospels arising from reflections by the *Fig Tree* Prayer Group who have been meeting in Fatima on Monday nights for over 20 years. See Pierre Simson, *The Buttonhole Gospels*, (Rialto, Dublin: Partners in Faith, 2008).

⁹ See Ciaran Earley and Gemma Mc Kenna, *Partners in Faith: Programme of Adult Faith Development* (US: International Scholars Association, 1991), also *Partners Training for Transformation*, 'Partners' Companion to Training for Transformation'; 'Partners, One Organisation, Two Identities-Four Dimensions'; *The Way of the Training for Transformation Practitioner* at <http://www.trainingfortransformation.ie>, viewed 04/08/2008.

This placed me in a position to observe, at first hand, the value systems and moral practice operating within the community. I quickly developed the viewpoint that Fatima had a distinctive (though not necessarily exclusive) inner city value system and moral practice; one fundamentally shaped by its position relative to wider Irish society.¹¹ I noted, in particular, that certain moral values, codes and practices were observable in the community which appeared to have their own inherent logic within the context of a socio-economically marginalized community. In that case, they seemed ethically and theologically significant. My professional engagement with ethics within the Irish context, and my knowledge of the literature at that point, indicated that these moral values, codes and practices had not been formally identified, documented nor systematically examined in Irish theological publications. Indeed it seemed to me that Irish inner city culture had little or no representation as a moral voice within the Irish academic theological forum. Preliminary exploratory research, including an initial literature review of selected sources, provided strong indicators that the moral perspective and voice of the inner city were notably absent from significant sources of moral theology in the Irish context. More specifically, they were absent from the moral teachings of the Irish (Roman Catholic) Episcopal Commission and publications in the field of moral theology in internationally recognised Irish theological journals.¹²

While inner city representations in the field of moral theology appeared to be generally absent, I was familiar with numerous public contributions made by individuals and groups who were/are committed to reflection on questions of social justice and to explorations of the relationship between faith and culture, in the Irish context.¹³ Sociological and theological analyses by the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) are an example.¹⁴ Also, selected publications by the Irish Centre for Faith and Culture (IFCC), including *A Faith Response to*

¹¹ The Fatima experience of values and morality, while sharing many characteristics of Irish (and other) inner-city communities, is not presented in this thesis as representative. Nevertheless, I argue in the conclusion to this work that the analysis provided has wider relevance, particularly in relation to comparative studies of inner city ethics, whether in Ireland and beyond, but also in relation to future potential applications of my research methodology.

¹² I intentionally focus on the Roman Catholic tradition in this thesis since this is the religious tradition to which the vast majority of Fatima residents are affiliated (98%).

¹³ These include: Enda McDonagh and Linda Hogan (moral theologians), Martin Byrne (contextual theologian and community educator in the North Inner City), Peter McVerry (social activist on behalf of homeless youth), Stanislaus Kennedy (social activist on behalf of the Dublin poor and homeless), Joe Lucey (former inner city drugs rehabilitation worker and poet), Bernadette Flannagan (academic theologian with expertise in the field of Dublin inner city spirituality), John Lonergan (Governor of Dublin's Mountjoy Prison and an authoritative public voice of behalf of the prison community), Anne Louise Gilligan and Katherine Zappone, feminist theologians and social activists, and my former colleagues in All Hallows College and The Milltown Institute, Dublin, among many others.

¹⁴ See www.cori.ie. The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, a vital resource for a Christian social analysis in the Irish Context, is *one* representative example at www.cfj.ie.

the Street Drug Culture (2000), have explicitly engaged with the lived experience of *spirituality* within the Irish inner city.¹⁵ I was unable to find, however, among the published works of Irish theologians, a comprehensive *ethical analysis* of the inner city. Neither was there any instance of ethnographic ethics applied to the context of the Irish inner city, which was my specific research interest. Unlike the fields of contextual theology and spirituality, where the construction of a theology of the Irish inner city was already underway, there was a notable gap in academic research on the specific area of inner city ethics. I developed the conviction that a systematic and comprehensive analysis of inner city values systems by means of ethnographic and inductive methodologies, and conducted by a trained moral theologian or ethicist residing in the inner city, would be a vital contribution. I viewed my own research contribution as a necessary prior step to a future interdisciplinary dialogical approach in ethics, which would ultimately seek to integrate insights from the fields of ethics, contextual theology and spirituality.¹⁶

Since I was faced with the challenge of the absence of appropriate dialogue partners within the field of ethics in the Irish academic theological community, it proved necessary to dialogue with the wider international community of theologians. Parallel discussions to my own were initially identified in the work of selected feminist ethicists who were writing from contexts of social exclusion. Among these ethicists were Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarrango, founders of *mujerista* theology, and Dolores Williams and Katie Cannon, pioneers in the fields of womanist theology and ethics.¹⁷ Since their respective ethical analyses incorporate probing explorations of classism and sexism, their contributions were seen to have direct relevance for my own research where gender emerges as a central category (chapter three). Moreover, these ethicists explore cultural themes which directly mirror my own, including: *women's oppression, motherhood and the family, resistance, solidarity, access to institutions in society*

¹⁵ Eoin Cassidy (ed.) *A Faith Response to the Drugs Street Culture* (Dublin: Veritas, 2000).

¹⁶ The potential of such an interdisciplinary dialogical approach is demonstrated by means of a dialogue with the contributions of the Irish theologians Martin Byrne and Bernadette Flanagan in the concluding chapter. I here acknowledge certain points of intersection between my research findings and their urban theologies. This may in part be explained by the fact that I have previously collaborated with both of these theologians, as, for example, as a researcher for the publication *A Faith Response to the Drugs Street Culture* (2000).

¹⁷ See Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz & Yolando Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992; Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha. In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) and *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004); Dolores Williams: *Sisters in the Wilderness: the Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998); and Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*. American Academy of Religious. Academy Series, No. 60. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press. 1988.

and *women's celebration, the drugs culture, violence, discrimination, social welfare and poverty* (chapter three). On this basis a critical dialogical engagement with these selected sources was considered useful. The specific value of adding this exploration to my thesis was considered to be its heuristic function of helping to further identify/map, and clarify, Fatima-based values and their wider significance (chapter four).¹⁸

Having clarified in general terms my overall research goals, my methodological prioritisation of ethnography, and the nature of my engagement with feminist theologies (discussed later in greater depth), the central question of this research became more precisely stated as follows:

Does the Fatima community have distinctive moral values, codes and practices that, if systematically identified, documented and explored, would provide the basis of a critique of moral theology in the Irish context?

While a comprehensive documentation and exploration of the value system of Fatima might be considered a significant research contribution in itself, I considered it equally important to include an in-depth critique of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context using the hermeneutic of Fatima ethics uncovered in my earlier ethnographic analysis. Once these requirements were clarified, my primary research objectives became formulated as follows:

1. to identify, document and provide a comprehensive analysis of the central values and moral practice in the Fatima community (chapter three), and
2. to critique, by means of the hermeneutic of Fatima ethics, selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context, namely publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference and publications in selected theological journals, with a view to examining the perceived invisibility of the Fatima moral voice and experience (chapters five and six).¹⁹

Also, as indicated above, a secondary research objective was to engage in a dialogue with selected feminist theologies in order to further illuminate my own ethnographic analysis of the Fatima experience (chapter four).

¹⁸ This dialogical approach is necessarily cautionary; I acknowledge that these theologies reflect Hispanic-American and African-American contexts, respectively. They also explicitly highlight the category of race, which is not a central category in my own research, and they employ an explicitly feminist methodology (chapter four).

¹⁹ This examination is intentionally limited to the contribution of the Roman Catholic Irish Bishops and theological journals, given that the context of my research is almost exclusively Roman Catholic.

With respect to research methodology, the term which I have coined for my approach in this research is the ‘cultural themes process model’ (chapter two).²⁰ A multi-dimensional, ethnographic case study is undertaken. This methodology prioritises grounded theory, as well as a creative and organic unfolding of the research process. This case study of an “integrated” and “bounded” system, namely Fatima, may be seen as a unique or particular case, which, as shall be argued, is no less significant or valid for its particularity (chapter two).²¹ My personal intrinsic relationship with Fatima makes this an example of an “intrinsic case study”, but the wider import and relevance of this case categorises it equally as an “instrumental case study”, both aspects of which are examined.²² However, this study is not a case study in any restrictive sense of the term, since it employs a variety of complementary and overlapping qualitative research processes, not always strictly equated with case studies in the literature, but commonly integrated into the case study approach in research practice.²³ Specifically, it combines three traditional “flexible design research strategies”, namely: case study, ethnographic study and grounded theory study.²⁴ Grounded theory is intentionally employed in this research in order to uncover the Fatima community’s distinctive inner city ethical system.²⁵ Within this framework, evidence is primary, and prior to theory. As Bill Gillham puts it “(The) case study researcher, working inductively from what’s there in the research setting develops grounded theory; theory that is grounded in the evidence that is turned up”.²⁶ Stake further comments that an inductive methodology allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general moral features of the research context by means of an analysis of empirical observations and multi-method ethnographic processes, as in this research.²⁷

The study addresses the boundaries between moral practice and the context of social exclusion. It is to a significant degree praxis-based, as is demonstrated in its reflective, collaborative, revisionary, organic and unfolding nature (chapter two). The approach taken also shares certain significant elements in common with the practice of ‘action-research’, although there are

²⁰ Here and throughout this work the term ‘cultural themes’ is also understood in the broadly Freirian sense of ‘generative themes’. See chapter two for further clarification on this..

²¹ See Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1995) 2.

²² *Ibid*: 3

²³ See W. Tellis, (1997, July). Introduction to case study [68 paragraphs]. *The Qualitative Report* [On-line serial], 3(2). Available: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/tellis1.html>, viewed 02/04/2008.

²⁴ See Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2002) 89.

²⁵ On ‘Grounded Theory’ see the foundational text A. Strauss & B. Glaser, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

²⁶ Bill Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods* (London/New York: 2000) 12.

²⁷ Patricia Yancey Martin & Barry A. Turner. "Grounded Theory and Organizational Research," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (22:2) 1986: 141-157.

differences.²⁸ Collaboration and close attention to the ethical dilemmas arising in research, both of which are standard concerns in ‘action-research’, are prioritised in this work. Transformation of research participants is also enabled in this research process, though at a personal and not also at a collective or communal level, which is normatively a requirement of action-research methodology.²⁹ This approach on my part is explained by political reasons; within the context of Fatima, collective communal transformation was the agreed task of the over-arching development group, Fatima Groups United (FGU). Participant observation indicated that any attempts on my part to facilitate a parallel process might have been considered divisive (chapter two).

As indicated above, this thesis is unique in its particular employment of inductive, organic and creative ethnographic methodological processes. Importantly, the methodology employed is replicable in the specific sense that this thesis provides a flexible blueprint (a ‘cultural themes process model’) for future comparative research in this field, whether in Ireland or elsewhere. Moreover, the ethical analysis provided in this research has uncovered significant findings with respect to one Irish inner-city ethical system. The research findings (namely the emergent ‘thick description of Fatima cultural themes’) are significant in that they provide the foundations for future comparative research in the field of social ethics, and also provide a solid sociological basis for future theological explorations of the inner city. Respecting this work as one of grounded theory, I do not, however, wish to suggest that my findings are directly replicable within other inner city communities.³⁰ Neither do I claim to provide a methodological ‘model’, which might be employed un-critically in the context of other inner city communities. Instead, I offer significant indicators of an organic and community-sensitive methodological process, which might readily be employed in research on the value system and moral practice of other significant sub-cultures in society that also, but perhaps dissimilarly, experience social exclusion. As suggested above, I term the approach adopted the “cultural values process model” (chapter two). I suggest that my contribution is a necessary one to the field of ethics, within Ireland and internationally, in that it provides both a solid sociological foundation and significant methodological indicators for future theological and ethical analyses of the inner city (or indeed, of other sub-cultures within society) whether these analyses are mainstream, contextual and/or liberationist and feminist (chapter seven).

²⁸ Robert N. Rapoport. "Three Dilemmas in Action Research", *Human Relations* (23:4)1970: 499-513 at 499.

²⁹ For this reason, since the specific requirements typically intended by the action-research cycle are not fully met, I make no claim to action-research in this work. For a summary position of the action-research cycle, or standard stages in action-research, see Robson: 217-219.

³⁰ Future comparative analysis would be required to test out such a claim, ideally, an ongoing “collective case study”. See Stake: 4

This research process was owned, to as great an extent as was practically possible, by the Fatima research participants themselves. Its intention was to uncover significant cultural themes in Fatima, by means of on-going dialogue and creative processes, engaging resident women and Fatima-based workers (chapter two). Primary research involved a variety of fieldwork processes conducted within the Fatima community during the period 1995-2002. These included:

- 1) immersion and participant observation;
- 2) semi-structured ethnographic interviews with twenty two women residents;
- 3) five focus group interviews with both residents and non-residents (including three on-going creative workshop focus groups with women residents) and,
- 4) research questionnaires conducted with eighteen non-resident workers in the estate.

Being organic in nature, the primary focus of my research gradually focused on Fatima *women*. This prioritisation of Fatima women's stories and voices arose initially out of my natural relationships with Fatima women, who were my neighbours and friends. However, as the research evolved, in fidelity to the organic nature of the research and in line with the required flexibilities of grounded theory, this gender bias in my research sample became an intentional selection process (chapter two). Specifically, it was a result of my ethnographic fieldwork observations of the systemic marginalization of women in the estate resulting from the profound sexism which I had observed operative within the community.

Participant observation of Fatima women, in particular their roles and their relationships, convinced me of the importance of incorporating a Fatima gender analysis in my research. Convinced, like Ursula King, that gendered reality significantly orders any society or community, I prioritised this category of gender in my research.³¹ Women's experience and voice were brought intentionally to the fore. Certain pragmatic considerations also played a role in this prioritisation of Fatima women's voices. Preliminary research explorations clearly indicated that access to women's life stories in Fatima would be relatively easy (especially given the relationships of friendship and trust that I had already established with many women in the community). It was also a fact that women in the community were generally at ease in telling their personal stories, due to a variety of personal-development, educational and training programmes available in Fatima. Added to this, from a pragmatic point of view, accessing an adequate number of men's life stories for research purposes would have proven extremely

³¹ Ursula King, *Religion and Gender* (Oxford UK/Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1995) 5.

difficult. Participant observation indicated that men in the estate are notably “invisible” and hugely private. Also, as part of my immersion in Fatima, I imbibed a tacit cultural code; that a single woman ought not to presume to have private conversations with another woman’s partner, even if for research purposes.

A broader perspective was also included by means of questionnaire-based research with non-resident female and male workers in the estate. This decision to include the perspective of non-resident workers was in order to attain greater reliability and validity in my study (chapter two). Their respective observations and analyses of Fatima’s moral life, in my view, served the purpose of both affirming and critiquing my personal analysis of the data yielded by ethnographic interviews and focus groups with Fatima residents.

The *multi-method* ethnographic approach employed in my primary research, the *thematic* approach adopted in the analysis of primary research data, and the *frequency* and *content analyses* employed in my research analysis are elaborated upon in some detail in chapter two.³² In this discussion a theoretical exploration of my research methodology is provided. This includes a detailed examination of qualitative approaches pertaining to culture and ethnography, narrative and discourse, gender and research ethics, is provided. I include a self-reflexive commentary upon the ethical dimensions of research, as encountered in my own work, as aspect which is significantly developed in the conclusion to this work. My intention throughout this discussion is to illustrate how critical reflection upon relevant interdisciplinary sources has provided the means of formulating and justifying my own research strategy. This exploration is followed by a research analysis of primary data structured around recurring *cultural themes*, which I have organized into over-arching themes, themes, and sub-themes respectively (chapter three). The over-arching themes were initially identified by means of immersion, extensive participant observation and pilot fieldwork research. Subsequently, a close cross-referencing of interview and focus group transcripts both confirmed and clarified the selected themes (appendix B). The over-arching themes were categorised as follows:

- 1) *children: protection and future;*
- 2) *women and men: perceptions and roles;*
- 3) *relationships: familial and social;*
- 4) *individual and community: inseparable realities;*

³² For a comprehensive overview of case study methodology see Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manin & Keith Morrison. *Research Methods in Education*. 5th ed. (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000, rep. 2003)181-190, and for a comprehensive account of ethnography see Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999).

- 5) *survival: persistence and resistance;*
- 6) *drugs: a significant culture shaper, and*
- 7) *celebration: living life in the moment.*

With respect to secondary research and the research literature review, a critical examination of relevant quantitative and qualitative studies, surveys and reports pertaining to the Fatima estate was conducted. The majority of these are published in conjunction with FGU and Dublin Corporation (chapter one). Literature addressing the question of values in Irish society was also examined in depth in order to situate my analysis of the ethics of Fatima. In this regard, contributions by John Whyte, James P. Mackey, Enda McDonagh, Louise Fuller, Tom Inglis, Patrick Corish and Linda Hogan, among others, proved indispensable for my argument (chapter one). Furthermore, a large variety of sources pertaining to cultural studies and qualitative research methodology were also consulted. Principal among these were contributions by James Spradley, Paulo Freire, Tim May, James Clifford, Clifford Geertz, Paulo Freire, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Charlotte Aull Davies, Liz Stanley and Kim Knott (chapter two).³³

Returning to my engagement with feminist sources, it must be made clear from the outset, that my pro-active and positive engagement with selected feminist sources with respect to my research analysis did not entail the adoption of an explicitly feminist methodology in this work (as shall be explained). This significant decision to dialogue with selected feminist sources while not employing a feminist methodology required a close inspection of the following:

- 1) my self-location with respect to feminism;
- 2) the rationale behind and justification of my prioritisation of a non-feminist ethnographic methodology in this research, and
- 3) the precise nature of my engagement with feminist sources in this research.

Beginning with my self-location with respect to feminism, my personal relationship with feminist ethics and theology is, as yet, critically unfolding. After many years of reflection, I continue to search personally for an authentic home within the 'feminist' theological world; one that truly reflects my personal, as well as my distinctively 'Irish', politico-cultural history. To date I have experienced the multi-faceted and richly diverse feminist perspectives with which I have engaged to be evocative, provocative, energizing, delightful, liberating, healing,

³³ With respect to this thesis, a review and critical reading of relevant literature is intentionally woven *throughout the thesis as a whole*, apart from the analysis of primary research findings which is an original contribution to the field (chapter three).

ambiguous, while also, on occasions, constricting, limited, separatist, culturally biased, and even oppressive. Significantly, seven years of shared life within the socially excluded community of Fatima has served to heighten my awareness of significant biases and blind spots operative within some feminisms, in the Irish context, including some encountered in the professional academic context. My experience of life in Fatima brought me to a point of liminality whereby I currently feel more at home with international feminisms, arising exclusively from marginalized groups in society, which are claiming their distinctive histories of cultural and ethnic marginalisation and oppression. Despite having moved out of the research context of Fatima in 2002, I remain to date in a theological 'liminal space'. In an attempt both to honour my personal experience and to respect the field of feminist ethics, I professionally describe myself as an ethicist who engages positively with the field of feminist ethics, yet also intentionally maintains a on-going dialogical and critical stance. In my theological praxis, I take a multi-method approach to ethics and intentionally dialogue creatively with feminist, liberationist *and* mainstream sources in an intentionally eclectic fashion. This is because I am of the opinion that the dialectics of argument and counter arguments offered by many diverse and rich theological perspectives enhance theology as a whole. I adopt a "bridging approach" with respect to diverse options and approaches, which involves an attempt to critically evaluate and synthesise insights from various major perspectives.³⁴

That said, given my prioritisation of an organic and inductive methodology and observational concerns regarding both sexism and classism within the researched community, a feminist methodology might possibly have been anticipated with respect to this work. My prioritisation of a non-feminist ethnographic methodological approach reflected the ethical requirements of research, in a two-fold sense:

- 1) the ethics of the personal integrity of the researcher (described above), and
- 2) the ethics of the research process itself, since I was faced with the challenging reality that Fatima residents, including my research interviewees, did not either individually or collectively espouse a feminist worldview.

From the beginning of my research I was strongly influenced by the philosopher Emanuel Levinas' portrayal of the ethical relation, which insists upon responsible and non-exploitative relationships between persons of unequal power and status.³⁵ I took the view that my encounter

³⁴ This concept of bridging is not innovative. Tim May, for example, suggests that both Giddens and Habermas demonstrate, in different ways, a bridge-building approach in their respective contributions. See *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Second edition. (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1997)15.

³⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, R.A. Cohen, (trans.), (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1985).

with Fatima residents required that I suspend personal ideologies (including my preferred worldviews, mainstream, liberationist and feminist) in an attempt to enable the authentic voice of the community to emerge on its own terms, as befits classical ethnography. I strongly held the view that the deontological ethics of respect for persons, characteristic of mainstream, liberationist and feminist ethics, and which I, as a researcher, espouse, demanded that I would not impose categories or worldviews on the community that were alien to their day to day experience, however attractive to myself as researcher (chapter two).

Significantly, feminist sociologists, ethicists and theologians challenged me to exercise heightened sensitivity towards the role of power and power relations in my research process (chapter two). Elaine Graham, for example, writes that feminist theology seeks (among other things) “to expose the ways in which the issue of power is embedded in the very foundation of theology itself...”³⁶ And, Kathleen Borland, in an article entitled “ ‘That’s Not What I Said’- Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research”, highlights effectively the ethical dilemma of employing feminist research on non-feminist women.³⁷ Furthermore, feminist writers have effectively described the inherent tension between ethnographic and feminist methodologies and have asked whether a feminist ethnography is at all possible (chapter two).³⁸ Consideration of ethical issues relating to power relations, raised in insightful self-reflexive accounts of feminist researchers such as Borland, pointed me, in this research, towards a prioritisation of a non-feminist ethnographic “tell it as it is” approach, over and above an explicitly feminist approach. The dilemma that presented itself was that an explicitly feminist approach would have methodologically required a focus on aspects of Fatima residents’ lives not necessarily found in Fatima self-descriptions. Also, both a deconstruction and a reconstruction of research findings from an ideological base other than that of the research community itself would be required. This conflicted, in my view, with the enabling of a normative Fatima voice attainable by means of more classical ethnography.³⁹

In light of my adopted “bridging approach” (discussed above), neither was the abandonment of feminist insight an acceptable option in my view. I held the conviction that feminist theorists,

³⁶ Elaine Graham, “Feminist Theology: Northern” in Peter Scott & William T. Cavanagh (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (London: Blackwell Publ., 2003) 210-226 at 210.

³⁷ Borland, K. “ ‘That’s Not What I Said’-Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research” in S. Berger Gluck and D. Patai (eds.) *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, (New York/London: Routledge, 1991) 63-75.

³⁸ For example, Millen, D. “The Ethics of Conducting Feminist Research on Non-Feminist Women”. Public Address. *Gendering Ethics/The Ethics of Gender: An International Interdisciplinary Conference*. University of Leeds, 23-25 June, 2000.

³⁹ These, and other, methodological considerations are addressed in depth in chapter two.

especially in the fields of the social sciences and ethics, could provide unparalleled gender and class analyses pertinent to my own research concerns (chapter four). Since I considered an “either/or” choice, between an exclusively feminist and an exclusively non-feminist methodological approach, dualistic and separatist, the challenge was to embrace the apparent ambiguity of employing a non-feminist ethnographic approach while also engaging in a creative and informative dialogue with feminism, particularly regarding the further exploration of and clarification of my research findings.⁴⁰ I elected: 1) to engage with feminist sources in the general field of the social sciences, particularly where they discuss the nature of the ethnographic process and research ethics (chapter two); and 2) to dialogue with *mujerista* and womanist theologies when attempting to provide further clarity in relation to my independent research findings (chapter four).

Once the analysis of the value system and moral practice of Fatima was completed, the question of the inclusion of the Fatima moral voice and experience in selected sources of moral theology, in the Irish context, was addressed. Key publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference (from Vatican II until June 2005) and four selected journal publications within the Irish context (January 1995-June 2005) were critically analysed by means of both frequency and content analyses (chapters five and six).⁴¹ The journals and periodicals under investigation included the academic theological journals *The Irish Theological Quarterly* and *Milltown Studies*, and the pastoral theological journals *The Furrow* and *Doctrine and Life*, which collectively reflect a balance between academic and pastoral theological interests and are therefore considered representative.⁴² This analysis is not to be confused with an initial literature review (which was a prior work); it entailed an intentional and critical analysis of the selected sources *from the hermeneutic of the Fatima ethical worldview*, a prerequisite of which is the prior analysis of Fatima values.

⁴⁰ I acknowledge that this judgement most likely reflects my internal ambiguities with respect to ethnography and feminist methodology, as a researcher, hence acknowledge the role of subjectivity in my research, which I argue on the basis of authenticity as a researcher, as well as an intentional resistance to academic dualisms.

⁴¹ This examination is considered necessary because the theology of Vatican II, and post-Vatican II periods, represent a radical shift from an earlier emphasis on casuistry (a case-based method of moral theology) to an increasingly more personalist and scripture-based ethics. Moreover, when examined chronologically, the Bishops’ letters mirror the challenges and changes in the wider Church and they also reflect emerging values in the Irish Church and State during this period (chapter one). See also the Irish Episcopal Conference, *Change in the Church*, 1972.

⁴² This ten-year critical analysis dates from my initial point of entry into the Fatima community (1995-2005). The analysis provided is primarily focused on theological *articles* within these selected journals. However, ‘forum’ contributions (*Doctrine & Life*), addresses, chronicles and ‘news and views’ (*The Furrow*) are also included where they examine or respond to issues directly relevant to my research.

This, of course, raises the question of the logical structure of this thesis which unfolds in that same manner as did the organic process of the research process itself. I begin with a description of the context of the research in which I found myself as a Fatima resident (chapter one). Here, both the micro level of the Fatima estate and the macro level of Irish society are examined, in order:

- 1) to highlight the level of socio-economic, cultural and ethical/religious exclusion experienced by Fatima, and
- 2) to situate this experience within the broader framework of the value system of wider Irish society.

Following on this, since chronologically second, I outline in depth the organic and community-sensitive nature of the ethnographic methodological processes employed (chapter two). Having accumulated my research data from a variety of ethnographic methods, while a Fatima resident, I subsequently conducted my research analysis, based on a thick description of cultural themes (chapter three); an analysis which comprises the centre point of the thesis itself and which is further supplemented by a critical dialogue with selected international feminist sources of ethics (chapter four). Since, chronologically, my research analysis intentionally preceded the critical analysis of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context (chapters five and six) the structure of the thesis reflects this fact.⁴³ Finally, I examine the wider implications of the research findings (chapter seven).

Having clarified the research objectives, the research methodology and the critical analysis of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context, I wish to state that I recognize that there are certain limitations to this research. To begin, my primary research in Fatima is confined to a definite historical period (1995 – 2002), the period of my residency in the community. Since that time numerous changes, pertaining to ‘regeneration’, have taken place in Fatima, which have altered its basic demographic profile. Also, in my decision to dialogue with theologies emerging from marginalized communities globally, a selective process proved necessary. Two such theologies are selected in this work, namely *mujerista* and womanist. I acknowledge that many other theologies “from the margins” worldwide might have been fruitfully explored. My analysis of selected, non-liberationist sources of moral theology is also necessarily selective. Once more I focus exclusively on *two* significant sources. With regard to the contribution of the Irish bishops, it is only the more authoritative sources that are examined, namely the pastoral letters by the *Irish Episcopal Commission*, from Vatican II (1965-1968) until June 2005.

⁴³ Since the critical analysis (with respect to inclusion) of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context, provided in this work involves a Fatima hermeneutic, its location post-analysis, rather than pre-analysis, is both a methodological and a logical requirement.

Furthermore, when analysing the contribution of moral theologians (and others) at the level of publication, journal articles in the ten-year period January 1995 until June 2005 alone are examined. I also acknowledge that further potential sources of moral theology in the Irish context might have included in this analysis, such as:

- 1) published works by Irish moral theologians and ethicists;
- 2) the curricula of religious and theological programmes at second and third level education in Ireland;
- 3) the contribution of the justice desk of the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI);
- 4) published homilies, and
- 5) popular religious press and media.

The above account provides a brief introduction to my research context, objectives, and methodology. I will now give greater attention to the research context (chapter one). Both the micro level of the Fatima estate and the macro level of Irish society will be examined with respect to their relevance for my research explorations. I will first present a detailed profile of the Fatima community which focuses on its geographical and historical location, its socio-economic status and its religious affiliation. A brief, yet comprehensive overview of the moral landscape of the mainstream Irish society, as it has emerged historically, will also be provided in order to locate the Fatima experience within its broader societal context and to provide the necessary backdrop for my later analysis of Fatima's value system and moral practice.

CHAPTER ONE

LOCATING FATIMA WITH RESPECT TO IRISH SOCIETY: EXPLORING THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this two-part chapter I provide a detailed account of the research context, both at the micro level of the Fatima estate and at the macro level of Irish society. The exploration provides the necessary background for the establishment of the moral worldview of the community under research, a primary goal of this research. In part one, I begin by introducing key terminology with respect to Fatima. I then examine Fatima's geographical location, boundaries and layout at the time of my research, since 'boundary' is viewed as a significant aspect of community identity in this research.¹ I follow this examination with a critical account of Fatima's historical development as a community and as a culture, since its foundation in 1949, because it is out of this historical context that Fatima's values have evolved. Having located the community, both geographically and historically, I present an in-depth social analysis of the estate, the purpose of which is to provide a necessary background to my later analysis of Fatima values (chapter three). Finally an original examination of Fatima's religious affiliation is included, based on primary research, which highlights the experience of alienation experienced by Fatima residents with respect to the official Churches.²

In order to situate Fatima's value system and moral practice with respect to values and morality in Irish society at large, a summary account of the central values and normative moral practice in Irish society is also provided, in part two. This latter account is concise and intentionally selective; it focuses on value-related aspects of Irish society that are of particular relevance to Fatima (as elaborated in chapter three). These relate to: 1) economic development, 2) the status of women, 3) access to education and health services, and 4) Church and State perspectives on sexuality and marriage. Furthermore, since two controversial referenda were held in Ireland during the period of my research, one on the issue of divorce (1995) and the second on the issue of abortion (2002), these topics are treated in some detail. This latter discussion provides a necessary background to my critical analyses of selected sources of moral theology in Ireland

¹ On the significance of 'boundary' in relation to community see Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London & New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985) 12-15.

² The religious dimension of Fatima life has not been systematically documented to date; this exploration is original and is based upon my own primary research.

(chapters five and six).³ This study, overall, provides a necessary background for my later critical analyses of sources of moral theology in the Irish context, a further primary aim of this research (chapters five and six).

PART ONE: THE MICRO LEVEL OF RESEARCH

1.2 A PROFILE OF FATIMA

As indicated in the introduction to this work, the Fatima estate, established in 1949 by the local authority Dublin Corporation, is situated two miles south-west of Dublin city centre. Traditionally, it has accommodated one of a number of socio-economically disadvantaged inner city communities in Dublin city. Over the past decade it has undergone a radical programme of regeneration which has facilitated a profound reflection, on the part of residents, on the question of a communal identity. In order to probe Fatima's identity and worldview, in particular its moral worldview, it is first necessary to familiarize ourselves with key terminology pertinent to the discussion, namely 'community', 'social exclusion' and 'regeneration'.

1.2.1 COMMUNITY, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND REGENERATION

The literature provides a number of competing definitions of community loosely distinguished by an emphasis on: 1) geographical space/place, 2) common life/interest/values/principles (such as the "intentional community"), 3) sites of communion or encounter (such as the concept of "the spirit of the community") or a combination of each.⁴ George Goetschius, for example, suggests that community "is a convenient term to refer to a group of people gathered together in any geographical area, with common interests, actual or potential, in the social, welfare and recreational field."⁵ Margaret Betz, moving beyond purely spatial considerations, describes community as entailing a common origin, dignity and destiny, as well as a sense of belonging and a commitment to inter-relatedness.⁶ Elizabeth Frazer indicates that community itself can be approached as a *value*, which brings together elements such as solidarity, commitment,

³ For the purpose of this thesis, by the 'Irish Church' is meant the Roman Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland, since this is the faith context of the Fatima community.

⁴ On definitions of community see Mark K. Smith, "Community" (2001), <http://www.infed.org/community/community.htm>, 1-17 at 1-3, viewed 17/07/06; also Jerry Hampton, "Group Dynamics and Community Building: Seven Community Definitions" (2000), http://www.community4me.com/comm_definitions.html, 1-3 at 2, viewed 19/06/2006.

⁵ George Goetschius, *Working with Community Groups*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) 9. A similar argument is offered by Peter Willmott, *Social Networks, Informal Care and Public Policies*, (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1986) 6.

⁶ Margaret Betz, cited in Hampton: 1. Mark Smith also highlights relationality and specifically identifies social networking/kinship as a distinctive aspect of community. See Smith: 3-4.

mutuality and trust.⁷ In a different vein, Anthony Cohen emphasises the highly symbolic function of community, presenting it as a site of meaning and identity; he highlights in particular the notion of ‘boundary’, which, as we shall see, is highly relevant for Fatima.⁸ In this thesis I adopt a comprehensive approach to the question of community since *all* of the above considerations are in evidence in Fatima’s self understanding of community (chapter three). Significantly, ‘community’, as self-interpreted by Fatima residents, is defined in relation to, and in contrast with, the wider community of Dublin city. This interpretation corresponds to the notion of *the divided city*, which is highlighted by Corcoran and Thake:

In Dublin, there are ongoing tensions between residents of Fatima Mansions and the surrounding Rialto neighbourhood. In these instances, an unintended consequence of community mobilisation around a regeneration strategy may be to reinforce rather than overcome divisions in the neighbourhood.⁹

When examining urban communities within the context of social exclusion, David Byrne provides an insightful exploration of intra-city divided spaces.¹⁰ Byrne suggests that the term ‘social exclusion’ 1) incorporates society as a whole, as opposed to discrete individuals in society, and 2) entails discussion about changes in the whole of society, which have consequences for some of the people in the society. This twofold understanding of the term appeals to my research interests since a critical examination of mainstream Irish morality, from the perspective of Fatima, is central to my research goals. As a term it is also distinguishable from somewhat simplistic notions of ‘poverty’ in that it provides a more comprehensive framework, extending beyond an emphasis on the lack of material resources and income alone.¹¹ It is an “inherently dynamic” term, in that “exclusion happens in time, in a time of history, and ‘determines’ the lives of the individuals and collectivities who are excluded *and* of those individuals and collectivities who are not.”¹² Furthermore it is a systemic term, with real implications for agency.¹³ Based on Byrne’s contribution, social exclusion is here understood to mean:

⁷ Elizabeth Frazer, *The Problem of Communitarian Politics. Unity and Conflict*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 76.

⁸ Cohen: 12.

⁹ Mary Corcoran & Conrad Thake, *Entrust Thematic Report. Partnership, Urban Regeneration and the European City: a community participation perspective* (Dec. 2003), ENTRUST, Thematic Reports. <http://www.ensure.org/entrust/reports/community-participation/Default.htm>: 1-23 at 10, viewed 19/07/06.

¹⁰ David Byrne, *Social Exclusion*, (Buckingham/Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999, rep. 2000).

¹¹ Byrne: 2. On ‘poverty’ and ‘social exclusion’ specifically in the Irish context see: CORI Justice Commission, *Resources and Choices: Towards a Fairer Future*. Socio-Economic Review (Dublin: CORI, Justice Commission, 2000) 8-26.

¹² Byrne: 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 1-2.

a spatially manifested, multi-dimensional, and systemically orchestrated separation of some members of a society, from such normative societal processes as, 1) participation in decision-making and the political process, 2) access to employment and material resources, and 3) access to social and cultural aspects available to the wider society.¹⁴

'Regeneration' is another central term in this work, specifically urban regeneration. Urban regeneration in the context of European cities is normally project-based and entails a strategic, 'partnership approach', involving interested parties, including governmental departments, business groups, local community representatives, trade union representatives, etc.¹⁵ In the Irish context, since 1987, this approach has involved medium term (three-year) national agreements dealing with issues of pay and wages, tax and welfare, education and health, among others. According to Mike Geddes, in this partnership approach, it is accepted that the local community is a significant stakeholder in its regeneration process.¹⁶ In the case of Fatima, it is a "collective mobilisation" by the community that has driven its regeneration agenda.¹⁷ In fact, the initial driving force for regeneration was Fatima Groups United (FGU), a Fatima-based community development organisation which set the agenda for community development for the estate. A primary aim of Fatima's regeneration project was to decrease the social exclusion experienced by residents by virtue of their spatial, cultural and socio-economical location within the city.¹⁸ This partnership approach has been driven by "partnership objectives", which are central to European Union (EU) policy, and which typically include: 1) commercial regeneration, 2) heritage preservation, 3) care of the environment, 4) economic development, and 5) the facilitation of community/quality of life.¹⁹ In the case of Fatima, in the late nineties, the dual objectives of economic development and community/quality of life were central in the planning and implementation stages of regeneration, not least because of substantial plans, at that time, for investment in information economy. These plans included a 'digital hub' in the Liberties-Coombe geographical area, within which Fatima is situated (appendix A).

These regeneration partnerships are implemented within the context of Dublin's inner city, Integrated Area Plans (IAPs), which are designed for the strategic regeneration of the most disadvantaged communities in the city. The general success of the IAPs is partially attributed to the fact that they target sub areas or key developments within disadvantaged communities for

¹⁴ Ibid.: 3.

¹⁵ Corcoran & Thake: 8

¹⁶ Mike Geddes, "Tackling Social Exclusion in the European Union: the limits of the new orthodoxy of local partnership" in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Dec. 2000: 782-800 at 793.

¹⁷ Corcoran and Thake: 12

¹⁸ Geddes: 783.

¹⁹ Corcoran and Thake: 12

which tax designation is sought. The central strategy of the plan is “the integration of policies, objectives and projects relating to the physical environment, economic renewal, education, community development and housing in order to bring about the sustainable regeneration of the area”.²⁰

1.2.2 THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF FATIMA

As indicated earlier, Fatima, one of a number of inner city estates managed by the local authority, Dublin Corporation, is located two miles south-west of Dublin’s city centre (appendix A). The estate originally consisted exclusively of balcony-access flats and was comprised of fifteen four-storey blocks of flats (plate 1).²¹



Plate 1: Spatial View of the Fatima Mansion’s Estate, Dublin (1999).

Photograph by Dublin Corporation.²²

Nestling between the two major Dublin canals, the Grand Canal and the Royal Canal, it is situated one mile from Christchurch Cathedral, a notable city landmark. The estate is built on eleven acres of prime urban land, given its close proximity to the city centre and to the city’s amenities. These include James’ Hospital, Heuston (Train) Station, the Phoenix Park; the Irish

²⁰ Ibid: 7-8.

²¹ At the time of research it consisted of fourteen blocks of flats (which are since demolished).

²² In Tony Fahey, *Social Housing in Ireland: A Study of Success, Failure and Lessons Learned* (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 1999) 86. Printed by the permission of Oak Tree Press.

Museum of Modern Art; the Meath Street shopping/market area, the Crumlin Shopping Centre (the 'Shoppo'); Basin Lane and Loreto primary and secondary schools and two Roman Catholic churches. The *Luas* light rail transport system and a wide variety of local bus services provide for Fatima a convenient link to other parts of the city. The estate is also closely situated to the M50 motorway, which by-passes the city and allows access to all parts of the country, as well as to Dublin Airport. Urban renewal schemes and the development of nearby Cork Street and Dolphin's Barn have been generating renewal in the local area in recent years, thereby revitalizing it as a residential area.²³ For these reasons, since the mid nineties, Dublin Corporation has positively highlighted the geographical location of Fatima, from the perspective of its development.²⁴

From its origins - and at the time of research (1995-2002) - the Fatima estate was a geographically enclosed space, facing in upon itself, and effectively hidden behind Rialto village, to the South and St. James' Walk (off the Grand Canal boundary) to the North. At the foundation of the Fatima Estate, Rialto was a "middle class suburb" of Dublin and Fatima, in contrast, was "a 'walled-in' flats complex separating the new working class tenants, who came from inner city tenements, from their middle class neighbours"²⁵ In the late eighties, the outer parameters were fenced off by distinctive blue spiked railings, setting the flats complex visibly apart from other housing in the local area.²⁶ Fatima's defined boundaries with respect to the wider locality proved significant in terms of community identity. Social division was also internal to Fatima. Fahey writes that the extent of its "spatial differentiation" is especially interesting, given the compactness of the estate.²⁷ From a very early stage the community developed internal boundaries which effectively divided the estate and - hence - the community itself. The 'through road' from Dolphins Barn to James' Walk has historically marked the point of greatest division; five blocks, densely compacted "under the arch", were separated off from the other blocks in the estate which were larger and had more open spaces surrounding them. "Under the arch", a phrase often heard in Fatima discourse, is a reference to a concrete arch which marked the entry point into the five blocks, A to E (plate 2). Two blocks to the furthest western edges of the estate, Blocks R and S, somewhat more isolated than others, were occasionally termed the "yuppie" or "posh" blocks; these had a more orderly, well-kept appearance. Therefore, there was a clear territorial sense around each of the blocks that

²³ *Ibid.*: 14.

²⁴ Dublin Corporation, *Regeneration Next Generation: Looking Forward to a New Future for Fatima*, (Dublin: Dublin Corporation, 2001).

²⁵ CAN (Community Action Network), *Fatima Mansions-Dublin Corporation Dialogue*, (Dublin: CAN & Dublin Corporation, 1997): 3.

²⁶ This pattern follows the widespread and general pattern of "divided spaces" in the post-industrial city, as described by Byrne: 109-124.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 128-129.

significantly impacted upon the social relationships within the estate.²⁸ At the time of my research, there were distinct ‘no-go’ areas (H and G Blocks). These were colonized by drug users and ‘undesirables’.²⁹



Plate 2: The “Arch”, Fatima

Photograph by Aisling Deignan and Olive Power (2002).

Fatima residents have historically drawn upon certain symbolic representations, metaphors and myths to describe its unique geographical and psychological space. For example, Fatima has been referred to as “prison” and “Beirut”.³⁰ The Corcoran Report (1998) suggests that many residents felt they were “living life as a [prison] sentence”.³¹ Her research demonstrated that prison imagery abounds in the community's language and myths, for instance, “it’s like a life sentence being here now”; “we are like pigs in a pen here”; “I feel as if I am in Mountjoy”; “our children are like caged animals”, etc.³² One further myth is that the blue spiked railings enclosing the flats were originally planned for Wheatfield Prison (Dublin) but got diverted to Fatima.³³

²⁸ Ibid.: 129.

²⁹ ‘Undesirables’ is a term used locally for individuals involved in anti-social behaviour.

³⁰ Ibid.: 134.

³¹ Mary Corcoran, *Making Fatima a Better Place to Live*, (Dublin: FGU & Dublin Corporation, 1998)18-19.

³² Ibid. ‘Mountjoy’ refers to Ireland’s largest prison, which is located in Dublin City (North).

³³ The universal use of such metaphors is highlighted by Fahey: 134.

1.2.3 THE HISTORY OF FATIMA: SOCIAL HOUSING IN EVOLUTION

My research clearly indicated that a primary value and goal of the majority of Fatima residents was to have their own 'house', as opposed to 'the flats' (chapter three). Because of this central value of adequate housing and because community regeneration is the context within which my research occurred, a brief history of social housing with respect to Fatima is considered useful. The Fatima estate is an example of "social housing" which, according to Fahey, consists of "rental accommodation constructed with state subsidy where allocation of dwellings is somehow linked to social need and where the landlord usually has a non-profit status or is a state agency such as a local authority".³⁴ The Fatima social housing estate was built between 1949 and 1951 by the Dublin Corporation local authority, on an inner city Dublin wasteland site, sized eleven acres, which was locally known as *Bonzo's Field*.³⁵ The estate originally totalled 394 flats units, which consisted of 1 one-roomed flat, 254 three-roomed flats, 136 four-roomed flats and 3 five-roomed flats.³⁶ A population of 2,600 people, including 150 senior citizens, were housed on the estate. Eight shops were also located in the community, including a grocer's shop, a chemist and a butcher's shop, and there were two local cinemas close by. There was also a resident caretaker responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the estate.³⁷

The building of the estate coincided with the Dublin Corporation social housing policy of the 1940s, which was characterized by the mass relocation of inner city residents from condemned tenement slums (formerly Georgian housing) where overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions and dangerous housing structures called for a radical response.³⁸ Despite its high density and problems of overcrowding in individual flats, they were, on the whole, regarded as luxury dwellings.³⁹ Indeed, for many tenants the experience of having more than one room, electricity, and an indoor bathroom, was new.⁴⁰ The community spirit was very strong; neighbourliness was the order of the day and relations with neighbours were "governed by a norm of reciprocity".⁴¹ There was also evidence of pro-active community action.⁴² The Community

³⁴ Ibid.: 15-34 at 16-17. For accounts of social housing in Ireland, see 35-56 and 57-79; also 'Housing and Social Exclusion' in Sean Healy and Bridget Reynolds (eds.) *Social Policy in Ireland. Principles, Practices and Problems*. (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 1988) 285-302.

³⁵ See Dublin Corporation: *Regeneration Next Generation*: 8-9.

³⁶ Ibid.: 4.

³⁷ CAN: 3.

³⁸ On inner-city tenement life see Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994/Dublin: Colourbooks Ltd., 1996).

³⁹ On the density/overcrowding problems see Fahey, *Social Housing*: 108-110 and 114-116.

⁴⁰ Interview with Minnie and Anto, 24/05/2000.

⁴¹ Corcoran: 7

Action Network Agency (CAN) commented that, “despite the fact that few had formal education and that practically the only work available was seasonal work on the docks, the first 20 years of Fatima life was considered a success. The 1970’s and 1980’s, however, brought a dramatic change in housing trends in general in Ireland and this impacted significantly on the Fatima estate.⁴³ Cathal O’Connell comments that marginalized groups, previously low on the list of local authority housing, were being housed in low demand areas “thus reflecting the institutional bias which classified them as tenants of last resort”.⁴⁴ He adds that, coupling this with a letting policy that lacked commitment to “tenant heterogeneity and a social mix”, may well have resulted in certain locations becoming “dump estates” subject to “revolving door experiences of high levels of mobility and low neighbourhood stability”.⁴⁵ Such was the case in Fatima; between 1982 and 1984 over 45% of tenants (188) had made transfer applications to Dublin Corporation to live elsewhere.⁴⁶

In the late 1970s, Dublin Corporation, in conjunction with the *Fatima Development Group* (FDG), the first formal community development organization in Fatima, set out to redress the situation. Following on this, in the mid-eighties, a major refurbishment and modernization programme was carried out, which was completed in 1991, at the cost of IR£5.5m. Unfortunately, this programme was widely seen to have failed, primarily because of 1) inadequate local consultation, 2) a one-dimensional approach (as in an exclusive emphasis on the “bricks and mortar”) and 3) the belief that the Corporation, at the time, had “an unspoken agenda, which was ultimately imposed”.⁴⁷ Subsequently, recession-led cutbacks in housing maintenance precipitated the further decline and degradation of the estate, to the point that the estate became ranked as one of the most deprived local authority estates in Ireland.⁴⁸ By 1995, with its drugs problem visibly out of control, the community organized itself to force drug users and dealers out of Fatima, and with that came a renewed confidence about the possibility of turning Fatima around.⁴⁹

⁴² The Community Action Network (CAN), for example, writes that in the 1950s community members “marched on” Dublin Corporation to demand a playground. CAN: 3

⁴³ See Cathal O’Connell, “Housing Trends and Issues: The Role of Social Housing” in *Administration*, Vol. 41, no. 3. Autumn 1993: 249-261.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 256.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 257.

⁴⁶ Tobin: 4. For an fuller analysis of the factors which led to the decline of “social housing” during the seventies and eighties see also: Corcoran: 6-9; Fahey: *Social Housing*: 149-172 and 173-190 and Dublin Corporation, *Regeneration Next Generation*: 8.

⁴⁷ Drugs-related problems and anti-social behaviours were not tackled. See CAN: 5.

⁴⁸ O’ Gorman: 6.

⁴⁹ *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

Shortly afterwards, FDG officially disbanded and both the Fatima Task Force (FTF) and Fatima Groups United (FGU) were established to try and salvage a future for Fatima.⁵⁰ FGU was an umbrella organization composing representatives from Fatima-based organisations as well as local resident representatives. It formally launched its regeneration brief, *Eleven Acres. Ten Steps*, in November 2000. This advocated a 'Planning for Real' approach to the redevelopment and the regeneration of Fatima.⁵¹ In February 2001 Dublin Corporation responded with *Regeneration Next Generation*, which offered a 'master plan' or 'design framework' for the regeneration of Fatima.⁵² After further local consultation FGU published a response document, namely, *From Ghetto to Greatest*, in July 2001.⁵³ This document outlined five 'benchmarks' to judge Dublin Corporation's 'Draft' Plan, including a regeneration of excellent standard, a holistic approach, having the Regeneration Board as guarantor, the ongoing development of an inclusive and equal partnership approach with Dublin Corporation and 'real choice' for the community.⁵⁴ Significantly, the document highlighted the primacy of the *social agenda* in the regeneration of Fatima.⁵⁵ In parallel with these developments, in 2001, the FTF established (and was replaced by) the Fatima Regeneration Board (FRB) with the mandate to oversee the regeneration of the estate.⁵⁶ Intensive negotiations began between the community, Dublin Corporation, and other relevant bodies. This culminated in a new vision, promising a radical and sustainable regeneration of the estate.⁵⁷ In September 2003 funding for the master plan was withdrawn by central government; regeneration was now to be delivered through a public-private partnership. In 2004 a bidder was selected. Punch *et al.* write that the "announcement was completely unexpected and was greeted with alarm and anger locally, as people came face to face with their own (deepening) disempowerment."⁵⁸ In response, the Fatima Regeneration

⁵⁰ FTF consisted of representatives from residents, community groups, statutory agencies, Dublin Corporation, public representatives, governmental departments, the Eastern Health Board and the Gardaí (police).

⁵¹ On 'Planning for Real' see O' Gorman: 12; also The Housing Unit, "The Miracle of Fatima: Developing a community regeneration brief for Fatima Mansions" in *Housing Ireland*, Issue 5, March 2001: 2-4 at 4.

⁵² See Dublin Corporation. *Regeneration Next Generation*: 4.

⁵³ FGU & Fatima Advisory Strategy Team (FAST) *From Ghetto to Greatest* (Dublin: FGU, 2001).

⁵⁴ Interestingly, while Dublin Corporation referred to their regeneration plan as a 'master plan' FGU insisted on speaking of it as a 'draft plan', emphasising that community consultation was ongoing. On the five benchmarks, see O'Gorman: 7.

⁵⁵ O' Gorman: 10-25.

⁵⁶ O' Gorman: 24. On the Board, at the time of research, were Mr. Finbar Flood (chair), representatives from the Fatima and Rialto communities, Dublin Corporation, RAPID (Revitalizing Areas by Planning Investment and Development) and public representatives.

⁵⁷ On sustainable regeneration see CAN: 7-8.

⁵⁸ Michael Punch, Declan Redmond and Sinead Kelly, *Uneven development, city governance and urban change: Unpacking the global nexus in Dublin's inner city* (Ireland), 2004. Paper delivered at 'City Futures: An International Conference on Globalism and Urban Change'. Chicago. 8-10th July, 2004.

Board published its *Social Agenda* (2004) outlining bottom line areas to be delivered upon; its concerns about the new regeneration plan, questionable design quality and lack of any clear social integration plan. Despite this setback, currently (2008) the phased demolition of the flats has occurred and residents are re-housed either within the estate or in an alternative setting.

Undoubtedly, the history of social housing, as experienced by the Fatima community, has coloured and shaped the identity of Fatima, impacting directly upon its value system and morality. However, Fatima's status with respect to *housing* is but one element of its overall socio-economic status. In order to address this in a wider fashion, the following section provides a summary analysis of its socio-economic status, which provides the context for an interpretation of Fatima's value systems and moral practice (chapter three).

1.2.4 A SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF FATIMA

A number of research projects involving both quantitative and qualitative research were carried out in the Fatima estate both before and during the time of my own research. Of these, two key reports, namely, *Survey of Fatima Mansions* (1998) and *Making Fatima a Better Place to Live* (1998), together with a draft report *Taking Action on the Fatima Community Regeneration Brief-Steps 6&8: The Health and Education Needs of Residents of Fatima Mansions* (2001), collectively provided a helpful demographic profile and a comprehensive social analysis of the estate at the time.⁵⁹ A *brief* summary of their more significant findings is as follows:

- The 26-45 age group - the category most likely to be exerting parental or moral control on the estate - made up just 30% of the population. As 52% of the population was under 25 years issues of control and supervision were of uppermost concern;⁶⁰
- There was a significantly lower number of men in the 26-35 age group, namely, 6% of men, as compared to 14% of women, in the overall population;⁶¹
- 91% of the population were unemployed and dependent on social welfare for income. Despite the unprecedented economic boom in the Ireland of the nineties, poverty was a very real issue for many;⁶²

⁵⁹ Mary Corcoran & Tony Fahey, *Survey of Fatima Mansions*, (Dublin: Dublin Corporation and ESRI, 1998) and Claire Collins and Suzanne Lyons, *Taking Action on the Fatima Community Regeneration Brief-Steps 6&8: The Health and Education Needs of Residents of Fatima Mansions*. Draft Report. Dept. of Public Health Medicine & Epidemiology, University College Dublin. 2001.

⁶⁰ Corcoran: 16.

⁶¹ Collins & Lyons: 7. The authors comment that this may well be an inaccurate assessment, in that respondents might not have wanted to report partners living with them "unofficially". Participant observation in my own research confirms such a view.

- 44% were early school leavers with no formal educational qualifications; less than 10% had attained a Leaving Certificate, just over 15% had been educated to Junior Certificate level, and less than 5% had attained third level education.⁶³
- 34.9% of resident households reported a chronic illness or disability, asthma being the most frequently cited illness. Further disorders included arthritis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, kidney and bowel trouble, and epilepsy.⁶⁴
- 38% of households in the estate were single parent households (up to four times the national average) as compared to 23% of households with single people living alone and 21% of households with two parent families and children.⁶⁵
- Regarding the local environment, the standard of maintenance in the flats was consistently considered unacceptable.⁶⁶ Public space was considered to be indefensible, hence adults and children were relentlessly exposed to the drugs culture,⁶⁷ and
- 78% of residents opted for a full demolition of the flats.

The Corcoran Report highlighted in particular the dramatic rise in the percentage of lone parent families in Fatima over the previous two decades; at the end of 1980 the 'nuclear family' predominated (90.8%) but by 1998 the figure had dropped to 21%.⁶⁸ The significant relationship between the inordinately high percentage of lone parent households and poverty was also highlighted. Gender is significant here; as we shall see in part two of this chapter and in my later analysis lone parent families are most likely to be headed by women, hence the feminization of poverty is in clear evidence in the Fatima estate (chapter three).

The area of *education*, an aspect examined in some depth in part two of this chapter, has also been a focus of interest in research conducted in the Fatima estate and the wider local area. Stephen Rourke, for example, in a study of early school leaving in the Canal Communities Area, Dublin 8 (which includes Fatima), highlights the fact that there are particularly high

⁶² According to the Central Statistics Office, labour force unemployment was at 9.6% at the time of the Corcoran Report. See Corcoran: 15. Furthermore, welfare payments at the time of research failed to meet the cost of living in Dublin. On 'poverty' in the Irish context, see Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, *One Long Struggle: A Study of Low-Income Families* (Dublin: Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, 2001) 3.

⁶³ The explicit link between low levels of education and unemployment is made by Corcoran: 14. Within the Irish educational system the Leaving Certificate is the state examination at the end of second level education. The Junior Certificate is an earlier state examination taken mid-second level.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 15

⁶⁵ See Fahey: *Social Housing*: 99; Corcoran: 13 and Combat Poverty Agency, *Lone Parent Families and Poverty*. Poverty Briefing Number 5: (Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency, 1996).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 23-25.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 20-23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 13.

levels of absenteeism and non-attendance at school from children in this local area.⁶⁹ Low educational achievement, literacy difficulties and problems at school were highlighted as areas of concern by Collins and Lynch.⁷⁰ Their report indicated that, while most adults were concerned that their children attain good levels of education, and while local school services are generally well thought of, some residents felt that living in Fatima was a disadvantage to their children.⁷¹ School staff members were accused of hating Fatima children, blaming them inordinately and not welcoming the Fatima culture.⁷² The hidden costs of ‘free education’ were cited as a significant problem for Fatima residents. Some residents felt that teachers lacked transparency and others claimed that communication with teachers was often intimidating.⁷³ Service providers pinpointed the following as significant impediments to learning:

- poor housing conditions;
- lack of space and quiet to do homework;
- the carrying of inordinate nurturing and emotional loads by parents;
- lack of nutrition;
- the inter-generational effects of poverty;
- the general lack of parental modelling and the lack of life skills, and
- low expectations of Fatima children by educators, and the tolerance of low levels of educational attainment.⁷⁴

Finally, local community workers pointed to the challenge posed by historically negative cultural attitudes to education and suggested that it had to, instead, “be seen as liberating and a gateway to employment.”⁷⁵

The issue of health (addressed in part two of this chapter) is also relevant to my research analysis (chapter three). Consequently, a brief introductory overview is appropriate with respect to Fatima-based health-related research already in the public domain. Collins and Lynch

⁶⁹ Stephen Rourke, *Study on Early School Leaving in The Canal Communities Partnership Area*, Draft Report (Dublin: Canal Communities Partnership, May 2001) 9.

⁷⁰ Collins and Lynch: 22-23. Among the ‘problems at school’ were bullying, head lice, illness, fighting, not being able to cope in the school environment and the need for special classes.

⁷¹ Issues arising include the fact that parents felt that their children were being bullied by peers because of their non designer-ware clothing and their Fatima address. Similar experiences have been recorded elsewhere throughout the city. See the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice: 5.

⁷² Examples were given of how Fatima children are expected to draw ‘houses’ at school, and not flats, and that Fatima children are not invited to share what it is like living in Fatima with other students.

⁷³ Collins and Lynch: 32-33.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: 39-40.

⁷⁵ *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 24/04/2001.

provide useful statistics regarding the incidence of various illnesses in Fatima: asthma, 37%; chest problems/bronchitis, 22%; depression, 8%; ENT, 8%; kidney problems, 4%; heart problems, 4%; arthritis, 2%; diabetes, 2%; other 12%. Clearly, asthma and chest complaints were the most predominant health problems for residents, especially children. This is directly linked to the physical environment, in particular the lack of adequate heating in the flats. At the time of research the flats were equipped with a single coal or gas fire and dogged by poor insulation. Clothes and blankets were often used to block draughts. Significantly, only flats that housed community projects were fitted with central heating. Tenants relied on electric and gas heaters which were a health and safety risk. Further health related issues included sewerage and draining problems, the filthy environment, the lack of appropriate levels of sanitation in the flats and the presence of vermin.⁷⁶ Depression was the third most frequent illness recorded and residents often cited the impoverished conditions as a contributory factor.⁷⁷ 15% of prescriptions in the estate were depression related, 10% being anti-depressants and 5% sleeping pills.⁷⁸ A gross lack of information regarding what health services were available was a consistent finding.⁷⁹ The safety of the children and noise pollution, caused by regeneration, were highlighted as concerns of the community.⁸⁰

Fatima's undeniable drugs culture has had direct impact upon the community's profile and needs, including health needs. The Fatima Regeneration Team (FRT) commenting on the influx of drugs into the estate stated that the

heroin epidemic, which first swept through Dublin in the late 1970's, took root in Fatima, feeding on the chronic social conditions that existed and exacerbating them even further. The estate became a site for the dealing, buying and use of drugs by people from all over the city. Many young people died unable to achieve their potential, and without access to other life opportunities.⁸¹

Once rooted, the problem was on-going. One resident commented that in the early 90's one particular flat in the complex had so many drug addicts and drugs-related deaths associated with it that it became known locally as 'Cromwell St.'⁸² Examining Dublin Corporation flats complexes in the Rialto Area, Tony Mac Cártaigh concluded that 40% of units in one complex had close connections with issues related to drug use and that 10% of units had the experience

⁷⁶ O' Gorman: 12; also Collins and Lynch: 12-13; 25-28.

⁷⁷ Collins and Lynch: 13-14.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.: x.

⁸⁰ O' Gorman: 12.

⁸¹ Ibid.: 6.

⁸² *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001. This is a reference to the historical mass genocide of large numbers of the Irish population by Oliver Cromwell.

of HIV+ and/or deaths from AIDS-related illness.⁸³ In 1997 the CAN agency similarly identified drugs as a major issue for Fatima and suggested that a “multi-faceted response by police, community, and agencies” was required to tackle this “social disease”.⁸⁴

1.2.5 THE RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF FATIMA

Undoubtedly, religion serves, among other things, as a primary source of values and morals. While part two of the chapter provides an historical examination of the role of the Church in shaping values in Irish society, here a more focused treatment is provided of the religious culture of Fatima itself. This sets the context for my later analysis of the sources of values in Fatima (chapter three). It is notable that, while the literature provides various accounts of urban, including inner city, religious experience and spirituality, in Dublin and elsewhere, no comprehensive treatment of the religious culture of Fatima is available.⁸⁵ The Corcoran Report, however, indicates that Mass-going and community-based religious events were important features in terms of social cohesion in Fatima in the past, but the Church no longer plays such a cohesive role.⁸⁶ Also, according to Fahey, despite an explicit ‘option for the poor’ among many Catholic religious congregations in the wake of Vatican II, and concentrated efforts by individual priests and Religious in social housing estates such as Fatima, the church, as a collective, has not made any significant contribution to the transformation of these estates.⁸⁷ In the absence of further research and documentation on the religious culture of Fatima, immersion, participant observation and personal ethnographic interviews, in my own research processes, provide the basis for an initial analysis of the religious-cultural life of Fatima (chapter two).

Firstly, it must be stated that the vast majority (approx. 96-98%) of the community of Fatima has been baptised into the Roman Catholic Church. Despite this, levels of religious practice are significantly low. However, baptisms, First Communion, Confirmation and funeral celebrations are generally valued as religious-cultural events.⁸⁸ My research indicates that most Fatima residents feel alienated from the local church and clergy. This alienation is physically expressed by such behaviours as remaining at the back of the “chapel” (local parish church) or even

⁸³ See Tony Mac Cárthaigh *Community & Drugs ~A Christian Response*, a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy, Irish School of Ecumenics, University of Dublin, Trinity College (Unpublished) 1994:6.

⁸⁴ CAN: 7.

⁸⁵ See Martin Byrne, *The Boundary Wall: Evolving Consciousness of North Wall People* (Dublin: The Christian Brothers, 2000); Bernadette Flanagan, *The Spirit of the City: Voices from Dublin's Liberties* (Dublin: Veritas, 1999).

⁸⁶ Corcoran: 41.

⁸⁷ See Fahey: *Social Housing*: 213-216; also Corcoran: 41.

⁸⁸ Interview with Mrs. Ryan. 26/04/2001

outside the “chapel”, during religious events such as removal ceremonies and funeral masses. Attitudes to local priests appear to be varied and often ambiguous. In Fatima’s history there is both a positive and negative record of relationships with local priests. Some priests were perceived as being genuinely committed to the community, a value that surfaced repeatedly in many interviews and informal conversations in the community. These priests were fondly remembered by name, or, in one case, by the nickname ‘Moses’, because of his beard and his prophetic role in the community. A phrase often heard in relation to such priests was: “he would give the clothes off his back”.⁸⁹ There was also evidence of profound anger directed towards individual local priests who were perceived as not being involved in community life. This was accompanied by a general sense of rejection and shame.⁹⁰ Prior to my departure from Fatima, residents commented that they no longer knew the priest.⁹¹ Some missed the encouragement of the priest in terms of faith practice and expressed anger that the clergy were simply not doing their job.⁹² Others expressed confusion at the perceived rejection.⁹³ Despite the generally perceived lack of the priest’s presence and despite the lack of formal religious practice, research interviews conducted in Fatima indicated that both personal and communal spiritualities were operative. Indeed, a distinctive form of popular devotion is in evidence.⁹⁴ At the personal and private level, ‘God’ is generally prayed to in a very direct way, and viewed as protector or guide or helper, as is Mary or ‘Our Lady.’⁹⁵ The local community statue of Our Lady of Fatima, erected at the opening of the flats complex at its foundation remains a source of reverence and pride for many in the community (plate 3). During my research, one resident commented: “It will have to stay where the people of Fatima stay... that’s our Lady of Fatima and its not to be touched...”.⁹⁶ Other than devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, or ‘our Mary’, as she is sometimes referred to locally, traditional spiritual practices often feature in the collective stories of the more elderly in the community.

In terms of religious practice, candle lighting in the local Church is also in evidence, as also are blessings with Holy Water and making the Sign of the Cross when passing a Church, or when a funeral procession or ambulance passes by. Upon the death of a community member the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Interview with Mary, 15/05/2001.

⁹¹ Interviews with Nicole, 08/10/01 and Sarah, 03/03/2001.

⁹² Interviews with Mrs Ryan, 22/03/ 2001 and Sarah, 03/03/2001.

⁹³ Interview with Natasha, 30/05/2002.

⁹⁴ On ‘popular religion’ see Salvador Ryan, “Resilient Religion: Popular Piety Today” in *The Furrow*, Mar. 2005: 131-141, also Brian J. Pierce, O.P. “Popular Religion – Liberating Liturgy” in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 53, No. 10, Dec. 2003: 625-629.

⁹⁵ Interview with Marie, 23/05/2001.

⁹⁶ *Spirit Level*, RTE, Radio 1, 26/04/2001. Interestingly, upon my own entry into the community a neighbour, as a sign of welcome, presented me with a glass encased statue of ‘Our Lady’ which had been passed on to her by her mother.

undertakers halt the hearse at the flats complex as an act of reverence. Older members of the community also talk about the earlier tradition of placing the Child of Prague, (a crowned and robed statue of the Infant Jesus) in the garden, before a wedding, to ensure good weather. Tradition also held that “a thruppenny bit” under the statue would ensure wealth.⁹⁷ Another popular tradition often recounted is that of placing a saucer of bread and salt outside for the ‘Holy Souls’ on Halloween night. Though often spoken of, these latter traditional practices are no longer evidently practised.⁹⁸



Plate 3: Statue of “Our Lady of Fatima”

Photograph by Aisling Deignan and Olive Power (2002)

⁹⁷ Interview with Mrs. Ryan. 22/03/2001.

⁹⁸ Ibid. These particular practices, in my view, are more indicative of a popular Irish *devotional faith*, as opposed to the practice of any formal religious activity.

As indicated in the introduction, one distinctive expression of faith in the estate is the presence of a small house prayer group, called *The Fig Tree Group*. This bible group (ranging from about three to ten people at a gathering) is predominantly (though not exclusively) Roman Catholic and female in its leadership and membership. The group reflects on the Christian Scriptures in the context of the life of the estate, seeking to integrate biblical prayer and lived life in Fatima. Members adopt a See/Judge/Act prayer methodology, adapted for their context.⁹⁹ While this particular expression of faith is in many ways atypical of a general Fatima spirituality, nevertheless, this group has been firmly situated in the Fatima estate over an extended period of twenty years and is intimately concerned with Fatima life. Therefore it is significant. Some of the faith values which came to the fore in discussions on faith with the *Fig Tree* group include: *the appropriate use of power in contexts of faith and Church, inclusion, respect for culture, the presence of the Church in the community, and respect for people's lived experience*.¹⁰⁰ Through its reflection the group became wary of manipulations of the biblical text and affirmed interpretations that fitted the reality of Fatima life "as it is... in all its rawness".¹⁰¹ *Fig Tree* group members made the comment that, in their experience, biblical prayer related directly to what was happening in their personal and communal lives. Biblical reflection forced members to examine and respond to pressing community development issues. For example, in one instance the group chose to attend a community drugs meeting in an act of solidarity, rather than have the usual weekly prayer meeting in one member's flat.

Other research interviews revealed a lively interaction between various religious groupings from outside the community and the local community. These include Roman Catholic organizations and congregations such as The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) or 'the Vincents', the Missionaries of Charity, (the 'blue nuns' or 'the Mother Teresa nuns'), the Legion of Mary (the 'Legion') as well as the church community, Victory Outreach (the 'Born Agains'), based in Pearse Street, Dublin. Participant observation and research interviews indicated that these are, generally, either tolerated or avoided by the Fatima community, with the exception of the 'Vincents', who, though formerly despised (because of a perceived judgemental attitude on the part of their members to Fatima residents) are now very well

⁹⁹ Interview with the *Fig Tree Group*, 22/05/2001. At the time of my research there was also a 'born again' Christian house prayer group, which met regularly in R block. An interview was not included with this group since my research was restricted to the Roman Catholic tradition (see general introduction).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

respected by many members of the community.¹⁰² Finally, there is also evidence of willingness by some to attend a spiritual medium, particularly in the absence of a connection with local church and where there are concerns regarding 1) family members who have died, or 2) financial matters.¹⁰³

In terms of its contemporary communal spirituality, a characteristic cultural feature of the Fatima community is its capacity to celebrate its unique community spirit, both creatively and ritually. This has proven to be a significant aspect of the Fatima regeneration process, both in terms of healing and inspiration. Some examples include:

- the ‘Burn the Demons: Embrace the Future’ Halloween Festival (1997), where a mural of a drug user injecting drugs was burned in a giant bonfire. This was a symbolic representation of the community’s rejection of its drugs culture and its desire to move on,¹⁰⁴
- at the launch of the community brief, *Eleven Acres Ten Steps* (2000) the chairperson of FGU, in his address, made reference to the ‘sacredness’ of the Fatima land, and drew comparisons with Native American reservations,¹⁰⁵
- the symbol of the butterfly and theme of transformation became particularly poignant for this distinctive inner city community immediately prior to regeneration;¹⁰⁶
- a Fatima wall mural, ‘Gone But Not Forgotten’, was a dominant inspiration in the community as the memory of the ‘old’ Fatima was gathered creatively by a variety of artistic means, culminating in the Fatima Regeneration Festival (2001). These celebrations incorporated a primitive and rhythmic use of drum beat, fire and chant, and
- during the Fatima regeneration residents expressed a desire for some ‘memory space’ in the new Fatima in order to remember those who had died. This was inspired by a particular Christmas community procession (based on ‘The Little Drummer Boy’) where the community processed with candles to Our Lady’s grotto, heard the Nativity (biblical) story read aloud, and prayed for those who had died during the year.

These and similar celebrations have provided a cohesive role, heightened community spirit and symbolically acted out boundary concerns, as Fatima has looked to its new future. Moreover, according to the Fatima Regeneration Team (FTR), arts and cultural programmes also helped to “combat the negative stereotype associated with Fatima”, instead actively promoting “a new

¹⁰² This, in my view, is explained by two factors: 1) the organisation’s current justice/charity-centred approach to its work (as opposed to a solely charity-centred approach), and 2) the dynamic and empathetic personalities of those individuals who currently represent the organisation locally.

¹⁰³ Interview with Mrs. Ryan, 22/03/2001.

¹⁰⁴ *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

¹⁰⁵ Chairperson, FGU, Opening address at the launch of *Eleven Acres Ten Steps*. St. Andrew’s Centre, Rialto, November 2000.

¹⁰⁶ See Byrne, *The Boundary Wall*: 87-89.

awareness and respect for the quiet dignity of the community operating in such adverse conditions.”¹⁰⁷

Having presented a comprehensive profile of the Fatima community I now turn to an examination of the broader context of research.

PART TWO: THE MACRO LEVEL OF RESEARCH:

1.3 DOMINANT VALUES IN IRISH SOCIETY

In order to situate the moral worldview of Fatima, it is necessary to comment upon the dominant values in Irish society as a point of comparison. Confining this examination to Fatima-related concerns, the focus is primarily on the areas of economics, gender and the impact of the Church in relation to education, health, sexuality, marriage and the family (aspects examined in relation to a Fatima ethics in this research).

1.3.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: INCREASED INEQUALITY?

Joseph J. Lee, in his work *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, analyzes Ireland’s economic history from the period of Independence to the mid-eighties.¹⁰⁸ He demonstrates that no other European country recorded so slow a rate of growth of national income in the twentieth century. From the late eighties onwards, however, Ireland witnessed a radical and dramatic change in its economy, commonly referred to as the ‘Celtic Tiger’ event.¹⁰⁹ During the mid to late nineties Ireland’s economy grew at the rate of more than eight per cent a year in real terms.¹¹⁰ Changes in the labour market led to a significant rise in standards of living. The primary causes of this unprecedented economic growth is primarily attributed to foreign investment and Ireland’s educational policy. Other contributory factors include:

- the availability of a skilled Irish work force;
- the US and UK economic booms of that period;

¹⁰⁷ O’ Gorman: 19.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁹ See Tom Giblin, “The Irish Economy: Wondering about Wealth” in Dermot Lane (ed.) *New Century New Society: Christian Perspectives* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1999) 25-39.

¹¹⁰ Dermot Mc Aleese, “The Celtic Tiger: Origins and Prospects” in *Options Politiques*, July-August, 2000: 46-50 at 46.

- the Northern Ireland Peace Process
- EU subsidies;
- national policies which led to macroeconomic stability and an opening up to investment and trade;¹¹¹
- the distinctive ‘social partnership’ approach to development adopted in Ireland.¹¹²

The net impact of these developments upon socio-economically excluded communities, such as Fatima, is a debated issue. It is generally accepted that, initially, conditions for those in the lower socio-economic strata in Irish society improved somewhat during the Celtic Tiger era, largely due to increased employment opportunities and limited increases in social welfare benefits.¹¹³ Over time it was observed that ‘relative poverty’ was on the increase”.¹¹⁴ Research by the Combat Poverty Agency corroborates this position, namely that the richest 10% of the population received 25% of the budget allocations, while the poorest 20% received 5% in the five years leading up to the 2002 budget.¹¹⁵

In examining the ‘Celtic Tiger’ phenomenon, Giblin argues that Ireland has become a *three* tiered society.¹¹⁶ He points to the Economic and Social Research Institute’s (ESRI) figures for 1994 where the top tier (20%) of Irish society obtained 44% of total disposable household income. The top tier comprises people in computing, finance, company owners, senior management, shareholders, highly skilled workers, pub and restaurant owners, developers and large farmers. The middle tier (40%) receive 40% of the disposable income. Here we are speaking of white collar workers, public servants, professionals, tradespersons, the small-scale self employed, who have concerns around mortgage repayments, education of children etc. The bottom tier (40%), to which Fatima belongs, has only 16% of the total disposable income; lower paid workers of all descriptions, those in casual employment, disadvantaged groups (including the physically/mentally challenged, early school leavers, the homeless, addicts,

¹¹¹ Ibid.: 46-49.

¹¹² Ibid.:47. See Rory O’ Donnell, “The Future of Social Partnership in Ireland: A Discussion Paper for the National Competitive Council” (May 2001) at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/download/dp15604.pdf>, viewed 18/07/06

¹¹³ Unemployment Benefit and Assistance increased by 7% in real terms and pensions by 9-10%. See Richard Layte *et al.*, *Monitoring Poverty Trends and Exploring Poverty Dynamics in Ireland*, ESRI Policy Research Series, No. 41, June 2001:17.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. See also Tom Farrell, “Left out of the Equation: Ireland’s Downward Mobility”. Sept. 2000. Reality Online. <http://www.redemptoristpublications.com/reality/sept00/leftout.html>, viewed 29/04/2006.

¹¹⁵ Cited in Eugene Quinn, “A Vision for Ireland: a Question of Tax?” in *Working Notes*, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Issue 43, June 2002: 7-14 at 7-8.

¹¹⁶ Giblin, “The Irish Economy”: 33-34.

refugees and members of the Travelling community). Their concerns are in relation to debt management and the meeting of basic survival needs. This position is supported by the fact that in 1994, a quarter of the population still lacked one or more items on the Economic and Social Research Institute's (ESRI's) 'basic deprivation list'.¹¹⁷ From 1994 onwards social welfare increases lagged far behind the increase in income from other sources; wages, tax, salaries, properties, investment, etc. causing the condition of relative poverty to deteriorate dramatically.¹¹⁸

Directly linked to the economic boom of the last decade is the huge influx of economic migrants and asylum seekers. Joan Roddy *et al.* provide striking statistics: in 1992 the number of those seeking asylum in the Republic was only 39. By 1997 the annual number had risen to just under 3,900. By 2002 the figure had reached 11,600.¹¹⁹ The question of the potential citizenship rights of immigrants and asylum seekers is a fraught one in Irish society today. A 2003 Supreme Court ruling stipulated that the non-Irish parents of Irish born children had no automatic right to remain in the country.¹²⁰ In November 2006 the Supreme Court overturned this earlier ruling, arguing that children's rights were violated.¹²¹ In her analysis of the impact of the rapid influx of refugees and asylum seekers into Ireland at the turn of the millennium, Sutton highlights the phenomenon of racist behaviours, including verbal abuse and racist attacks.¹²² Referring to a survey conducted by the Pilgrim House Community, she points out that, of 157 asylum seekers interviewed, virtually all African respondents had been verbally abused and more than one fifth had been physically assaulted.¹²³ She writes that media coverage at the turn of the millennium was highly inflammatory, with headlines including:

¹¹⁷ They were not able to afford *one* of the following: heating, a substantial meal once a day, new clothes, a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day, a warm overcoat, two pairs of strong shoes, a 'roast' or equivalent once a week, or they fell into arrears, or debt, when paying for everyday necessities. See T. Giblin, "Poverty and Inequality" in *Working Notes*, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Issue 50, Dec. 2001: 2-11 at 2.

¹¹⁸ See T. Giblin, "The Irish Economy": 34.

¹¹⁹ Joan Roddy, Jerome Connolly and Maura Leen, "Human Rights have no Borders: Justice for the Stranger at Home and Abroad" in J. P. Mackay and E. McDonagh (eds.) *Religion and Politics*: 198-213 at 198-199.

¹²⁰ At the time of writing an estimate of 1,120 refusals had been granted, mostly on the basis of failure to prove continued residency in the state. See Mary Carolan, "Parents were wrongly refused leave to stay" in the *Irish Times*, 15/11/06: 4.

¹²¹ Significantly, the Irish Bishops have challenged moves by government to limit citizenship, calling for a greater generosity towards immigrants, especially in light of the Irish historical experience of emigration. See "Bishops' Conference Appeals on Behalf of Immigrant Parents of Irish Children" in Forum, *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 54, No. 4, April 2004: 49-50.

¹²² M. Sutton, "Ireland in the New Millenium: A Brooder or a Gloater?" in D. Lane (ed.) *New Century New Society*: 64-72 at 69.

¹²³ This survey was conducted by the Pilgrim House community and published in the *Irish Times*, 24/04/1999: 9.

'Refugees Spark Housing Crisis', 'Crackdown on 2000 Sponger Refugees', 'Refugee Rapists on the Rampage', etc.¹²⁴

1.3.2 THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Given that my research is primarily women-based and that gender is a significant category in my later analysis (chapter three), a summary account of the status of women in the wider context of Irish society is insightful. It is argued that one of the major issues involving church and state in the second half of the twentieth century was the status of women.¹²⁵ While women in Ireland accessed the vote on the same terms as men (1918), and while they actively participated in the struggle for independence, the 1937 constitution "reflected what women critics at the time regarded as an oppressive or at least restrictive ethos in regard to women".¹²⁶ Article 41, Section 2, of the Constitution, on the family, is a case in point whereby the state endeavoured to ensure "that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."¹²⁷ Historical examples of lack of access for women highlighted by Pat O' Connor include 1) a 'marriage ban', involving a prohibition on married Irish women from working in the public services, 2) the lack of entitlement to maternity leave, 3) substantial inequalities in the social welfare system, and 4) unequal wages for men and women in similar employment.¹²⁸ As recently as 2004, ESRI research presented to the Congress of Irish Trade Unions verified that Irish women, in the period 1997-2004, were at wage levels which were on average 15% lower than those of Irish men.¹²⁹ Hogan suggests that one reading of the political history of Church and State would be "to relegate women to the periphery".¹³⁰ She writes that women, despite significant advances in numerous fields, have on balance been excluded from centres of decision-making. She questions whether the lot of women, especially poor women, has improved substantially.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Sutton: 69.

¹²⁵ Enda McDonagh, "Church-State Relations in an Independent Ireland" in J.P. Mackey and E. McDonagh, *Religion and Politics*: 41-63 at 53-55.

¹²⁶ McDonagh: 53.

¹²⁷ Cited in McDonagh: 53.

¹²⁸ Pat O Connor, *Emerging Voices: Women in Contemporary Irish Society* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1998) 1.

¹²⁹ Reported on *RTE News*, 08/03/04.

¹³⁰ L. Hogan, "Occupying a Precarious Position: Women in Culture and Church in Ireland" in D. Lane (ed.) *New Century New Society*: 140-148 at 141.

¹³¹ See also Emer Smith, "Labour Market Structures and Women's Employment in the Republic of Ireland"; Ethel Crowley, "Making a Difference? Female Employment and Multinationals in the Republic of Ireland" and Wendy Richards, "Behind Closed Doors: Homeworkers in Ireland", in Byrne and Leonard: 63-80; 81-96 and 127-140, respectively.

Certain developments in respect of women's rights and questions of access are noteworthy, however. The government's establishment of the Council for the Status for Women in the late 1950's and the establishment of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960's are cases in point. Mc Donagh writes that the "symbolic climax to the development of women's rights in Ireland came with the election in 1990 of the first woman President of Ireland, Mary Robinson".¹³² Despite these advances, Pat O Connor points out that Irish women are still significantly under-represented in the political system, at the higher echelons of the economic system and in the institutional church structure.¹³³ Moreover, they are the more likely than men to suffer from poverty.¹³⁴ In line with this viewpoint, CORI records the following statistics pertaining to Irish women for the year 1995 (the beginning of my research period):

- 274,000 adult women (as against 224,000 men) lived below the poverty line (1987);
- 463,000 women were dependent on social welfare and social welfare payments which reinforced dependant roles for women, since the woman was often not the direct recipient;
- Women had a three times higher risk of malnourishment than men in lower socio-economic groups;
- Participation by women, aged 15-40, in employment outside the home was one of the lowest in Europe (33% compared to the EU average of 42%);
- Women's average hourly wage was 68% that of men, and
- Ireland is the lowest in Europe in its attitude of confidence in women in certain Occupations - bus driver, barrister, surgeon, public representative, etc.¹³⁵

The CORI analysis of gender and poverty in the Irish context, in the publication *Women, Income and Poverty* (1995), suggests that this situation of structural injustice is maintained by the value system of Irish society, particularly values around economics and patriarchy, embedded in certain widespread myths.¹³⁶ CORI argues for an alternative form of income distribution - a basic minimum income (BIG). The organisation also argues for an integrated tax and social welfare system, more equitable entitlements in marriage, and childcare facilitation. This identification of the gendered dimension of inequality in Irish society in regard to work

¹³² McDonagh: 54.

¹³³ O Connor: 1. ESRI research presented to the Congress of Irish Trade Unions (2004) verified that Irish women, in the period 1997-2004, were at wage levels which were on average 15% lower than those of Irish men.

¹³⁴ CORI, *Women; Income and Poverty*. Leaflet 1, c. 1995.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Their analysis includes examples of such myths, such as: 'poverty is due to misuse of income, the solution to which is charity'; 'economic status is due to personal achievement'; 'men are more intellectual and rational and therefore their contribution to society is more valuable and their decision-making more reliable'; 'men should be free of household chores so that they can be involved in public affairs which is more suited to their gifts of nature' etc.

and economics is of particular significance to my research (chapter three). Social welfare is a case in point. Byrne and Leonard argue that women are not given full citizenship rights within the confines of the Irish social system since, unlike men, they are not commonly treated as individuals but as dependants upon a male breadwinner (mother, wife, daughter, etc).¹³⁷ This combined with the haphazard development of Irish social policy and the inadequacy of policy-making processes have impacted negatively upon Irish women, as, for example, the impoverishment of Irish women as a direct material effect of such a welfare arrangement.¹³⁸ A further gendered aspect of social security is the fact that insurance benefits are based on contribution records and women are often unable to build up a sequential record similar to men's because of pregnancy and movement in and out of the labour market. Leane and Kiely further argue that despite the "new right rhetoric" regarding lone mothers - that they get pregnant for benefits and housing - the poverty they experience is real.¹³⁹ They point to the inadequacy of welfare entitlements and to the fact that lone mothers are more likely to be suffering economic hardship, poor housing and more limited choice over employment. This discussion is highly pertinent to Fatima life.

A comment on gender issues pertaining to education is also required, since this arises as a significant dimension of my own research. While traditionally in Ireland, as elsewhere, males had greater access to education, the pattern is now reversed. Statistics relating to gender and Irish education at the time of research (1991-2004) indicated that, while at primary level there was equal access to education (96%), at second level females were in the majority (89% females as opposed to 84% males) and this majority is even wider at the level of continuing education (66% female and 51% male).¹⁴⁰ As mature students in higher education, women were also in the clear majority (62.47% as opposed to 37.53%).¹⁴¹ This pattern of increasing access of women to educational services is somewhat reflected in Fatima life where community-based

¹³⁷ Byrne and Leonard: 141, also Nicola Yeates, "Gender and the Development of the Irish Social Welfare System" in Byrne and Leonard: 145-166.

¹³⁸ On the historical development of the Irish Welfare System see John H. Goldthorpe and Christopher T. Whelan (eds.) *The Development of Industrial Society in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Mel Cousins, *The Irish Welfare System: Law and Social Policy*, (Dublin: The Roundhall Press, 1992).

¹³⁹ Maire Leane and Elizabeth Kiely, "Single Lone Motherhood- Reality Versus Rhetoric" in Byrne and Leonard: 296-310.

¹⁴⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "Statistics in Brief: Education in Ireland", (Canada, 2004) http://www.uis.unesco.org/profile/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=3720: 1, viewed 19/07/06.

¹⁴¹ Significantly, also the Department of Education and Science established a dedicated equality unit to education, under the National Development Plan (NDP) in June 2001. See National Development Plan. NDP Gender Equality Unit (Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform) "Databank of statistics on women and men in Ireland, related particularly to National Development Plan policy areas, compiled in 2002" (2002) <http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie/statistics/2002/topic/topics5.html>, viewed 19/07/06.

education is an integral part of the lives of many women. Bríd Connolly writes that by community education is meant adult education which is located in the community, whether the community is geographic or issue based; it adopts a “person centred approach” and seeks to impart knowledge and skills which the community needs in order to become agents of change.¹⁴² It is effective precisely because it is relevant to life. Connolly, however, raises provocative questions with respect to community education and gender in the Irish context, which mirrors the experience of Fatima women (chapter three):

... why are women, generally, not achieving an equal share in the benefits and power from this social movement? Are the discourses insufficient to address gender inequality? Or is the practice of community education and development inconsistent with the emancipation of women?¹⁴³

Without a doubt Irish women have had a high profile in Community Development education in the last decade.¹⁴⁴ But a closer analysis of the impact of community development reveals that women comprise the vast majority of *voluntary* participants in community education and development and do not, as a rule, access the more powerful positions.¹⁴⁵ Such was the case in Fatima where resident women were not in managerial roles. AONTAS (the Irish national umbrella organization which promotes adult learning) confirms this view.¹⁴⁶ Connolly concludes that emancipation movements, *which do not have a specific gender dimension*, are doomed to reproduce the status quo.¹⁴⁷

1.3.3 THE IRISH CHURCH AND STATE: CONFLICTING VALUES?

The Republic of Ireland is a predominantly Roman Catholic state. There are currently 4.5 m baptised Catholics out of a population of just under 6 million. Historically, the moral theology of the Irish Church has significantly informed the value system of Irish society, largely because of the exceptionally close links between Church and State since the foundation of the State in the early 1920's.¹⁴⁸ The Catholic ethos was legitimated by successive Irish governments, a

¹⁴² Bríd Connolly, “Women, Community Education and Development - Liberation or Domesticity” in Byrne and Leonard: 40-57.

¹⁴³ Connolly: 41.

¹⁴⁴ See Carol Coulter, *The Hidden Tradition: Feminism and Nationalism in Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.: 55.

¹⁴⁸ For an overview of the historic and contemporary relationship between the Irish Church and Irish State see James P. Mackey and Enda McDonagh (eds.) *Religion and Politics*; also Vincent Twomey, *The End of Irish Catholicism?* (Dublin: Veritas, 2003) and Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002). For a

phenomenon considered by Louise Fuller to be “one of the most outstanding features of Irish Catholic culture in the post-Independence era.”¹⁴⁹ It must, however, be noted that a most significant destabilizing factor with respect to the Irish Church is the relentless media revelations of Church scandals over the past fifteen years. Given its direct relevance for Fatima (chapter three) a summary word is in order. The more prominent Irish Church scandals include: 1) the exposure of both Bishop Casey (Bishop of Galway) and Fr. Michael Cleary (a nationally respected media presenter) as having conducted illicit affairs and having fathered children, 2) the sexual abuse of minors by paedophile priests; the first prominent public case being that of Fr. Brendan Smith (1994), 3) the physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by Religious involved in State owned and Religious run educational establishments, including industrial and reform schools, 4) the emotional and physical abuses of women associated with the “Magdalene laundries”, run by the female Religious congregations, such as the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy, on behalf of the State,¹⁵⁰ 5) the failure of the Irish Bishops, most notably the Archbishop of Dublin, Desmond O Connell, and Bishop Comisky, Bishop of Ferns, to protect victims of abuse who had made formal complaints, hence the *Ferns Inquiry*, 2005,¹⁵¹ and 6) the overly legalistic responses by the Irish Bishops and Religious Congregations to victims of abuse in wake of the public exposures.¹⁵² That these scandals are directly linked with decreased respect for the Church has been verified by research: Landsdowne Market Research (Jan. 1995) indicated that 42% of Irish Catholics claimed to have decreased respect for the Church and 17% indicated a personal loss of belief in light of the Brendan Smith revelations. Hogan sums up the overall effect:

(the) history of Catholicism in twentieth Century Ireland has been radically rewritten in the 1990's with the truth about the church's role in maintaining such a brutal system being told. Indeed this changes completely and forever our received understandings and interpretations of 'Catholic Ireland' ”.¹⁵³

theological analysis of Church-State relations in Ireland see E. MacDonagh, *The Making of Disciples*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982) 175-188.

¹⁴⁹ Fuller: 3.

¹⁵⁰ The Magdalene Asylums or 'laundries' were Roman Catholic religious-run and state-funded institutions for women who were either abandoned and/or considered “fallen” - prostitutes or single mothers.

¹⁵¹ Government Publications, *The Ferns Report* (Dublin: Irish Stationary Office, 2005). The Report, published subsequent to the governmental inquiry (*The Ferns Inquiry*, 1995) documents over 100 allegations of sexual abuse against 21 priests in the Irish Catholic diocese of Ferns.

¹⁵² Andrew Pierce, “Christianity- A Credible Presence?” in D.Lane (ed.) *New Century New Society*: 11-17 at 12.

¹⁵³ Linda Hogan, “Occupying a Precarious Position: Women in Culture and Church in Ireland” in D. Lane (ed.) *New Century New Society*: 140-148.

Despite this notable decline in respect for and support of the Church, the Church continues to exert significant influence in Irish society, not least in the fields of educational and health.

1.3.3.1 Irish Educational Services: Centres of Moral Control?

Historically, the Catholic Church has played a huge role with respect to the Irish education system, to the extent that, even today, over 90% of schools are directly under its control while also funded by the State. At primary school level the Boards of Management are chaired by clergy and teachers are responsible for the religious instruction and sacramental preparation of pupils. A majority of second level schools (most of which were originally founded by religious congregations) have religious education as a core aspect of the curriculum and this aspect of education is subject to inspections independent from the State, by 'diocesan advisors' appointed by the bishop of the diocese. Research, by Michael Breen, published in 2001, indicated that just two years earlier 1,669 Irish religious were engaged in the education fulltime, while 519 were engaged part-time.¹⁵⁴ Of these, over 1,200 religious were working fulltime in primary and secondary schools in the state.¹⁵⁵ A trend towards increased involvement in community, adult and third-level education was also in evidence.¹⁵⁶

John Whyte and John Coolahan independently highlight the contentiousness of the issue of control of educational establishments prior to and since the establishment of the State.¹⁵⁷ Emphasizing the different values at stake, Coolahan writes that, while politicisation and socialisation were among the State aims in regard to schooling, the Churches viewed schools as vital areas of religious and moral control and influence.¹⁵⁸ The Church of this period is described by Dermot Lane as "defensive, exclusivist and introverted".¹⁵⁹ The Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners of the Board of Education (1812) called for a unified and a mixed denominational educational system at primary level (National School). This was strongly opposed by the Church, to the extent that by the mid-nineteenth century the national school system had become a distinctly denominational system. In 1884, the state conceded to the provision of funding for denominational teacher training colleges. In October 1921 the Catholic Clerical Managers Association (CCMA) issued a statement that insisted upon the rights of

¹⁵⁴ Michael J. Breen (ed.), *A Fire in the Forest*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2001) 40-41.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 41.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Whyte: 21. See also John Coolahan, "Church-State Relations in Primary and Secondary Education" in Mackey and McDonagh: 132-151; Pádraig Hogan and Kevin Williams, *The Future of Religion in Irish Education* (Dublin: Veritas, 1997) and John Macken, "Religion and Culture in Irish Society" in *Studies*, 82, Summer 1993: 13-130.

¹⁵⁸ Coolahan: 132.

¹⁵⁹ Cited in Coolahan:150.

Catholics to be educated by Catholics in Catholic establishments in the new State.¹⁶⁰ This was not contested by State politicians; minister Eoin Mac Neill formally stated that the role of the State was one of aiding and assisting agencies such as the churches in the provision of schooling.¹⁶¹ In an address at a Catholic education conference in Louvain, in 1931, Rev. Professor T. Corcoran presented an overview of Irish education: Catholic ownership of Catholic primary schools was secured and the Catholic secondary schools were largely the property of the pastoral clergy and of Religious Orders.¹⁶² By 1937 articles of the Constitution pertaining to educational rights were “in alignment with Catholic moral and social teaching”.¹⁶³ This *status quo* was maintained until the late 1940’s. According to the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI), the net effect was that the Church failed to provide a prophetic, counter-cultural education, but instead acted as an agent of socialization into the values and outlook of the new State.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Lynch argues that it is the ethos of competition and ‘points’ and not a religious ethos, which is currently most pervasive in religious run secondary schools.¹⁶⁵ The implications for socio-excluded communities which are characterized by educational disadvantage are enormous. Indeed, one of the defining features of the Irish inner-city, including Fatima, is the phenomenon of educational disadvantage which is symptomatic of a fundamental inequality in the Irish education system which has its roots in the historical development of education. Lynch argues that the State fundamentally colludes with this ideology:

One of the major reasons why governments and policy makers continue to support initiatives that tinker at the edges of injustice without radically altering its pattern is undoubtedly because of the power and influence of middle class interests on educational policy in Irish society. Those who are currently benefiting handsomely from educational inequality have no reason to want to change, and, in political terms, they constitute a major interest group in Irish political and educational life.¹⁶⁶

From the sixties onwards the Department of Education sought to radically redress the Church-State imbalance in educational control and influence. As a result there were certain challenges to State initiated developments in education by the Episcopal Commission on Education, the

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*:136.

¹⁶¹ See Eoin MacNeill, “Education -The Idea of the State” in *Irish Review*, II, November 1922: 28-29.

¹⁶² Coolahan: 138.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*:140; also CORI, *Religious Congregations in Irish Education: A Role for the Future?* (Dublin: CORI, 1997) 15.

¹⁶⁵ Kathleen Lynch, *The Hidden Curriculum: Reproduction in Education, An Appraisal*. (London: Falmer, 1989).

¹⁶⁶ Kathleen Lynch, “Equality in Education” in *Studies*, Vol. 90., No. 360., Winter 2001: 401. See also Cathy Molloy, “The Leaving Cert. and Good Outcomes: Hard Work, Good Luck, or What?” in *Working Notes* Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Issue 43, June 2002: 15-18.

Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools (CMCSS) and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS).¹⁶⁷ More recently it is argued that the earlier defensiveness of the Church regarding the control of education, and its consistent failure to recognize minority views and rights pertaining to education, has given way to a somewhat greater willingness to collaborate with partners in education and exhibit a respect for the rights and values of people of other denominations, and those of no denomination, as well as for the increasing pluralism of Irish society.¹⁶⁸ Coolahan suggests that this shift in values is due to such factors as: 1) the greater openness to Church-State relations as prompted by in Vatican II, 2) the diminished numbers of Religious personnel, hence the practical necessity to transfer schools to the care of lay principles and Trustees, as facilitated by CORI, and 3) recent church scandals, hence the diminished public trust in religious run schools.¹⁶⁹ This viewpoint is corroborated by research undertaken by CORI.¹⁷⁰

1.3.3.2 Irish Health Services: The Prevailing Ethos?

The historical link between the Church and the Irish Health Services is both unique and indisputable. As with education, the vast majority of Irish hospitals were founded by the religious orders under the direction and patronage of the bishop. Notable examples include the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and St. Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin, both of which maintain a Catholic ethos.¹⁷¹ Research published in 2001 indicated that a total of 809 religious were involved in health care in the state fulltime while a further 163 were working part-time in this field.¹⁷² Ruth Barrington, in an article entitled "Catholic Influences on the Health Services" provides a comprehensive account of the Church-State relationship with regard to health.¹⁷³ She writes that the Catholic hierarchy and Religious Orders took a minimal interest in health policy; instead they began to respond to the pressing practical social need of health care from the 1830's. The Daughters of Charity and St. John of God Brothers also founded hospitals for the mentally ill. Church-State tensions were to emerge subsequently. Significantly, from the perspective of dominant values in the State, when the then government sought to introduce medical advances early in the twentieth century, the Catholic Church continued to exert enormous influence. Examples include:

¹⁶⁷ CMCSS later renamed itself as the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI).

¹⁶⁸ Coolahan: 147-148

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ CORI, *Religious Congregations in Irish Education*: 28.

¹⁷¹ Among exceptions is the Rotunda Maternity Hospital (Dublin) with its rotellant origins and ethos.

¹⁷² Breen, *A Fire in the Forest*: 41-42.

¹⁷³ Ruth Barrington, "Catholic Influences on the Health Services" in Mackey and McDonagh: 152-165.

- the papal encyclicals *Casti Connubi* (1930) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) both of which impacted directly upon state health policy;
- following representations from the hierarchy, the government passed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1935, which banned the importation and sale of contraceptives;
- Catholic hospitals were founded, including Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children and the Bons Secours private hospital in Dublin;
- the Catholic Church refused to support the Anti-Tuberculosis League which had strong Protestant involvement; and
- the Catholic Church had a general suspicion of medical practitioners training in Trinity College, Dublin, since it had a Protestant ethos.¹⁷⁴

In the late 1940's the State pro-actively sought increased control of, and proposed radical changes to, the health services. The Health Act (1947) set out to tackle such significant problems as the challenge of TB, improved care for women in childbirth, children's health and the provision of medical services for poorer members of society. The hierarchy opposed this move, fearing state interference in Catholic run medical institutions. Despite this protest, the core of the health reforms was achieved by the government by the mid-fifties, under the direction of the Minister of Health. The Catholic Church, however, continued to exert its influence, most notably in the area of family planning. Theologian Patrick Hannon points out that right from the foundation of the state, because of pressure exerted by the Catholic Church, there were laws governing the availability of contraceptives, as, for example, the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1935) which prohibited the importation, sale and manufacture of contraceptives.¹⁷⁵ This position was retained until the 1970's. It was then legally challenged by Mary McGee in the High Court and the Supreme Court, in the period 1972-73, on the ground that it infringed her right to marital privacy. While the High Court challenge failed, the appeal to the Supreme Court ruled that the ban on importing contraceptives was in fact unconstitutional. In 1979 the Health (Family Planning) Act was passed which reversed the earlier ban. This was further amended in 1993.

1.3.3.3 Laws Governing Abortion

Currently, largely because of the ambiguity of its legal status and also because the Irish Medical Council considers it malpractice for doctors to perform abortions, abortion is not practised in

¹⁷⁴ Barrington: 154-157.

¹⁷⁵ Patrick Hannon, "Legislation and Contraception" in Mackey and McDonagh: 119-131 at 121.

the Irish state. Traditionally Irish women have travelled to Britain to procure abortions. This remains the case. Estimates of such cases are difficult to establish, however records in the 1990's indicated that anywhere between 1,500 and 10,000 Irish women travel annually. Historically, law prohibiting abortion was in place in Ireland prior to independence, since the 1861 Offences against the Person Act (Sections 58 and 59). In 1967, however, abortion was legalised in Britain, after which time anti-abortion lobby groups began to mobilize in Ireland with a view to the constitutional banning of abortion. The rapidly increasing availability of abortion in many Western societies was a significant factor in this development; even traditionally Catholic countries (Italy and Spain) had by now made legal provisions for abortion. The Women's Right to Choose group had pressed for legal changes in Ireland. In 1983 an Irish referendum led to the amendment of the constitution. Termed the "Pro Life Amendment", it "asserted that the foetus had an explicit *right* to life equal to that of the pregnant woman, with the Irish state guaranteeing to 'vindicate' that right.¹⁷⁶ Court injunctions issued in 1988 and 1990 barred family planning groups and student groups from providing abortion information and counselling. The right to travel to procure an abortion was also legally in question.

While proponents of the 1983 amendment argued that this constitutional change would prohibit abortion in the state, subsequent interpretations of the amendment challenged that position. In 1992 a landmark case (*Attorney General v. X*) known as 'the X case' debated the issue whether a suicidal minor who was a statutory rape victim, and who became pregnant, could leave Ireland for the purposes of a lawful abortion. In this case the Supreme Court allowed for abortion in the case of a real risk to the mother's *life* (as distinct to health). In 1993 two constitutional amendments were added allowing for the right to provide information and the right to travel. However legal ambiguities remained due to the government's failure to enact legislation following the X case, as was demonstrated in a second landmark case, the C case, where a 13 year old girl, pregnant as a result of rape, and in the care of the Eastern Health Board, sought permission to leave the jurisdiction to procure a legal abortion. The High Court ruled in this case that, since the girl was in risk of taking her life, she had the legal right to an abortion in Ireland and, in the absence of such a service within the state, she could travel for this purpose to another jurisdiction. There followed a decade of debate and discontent. In

¹⁷⁶ For a summary position of abortion in Ireland see Irish Family Planning Association, "Abortion Law in Ireland- a brief summary" <http://www.ifpa.ie/abortion/hist.html>, 1-6, viewed 19/06/2006. A more detailed treatment of the history of abortion law is provided in James Kingston and A. Whelan, *Abortion and the Law*. Dublin: Round Hall: Sweet and Maxwell, 1997.

March 2002 a second referendum took place (the Twenty Fifth Amendment), subsequent to the publication of the government's Green Paper on abortion, which was defeated.¹⁷⁷

Irish moral theologian, David Smith, highlights the power of the Church in Irish society by examining the case of the 1983 constitutional referendum on abortion.¹⁷⁸ This highly emotive referendum was preceded by a most divisive campaign, involving politicians, medical professionals, church personnel and the Irish farmers association (IFA), among others.¹⁷⁹ The Catholic Church, both the hierarchy and Catholic lay organizations, played a significant role in directing the vote.¹⁸⁰ One such lay organization, the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC), came into existence in 1981, largely as a result of concerns of, and meetings held by the Irish Catholic Doctors Guild and a conference of the World Federation of Doctors who Respect Human Life. PLAC's initial aim was to pressurize Government not only to make abortion illegal (which it already was under the Offences against the Person Act, 1861) but also *unconstitutional*, therefore irreversible by any Act of Parliament or decision of the Supreme Court. It exerted its pressure just before the General Election (1981) and quickly gained political support. It was therefore already in a strong position to exert influence at the 1983 referendum on abortion. It was successful in its campaign since it used thousands of committed lay Catholics throughout Ireland to canvass for the amendment. It also encouraged the clergy to promote its case through sermons. It mobilised the rural vote and, furthermore, presented its case forcibly in more conservative Catholic media and newsprint, including *The Irish Catholic*. Fuller writes that the "eighth amendment to the constitution was passed by 66.45 per cent, after a particularly acrimonious and divisive campaign".¹⁸¹

Smith and Fuller both indicate that the hierarchy also played a significant role.¹⁸² Statements pertaining to Church teaching regarding abortion were made regularly prior to the referendum, including a collective statement which asserted that, according to moral law, abortion was "wrong in all circumstances". The statement insisted that there was a responsibility to vote, and while it referred to the role of the conscience, it ambiguously called for the support of the amendment, linking an anti-amendment stance to a pro-abortion stance: "defeat of the

¹⁷⁷ The defeat was due to a number of reasons, including the complexity of the wording and the fact that it defined human life as beginning *after implantation* as opposed to conception, which proponents of the sanctity of life ethic strongly opposed.

¹⁷⁸ David Smith. "Truth and Communications", Lecture Notes, The Milltown Institute, 1997.

¹⁷⁹ Smith: 79-82 at 81.

¹⁸⁰ Intentional abortion is not accepted in the Roman Catholic tradition. The tradition has, however, allowed for indirect abortion, as, for example, where the abortion is a regrettable and unavoidable result of the removal of a cancerous womb or procedures carried out in an ectopic pregnancy. The principle of double effect is appealed to in this case.

¹⁸¹ Fuller: 240.

¹⁸² Smith: 79-82 and Fuller: 240-241.

amendment could well be represented as a victory for the abortion cause". Moreover, in certain dioceses Bishops had their own letters read out in churches, urging a 'yes' vote. In the Dublin Archdiocese, the Archbishop, Dr. Ryan, for example, had a pastoral letter read at all masses on the Sunday prior to the election urging support of the amendment. Pro-life movement speakers were also invited to speak in many Churches nationwide. Fuller also suggests that Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland (1979) and his warnings at that time against permissiveness in Irish society motivated lay organizations to organise their various campaigns."¹⁸³ The Referendum was held in September 1983, with the result that the Constitution should be amended.

1.3.3.4 Marriage and Family Law: the Divorce Debates (1986 and 1995)

There have been notable changes in marital trends in Ireland, as in many other Western countries, in recent decades, including: 1) a reduction in the number of marriages, 2) significant increases in births outside of marriage, 3) a greater acceptance of unmarried mothers in society, 4) the increased provision for unmarried mothers by the State, and 5) women's increasing assertiveness in cases of domestic violence and marital breakdown, including the recourse to law.¹⁸⁴ Garret Fitzgerald (former Irish Prime Minister) speaks of such change as a "demographic revolution".¹⁸⁵ He suggests that contributory factors to this change included the growth of individualism, the availability of contraception, the movement of women into the labour force, increased education (hence opportunities) and social and economic pressures against marriage, including positive disincentives to marriage in the income transfer system, income tax and social welfare.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps the most significant change relating to family was the adoption of divorce, by the State, in 1995, where Church-state tensions were clearly in evidence. Since 1995 Ireland has constitutionally provided for the dissolution of marriage (divorce). Statistics provided by The Courts Service of Ireland indicate that, in 1997 a total of 93 divorces were granted by the state; by 2004 the figure had reached 3,305.¹⁸⁷ This situation was facilitated by an amendment to article 41.3.2 in the constitution, allowing for divorce in certain circumstances.¹⁸⁸ Prior to 1995 an absolute ban on divorce had been present in the

¹⁸³ Fuller: 240.

¹⁸⁴ Corish: 149.

¹⁸⁵ Garret Fitzgerald, "Marriage in Ireland Today" in D. Lane (ed.) *New Century New Society*: 73-92.

¹⁸⁶ Fitzgerald: 90.

¹⁸⁷ The Courts Service of Ireland, "Statistics. Trend statistics for: Divorce orders granted." (n.d.) <http://www.courts.ie/statistics.nsf/5bbf90ec6532217380256e1500519da7/bcd1b92dea> , viewed 19/06/2006. More recent figures were not available at the time of writing.

¹⁸⁸ These circumstances include: 1) the spouses must have lived apart for a period of or periods amounting to four years during the previous five years; 2) there is no reasonable prospect of reconciliation; 3) proper provisions have been provided by the Court for spouses/children and 4) conditions prescribed by law are complied with.

constitution since its adoption in 1937, a position which reflected the Roman Catholic allegiances of the drafters of the constitution.¹⁸⁹ By the eighties this prohibition was seen by many as discriminatory; the Divorce Action Group, for example, was established to campaign for constitutional change. In 1986, an attempt was made, by the then coalition Fine Gael/Labour government, to remove the ban on divorce by means of a referendum. The proposal was rejected. (63.1% voted against it). In 1986 the Anti-Divorce Campaign (ADC) was established. In 1995 a second referendum attempt by the Fine Gael government, was made to remove the ban on divorce. This time the proposal was carried by a slim margin (50.3% for and 49.7% against). This 'Fifteenth Amendment' of the Irish constitution (1995), approved by referendum, was signed into law on the following year through the 1996 Family Law (Divorce) Act.¹⁹⁰ Up until 1995 marital breakdown was dealt with by 1) either a state or ecclesiastical nullity decree (or both) or 2) a judicial separation under the Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act, 1989. The 1995 repeal of the ban on divorce therefore marked a radical change.

The divorce referenda held in 1986 and in 1995, which sought to delete the constitutional ban on divorce, were enormously divisive in terms of Church - State relations. This reflects Linda Hogan's argument that the "unique intertwining of the Irish State and the Catholic Church is nowhere more evident than in relation to marriage and the family."¹⁹¹ In the case of the divorce referendum (1986) debate, the primary conflict in values included a concern for the rights of minorities and the value of pluralism in the State versus the value of the common good, strongly advocated by the Church. Hogan suggests some evidence of an increasing openness to religious, as distinct from moral, pluralism on the part of the Church.¹⁹² The New Ireland Forum (1984) brought the issue of the Catholic Church's stance on divorce to the fore. The Catholic Church insisted that it did not seek to have the moral teaching of the Church become the criterion for constitutional change or to have Catholic principles enshrined in civil law. However, in his submission to the Forum, Dr. Cathal Daly, Bishop of Down and Connor, insisted upon the right of the Catholic Church to inform the consciences of the Irish public in relation to the moral consequences of forthcoming legislation.¹⁹³ The Catholic Church insisted that, were it to oppose the repeal of the ban on divorce, it would argue on the basis of 'harm to

¹⁸⁹ It must be noted that this position was also supported by senior members of the Anglican Church of Ireland at the time of the writing of the constitution.

¹⁹⁰ See Geoffrey Shannon, *Family Law Practitioner: Divorce: The Changing Landscape of Divorce in Ireland*. (Dublin: Round Hall, 2001).

¹⁹¹ Linda Hogan, "Interpreting the Divorce Debates: Church and State in Transition" in Mackey and McDonagh: 107-118 at 107.

¹⁹² Hogan: 111.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*: 112

society' and the 'common good' as opposed to the enshrinement of Church teaching in civil law.¹⁹⁴

The Church did in fact strongly oppose the repeal of the ban on divorce. In 1986, in order to counteract government proposals, the hierarchy issued a series of statements and a fifteen page pastoral letter, *Marriage, Family and Divorce*, of which one million copies were distributed nationwide. The Irish Bishops at that time insisted that what was at stake was a moral issue, as opposed to the merely political. It was feared that the proposed amendment would weaken marriage and the family. Bishop Cassidy of Clonfert, then spokesman for the hierarchy, insisted that the bishops were not telling the faithful how to vote on the matter; conscience was to be the final arbiter. He even intimated that a faithful Catholic could vote in conscience in favour of the removal of the ban on divorce, without incurring guilt. However, individual bishops interpreted the bishops' collective statement differently. For example, with just a week to go before polling, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. McNamara, stated that the view of some Catholics that the introduction of divorce could be morally good found no warrant or justification in Church teaching. A similar pattern was observable in the 1995 divorce referendum. While not quite instructing the Catholic population on how to vote, the hierarchy and individual bishops exerted enormous moral power regarding the vote in its interpretation of the conscientious decision in light of Church teaching and authority. As the debate progressed the Church in fact increasingly sidelined the stated values of pluralism and minority rights in favour of Catholic moral teaching, promoted in the contexts of the least harm and the common good. This is a significant point, since, taking pluralism in its broadest understanding, cultural and socio-economic differences regarding accessibility to and the practice of marriage, were not aired as part of the overall Church-State debate on marriage and divorce. I will later argue that this is a significant omission from the perspective of the inner-city where marriage is not culturally normative (chapter five).

1.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I describe the context of my research at both the micro level of the Fatima estate and the macro level of Irish society. This provides a necessary background for my later explorations of Fatima values systems and moral practice and my critique of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context. In part one of this chapter I demonstrate that the Fatima community is 'socially excluded' from the dominant group in Irish society at geographical, historical, socio-cultural and religious levels. Fatima emerges as a community that experiences

¹⁹⁴ For an analysis of the common good in this context, see Hogan, "Interpreting the Divorce Debates": 112-114.

significant geographical and cultural isolation as well as widespread discrimination and stigmatization from wider society. Fatima is also shown to have minimal access to culturally relevant education, to adequate health services, to employment opportunities and to decision-making in the wider Irish political forum. Moreover, the estate is shown to have a long history of poverty management and an endemic drugs culture, both of which play a vital role in shaping the value system of its residents (chapter three). A striking aspect of this community is that it has pro-actively demanded adequate housing and protection from its widespread exposure to a threatening drugs culture in a sustained protest over two decades, resulting in the current regeneration of the estate. With respect to ‘family’ the lone parent household is shown to be the predominant family unit and new-borns are clearly welcome into the community, irrespective of circumstances of birth. While significant religious alienation from the official churches is demonstrated, there is evidence of popular devotion, at a personal level, and a vibrant communal spirituality, which incorporates both symbols and actions of resistance to death-dealing forces within the life of the estate. A lively sense of community spirit has characterised the history of the estate and there are significant indicators that a communal solidarity not only exists currently but shapes the very moral character and practice of residents.

In part two of this chapter I turn to wider Irish society in order to identify and examine dominant values systems. My research indicates that, despite significant advances in the state economy in recent decades, Ireland is now a “three tiered society” with socially excluded communities such as Fatima in the third tier. This third tier is characterised by “relative poverty”, which is systemic in origin. On the question of gender, Irish women have been historically denied access to education, employment opportunities, income, public roles and equal participation in church and state. I argue in this chapter that, as women classified within the category of “relative poverty”, Fatima women have been historically, and remain currently, *doubly oppressed* on the bases of sex and class. In this discussion I also highlight the often fraught historical relationship between the Irish Church and state; a relationship which has significantly shaped the dominant value system in Irish society. Acknowledging the negative impact of clerical scandals, the continued exercise of the Church’s power, in the spheres of education, health, sexuality and the family, were clearly demonstrated.

Having provided an account of the overall *context* of my research I now wish to address the question of research *methodology*. In the following chapter I provide a detailed discussion of the more significant theoretical, practical and ethical considerations encountered in the multi-method approach adopted in my research.

CHAPTER TWO:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: PRACTICAL, THEORETICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RELATION TO A STUDY OF FATIMA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines and provides a theoretical basis for my research methodology. To begin I provide a summary outline of the research methods employed, including: 1) the multi-method ethnographic approach employed in my primary research, 2) the thematic approach adopted in the analysis of primary research data, and 3) the frequency and content analyses employed in my case study of Fatima.¹ A theoretical exploration and justification of my research methodology follows. This exploration specifically addresses qualitative approaches pertaining to culture and ethnography, as well as approaches to narrative and discourse. Both are defining aspects of my research. Feminist insights are also examined, but not with the purpose of adopting a feminist methodology *per se*. Rather, my engagement with feminist insight is for the purpose of locating insight into the area of gender and research, which is relevant to my research interests (chapter three). Finally, I provide both a theoretical and a self-reflexive account of the ethical dimensions of my research.

My intention throughout this discussion is to illustrate how critical reflection upon relevant interdisciplinary sources pertaining to research methodology has provided the means of formulating and justifying a research strategy appropriate for Fatima, and for my research goals. As discussed in the introduction, the term which I have coined for the methodological approach or model, adopted in this research, is the *cultural themes process model*. This term, the meaning of which will become clear in this chapter, refers to the inductive, organic and community-sensitive ethnographic process which I employ, and which I later argue is replicable in other circumstances (chapter seven).

¹ For a comprehensive overview of case study methodology see Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manin & Keith Morrison. *Research Methods in Education*. 5th ed. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000, rep. 2003:181-190, and for a comprehensive account of ethnography see Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999).

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: A MULTI-METHOD APPROACH

As indicated in the introduction to this work, this research revolves around a Dublin-based, inner city, ‘community case study’.² It combines the processes of ethnographic procedures and grounded theory, in order to document and explore the value system and moral practice of Fatima. As a case study, it concerns itself with a “single instance of a bounded system” where the “complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance” are explored.³ In line with foundational principles of grounded theory, as articulated by Glaser and Strauss and also by Gillham, there is no *a priori* grand or meta-theory at the outset of the research. Instead, an inductive process is used to work from experience to theory (or from empirical observation to theoretical analysis) within the specific context of Fatima.⁴

This case study is regarded as a pioneering or foundational case study. Subsequent ‘multiple case studies’, within different inner city contexts, are anticipated. This is necessary for the purpose of “analytical generalization”; a concept, examined by Robson, which entails an on-going refinement of an original analysis, in light of newly emerging observations and patterns.⁵ The dynamic nature of this case study presented numerous challenges, not uncommon in the grounded theory approach. Charlotte Aull Davies speaks of the “often chaotic and unplanned nature of research” that has to be integrated into an on-going analysis and which requires the ability to respond flexibly to situations arising from the field and outside of it.⁶ Such was my experience in Fatima, not unexpectedly, since a characteristic feature of the life of the community is unpredictability. One way of overcoming this challenge is to adopt a flexible, ‘multi-method’ or ‘multi-dimensional’ approach to research, as indicated above. More specifically, the methods of data collection in my research included: 1) immersion and participant observation; 2) semi-structured ethnographic interviews with twenty two women residents; 3) five focus group interviews, including three on-going creative workshops, and, 4) research questionnaires conducted with eighteen non-resident workers in the estate. The research *analysis* processes included: 1) a thematic analysis of data collected by primary research, based on cultural themes (chapter three), and 2) a dialogical comparative analysis between my research findings and both *mujerista* and womanist theologies (chapter four), and 3) both a frequency analysis and a content

² The ‘community case study’ is one of a number of case study typologies. See Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioners-Researcher*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) 181.

³ Cohen *et al.*:181.

⁴ Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, (Chicago: Aldine, 1967) and Bill Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods* (London/New York: Continuum, 2000) 2.

⁵ Robson:183.

⁶ Aull Davies: 27.

analysis of the Irish Bishops' pastoral letters, 1969-June 2005, and of theological articles published in four selected Irish theological journals, 1995-June 2005, (chapters five and six). I will consider each method in brief, keeping the relevance for Fatima to the fore in my discussion.

2.2.1 Immersion and Participant Observation

The ethnographic processes of immersion in a culture and participant observation proved integral to my research.⁷ Daily exposure to community life placed me in a unique position to observe the community unobtrusively at first hand. I came gradually to understand the dynamic and dialectical relationship between the experience of immersion in a culture and the process of interpretation, as described by James Clifford.⁸ This process entailed an on-going critical reflection on my own research location as 'insider/outsider'. Accounts of 'insider/outsider' perspectives, attributed originally to Raymond L. Gold, are prevalent in the literature.⁹ Kim Knott, for example, provides a comprehensive account of insider/outsider (*emic/etic*) perspectives in the history of the study of religions.¹⁰ She employs the terminology, "experience-near" and "experience-far", to distinguish between the different levels of participation and plots on a continuum the range of positions which can be adopted between 'outsider' and 'insider' perspectives, namely:

- 1) the 'complete observer', who seeks to remain detached from the research community;
- 2) the 'observer-as-participant', who engages in limited participation,
- 3) the 'participant as observer', who joins the research community and overtly conducts research, and
- 4) the 'complete participant', who is a member of the researched community.¹¹

Norman Denzin similarly speaks of the 'participant as observer', suggesting that such a person adopts an overt role, making his or her presence known to the group.¹² This involves an attempt to form a series of relationships with the subjects such that they serve as both respondents and informants.¹³ Morrison, in teasing out these perspectives, introduces the further term 'participant comprehension'/'participant introspection', in which case the researcher has come to comprehend

⁷ See May: 132-156, Murray Morrison, *Methods in Sociology*, (London/New York: 1986) 42-55 and Charlotte Aull Davies: 67-93.

⁸ James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" in Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (eds.) *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*. (London/New York: Longman, 1995) 257-283 at 266.

⁹ Raymond L. Gold, "Roles in sociological field observations" in *Social Forces*, 36, 1958: 217-223.

¹⁰ Kim Knott, "Insider/outsider perspectives" in J. Hinnells (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religions*, London: Routledge: 243-258 at 243-246.

¹¹ Knott: 246-254.

¹² Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Art in Sociology* (London: Butterworths, 1978) 188.

¹³ Cited in May: 140. See also Denzin, 188.

that which was once incoherent and fieldwork details no longer have to be diligently recorded or memorized.¹⁴ Instead, the researcher reacts as would a community member to interactions observed. In fact, the researcher has so internalised the native role that by thinking about their own experiences they are able to gain necessary insights.

Intimate insertion into community life allowed me privileged access to aspects of life that would otherwise have remained hidden from me. My experience in this regard was similar to that of the researcher Karen McCarthy Brown, as described in her work *Mama Lola: A Voudou Priestess in Brooklyn*.¹⁵ Significantly, initiation into the world of Voudou world enabled McCarthy Brown to access unique and deeper understandings of Voudou that she would not have otherwise accessed. However, this level of insertion posed a challenge to the interpretation of data. Sensitive to this challenge of interpretation, I therefore opted for a *multi-observational approach*, where observations and interpretations of Fatima life were provided by: a) me, as researcher, b) community members, by means of ethnographic processes, (appendices B-E), and c) by non-residents workers in the Fatima community, by means of a research questionnaire (appendix F). These observations enabled a *multi-perspective approach* to interpretation, which drew upon a number of valid, though varying, subjectivities.¹⁶

Finally, despite my immersion in the life of the community, the question of access to the research community arose in the context of ‘gatekeeping’. The politics of gatekeeping by “watchdogs” is highlighted by Maurice Punch.¹⁷ Citing Argyris, he writes of the crucial role played by gatekeepers in relation both to access and funding.¹⁸ Severyn Bruyn further cautions that clearance at one level of the group under study does not imply clearance at all levels.¹⁹ My research had to be consented to at many different levels: 1) the local resident community, including the research interviewees themselves; 2) local community workers, from Fatima Groups United (FGU) and including the FGU sub-group, the Fatima Festival Committee (FCC), and 3) the Fatima Task Force (FTF). The research process began with preliminary pilot ethnographic interviews.

¹⁴ Morrison, *Methods in Sociology*: 44.

¹⁵ Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: a Voudou Priestess in Brooklyn*, (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) 1-20.

¹⁶ See Kim Knott, “Women Researching, Women Researched: Gender as an Issue in the Empirical Study of Religion.” in Ursula King (ed.) *Religion and Gender*, (Oxford, U.K. and Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell, 1995) 199-218 at 206.

¹⁷ Maurice Punch: *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork: Qualitative Research Methods*, Vol. 3, (Beverly Hills/London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1986)22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*:22. See also C. Argyris, “Diagnosing defences against the outsider” in G.J. McCall & J.L. Simmons (eds.) *Issues in Participant Observation* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1969)115-127.

¹⁹ Severyn Bruyn, cited in May: 141-142.

2.2.2 Ethnographic Interviews

As indicated in the general introduction to this work, seven over-arching themes and sub-themes identified by participant observation and pilot research formed the general background to the structure of one-to-one, semi-structured ethnographic interviews with twenty two women residents (appendix B). While originally I set out to interview equal numbers of women across distinctive age bands, the original age bands being <25 years, 25-50 yrs and >50 years, I soon gave way to the more natural and organic selection style, more in harmony with the culture of the community, and interviewed friends of the initial interviewees, who presented themselves spontaneously with the desire to have their story heard. In other words, I adopted a snowballing method.²⁰ The women who were interviewed in this manner in my research were often empowered by being invited along by a friend and by being included in what was perceived as a communal research process under my direction. This unanticipated response provided a unique insight regarding the crucial importance of the values of *friendship bonds* and *inclusion* within the life of the community; indeed, the importance of these distinctive cultural themes unfolded further in the subsequent analysis of interviews (chapter three). A total of twenty two ethnographic interviews were conducted with Fatima women residents (appendix C).

While respecting the organic nature of the unfolding (semi-structured) interview and the 'generative' (energized) moments in an interview, a certain consistency was maintained by informally introducing a series of general areas for conversation, namely: *self-description, personal history, description of the local community, gender descriptions, relationships, values/morality, conflict/conscience, faith and hopes*- all themes which had emerged in preliminary research interviews (appendix D). This had the effects of: 1) providing interviewees with the opportunity to avoid, or engage in, agreed topics of conversation, or alternatively, to suggest their own areas of interest; 2) maintaining some form of consistency in the interviews, which would assist a later analysis, and 3) affording opportunities to explore, in a general manner, the seven over-arching themes previously identified by participant observation.

Regarding the recording of the interviews, while the efficacy of audiotaping the interview process for transcription purposes is debated in the literature, I found this method to be effective.²¹ Because of public interest in the Fatima regeneration process, many of the women whom I

²⁰ On 'snowballing' see Cohen et al. 92-104 at 104; also Kay Standing, "Writing the Voices of the Less Powerful: Research on Lone Mothers" in Jane Ribbens and Rosalind Edwards, *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives*, (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998, rep 2000)186-202 at 188.

²¹ Cohen et al. :281-282

interviewed had been exposed at the time of research to various other research bodies and media personnel. Therefore, the use of a dictaphone was not generally considered to be inhibitory. In fact it appeared to interviewees to validate the research process. In all cases appropriate consent was requested and agreed (appendix E).

From the outset, I was aware of the need to distribute power by seeking to be highly collaborative in my methodological approach. Collaboration was facilitated in a number of ways: 1) an age-based selection of interviewees was replaced by an organic, friendship-based selection (as indicated earlier), 2) a non-intrusive ethnographic interview process was employed which allowed interviewees to direct the flow of the conversation to a significant extent, 3) comments by interviewees involved in the research process were actively sought, 4) creative workshops, though initially established by myself, were to a large extent facilitated by local women, 5) several local community residents and workers were intensively involved with me in co-planning a public celebration of *The Spirit of Fatima*, during the Halloween Festival Event, 2001, to mark the completion of the fieldwork process, and 6) informal conversations with local women and workers led to numerous revisions of fieldwork plans.

2.2.3 Focus Groups

The seven over-arching cultural themes previously identified by participant observation were further explored in focus groups. In collaboration with local women, these focus groups were established within the Fatima community and operative during the period Sept. 2001-Oct. 2002 (appendix C). Initially, informal table conversations were held with small groups representing the various generations of women in the flats. At these meetings, the nature of the research project was outlined and a conversation was facilitated about what it was like to be a woman in Fatima, out of which three focus-groups emerged:

- 1) the *Good Old Days* group consisted of ten first generation Fatima women (> 50 years). They reflected upon early days in Fatima and met weekly to sew a quilt depicting early Fatima experiences (plate 4);
- 2) the *Drugs Culture* group consisted of eight Fatima women (25 – 50 years). They explored the impact of drugs on their lives and relationships and engaged in art work (clay modelling, glass painting and meditation art) and a round table discussion (plate 5), and
- 3) the *Insecure* group consisted of five young Fatima women (< 25years). They explored their hopes and dreams for the future through music. In their workshops four members formed a girl's pop band and recorded a song entitled "No Words Can Tell" (plate 6).²²

²² Recordings were by The Fuse Box, Music Resource Centre, Ballymun, Dublin.

These creative workshops provided a means of enjoyable and non-threatening self-expression. The primary purpose of the workshops was to facilitate natural small-group conversations around communal memories, personal and communal values, struggles, dreams and aspirations. This aspect of the fieldwork methodology was the most original aspect. It respected the fact that literacy was a challenge for some participants.

Finally, two further independent focus groups were held with a local Fatima prayer group, the *Fig Tree*, and with the facilitators of the *Training for Transformation* programme which was offered in the Fatima community during the period March to December 2000 (appendix C). These latter focus-groups examined central aspects of Fatima's spirituality and morality respectively.²³



Plate 4: Member of the *Good Old Days* Focus Group. Photograph by Pauline Logue (2001)

²³ Since it was a residential prayer group extracts from this interview are also incorporated into the Spirit of Fatima Newsletter (appendix D).



Plate 5: Members of the *Drugs Culture* Focus Group. Photograph by Pauline Logue (2001).



Plate 6: Members of the *Insecure* Focus Group. Photograph by Pauline Logue (2001).

2.2.4 Research Questionnaire Interviews

The next phase of the fieldwork process involved conducting eighteen questionnaire interviews with key (predominantly non-resident) workers in the local community during the period January to February, 2002 (appendix F).²⁴ Areas examined in the questionnaire research included: 1) the worker's role in the community, 2) observations of moral practices or attitudes or codes within the community, 3) comparisons between such moral practices and those outside of the community, and 4) gender distinctions. The questionnaire was seen as a flexible tool, used to initiate discussion. The overall purpose of these interviews was to gather from 'outsiders' a variety of observations of the life of the community and, in particular, observations of its value system and moral life.

My reasons for including observations and reflections from non-resident workers, in the research were as follows:

- 1) since non-resident workers act, in their working role, as a bridge between Fatima and the world beyond Fatima, they maintain a 'one-step remove' from Fatima, hence their observations would both further elaborate upon, and provide a critique of, my findings;
- 2) observations by non-resident workers were expected to potentially illustrate some concrete differences, in terms of perceptions of morality and of moral practice, between the Fatima community (insiders) and non-residents (outsiders). This would assist me, as researcher, in describing any distinctiveness pertaining to the Fatima value system;
- 3) it was considered that a frequency analysis of commonalities and differences within the data would be helpful in the prioritisation of Fatima values,
- 4) it was expected that a greater selection of examples of cultural themes and values at work in the community would be identified;
- 5) it was felt that observations from this source might act as a counter-balance to possible blind-spots in myself as researcher, given my exclusive immersion in Fatima culture, and, finally,
- 6) since their working roles give non-resident workers access into aspects of Fatima life closed to me, their observations would broaden the knowledge base of my research.

²⁴ These interviews can be categorised as 'elite' or 'expert' interviews, since they drew upon the experience and expertise of a variety of workers, each having a unique access into a specific aspect of Fatima life, not otherwise easily accessed. On the role of such interviewees, see Bill Graham, *Case Studies: Research Methods* (London/New York: Continuum, 2000) pp. 63-65.

2.2.5 Research Analysis

In the case of primary research, a ‘cultural themes’ approach (discussed in greater depth later in the chapter) appeared to be the most appropriate means of analysis, since it provides an overall structure with which to examine commonalities and differences in the research interviews. With respect to primary research sources, as indicated earlier, the dual processes of participant observation and pilot research enabled me to identify the seven over-arching cultural themes characteristic of Fatima. These were verified by subsequent methods and were used as the basic structural framework for the analysis of the central values and morality of the Fatima community (chapter three). Transcripts of the one-to-one interviews with women residents were read and reflected upon repeatedly for the purposes of enabling an initial identification of recurring sub-themes within the seven over-arching themes previously identified (appendix B). An inventory approach to the emerging sub themes was adopted and inter-transcript cross-references were carefully recorded. This provided the structural basis for an in-depth analysis of my research data (chapter three). The notion of “key phrases”, as proposed by Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, was also helpful in the analysis. These are recurring phrases which she suggests

arise on the surface of the text as formal markers that accent the narrative ...They aim to define a type of relation between the self and the social sphere, that is, the community (which contributed to the formation of the self), and, more broadly, the society as a whole. The key phrase, then, expresses the harmony, the indifference, the ambiguity, the conflict, and so on, existing between self and society.²⁵

She draws attention, not only to the *content*, but also to the *form* of the interview, and links the formal features in the interview with socio-symbolic information.²⁶ Recurring phrases in the same interview, or across interviews, was taken in my research to provide an organizational principle for the research analysis. Examples of such are “I have/had no choice” and “I am a good mother”, etc. (chapter three). In light of these insights, the varying strategies which were adopted in order to present my analysis, included:

- the incorporation of extracts from interview transcripts;²⁷
- the provision of relevant illustrations of Fatima’s value system and morality;

²⁵ Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, “Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story” in Sherna Berger Gluck, and Daphne Patai (eds.) *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, (New York/London: Routledge, 1991)77-92 at 79-80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 79.

²⁷ sometimes including the interaction between myself and the interviewee, other times allowing the voice of the interviewee to stand alone and, in the case of focus groups, involving a number of interacting voices

- a paraphrasing of relevant contents of interview transcripts;
- the presentation of concise summaries of information from the research data;
- the incorporation of a number of my own commentaries on findings;
- the isolation of the operative values within research narratives;
- the inclusion of examples of moral dilemmas experienced by non-resident workers for the purpose of highlighting the distinctiveness of the Fatima value system and moral practice;
- the inclusion of relevant findings from key sources already in the public domain, and
- the inclusion of relevant insights from *mujerista* and womanist theologies (chapter four).

Aull points out that, inevitably, questions of interpretation and of validity and reliability present themselves.²⁸ From a theoretical perspective, the attempt to faithfully hold the particularity of selected Fatima women's experiences, while also extrapolating towards tentative generalities (with respect to both the local Fatima community and other inner city communities) presented a challenge in my own research. One theoretical view on this is that qualitative research may be seen as purely descriptive, in which case generalisability is not a requirement.²⁹ Stake, for example, refers to the 'intrinsic case study' whereby a single case is regarded as significant in its very particularity and no attempt is required to generalize or build a theory. I was more in agreement with Bhaskar's position; that generalisability is a possibility if regarded as explanatory, not predictive, as long as it does not degenerate into stereotypes.³⁰ I took the view that, with respect to the local community, a limited form of generalisation, by means of an attention to *commonalities*, including recurring common themes, as well as *differences*, would be useful, since my research goal was to examine the morality and value system of individuals within the context of their unique community. But I also recognised the value of wider generalisability, viewing the single instance of one inner city community (Fatima) as part of a longer term process of similar inner city case studies elsewhere in the future, for the express purpose of comparative research (hence the future relevance of this work). This future oriented (teleological) approach informed my overall thinking throughout; I saw this contribution, from the outset as pioneering; a charter document, as it were, but only the beginning of a longer term commitment on the part of the Irish theological community.³¹ In practically addressing this

²⁸ On reliability, validity and generalisability, see Aull Davies: 84-93.

²⁹ Cited in David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. (London/ Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000) 102-103.

³⁰ Aull Davies: 90-91.

³¹ The conclusion to this work explicitly addresses the question of wider relevance.

challenge of generalisability, a *multi-method approach* was ultimately adopted in the fieldwork methodology, akin to that proposed by Silverman, as indicated above.³²

A further and equally significant part of the overall research project was to provide a methodology for the critique of selected sources of moral theology within the Irish context. In this case, both frequency and content analyses were employed. The frequency analysis process set out to establish with some precision the degree to which Fatima-related over-arching themes were represented in the Irish Bishops' pastoral letters (appendix H) and in articles published in selected theological journals.³³ The frequency analysis was based on the actual number of articles, which explicitly examined Fatima-related themes, as compared with the overall number of articles examined.³⁴ It is important to note that a frequency analysis of this kind has certain limitations. Since the number of theological topics with potential for publication is not measurable, any objective standard of comparison between Fatima-related concerns and others is somewhat problematic. Placing a clear time limit on my analysis offsets this problem somewhat in that comparisons can be made between real numbers of articles over a particular time frame. But the specific problematic of comparison remain. The question arises: "proportionately, what might a significant coverage of Fatima-related themes be?" In order to address this, a simple *mean* is established between those theological topics which have been identified in the preliminary analysis as indicators of both a minimum and a maximum representation. Fatima-related issues are then compared to the mean and a more meaningful sense of representation is established. Because of its limitation, findings with respect to the frequency analysis are tentative. However, the analysis, as presented, is considered, on balance, to be useful for the following reasons:

- it provides a profile of actual indicators of the presence or absence of theological explorations of central elements of Fatima's value system and moral practice in the selected journals over a ten year period;
- it provides a basis for the identification and discussion of gaps and omissions in mainstream theological publications, with respect to inner-city value systems and moral practice,³⁵ and
- it demonstrates to some degree the *selection* and *prioritisation* processes employed by the selected journals over a ten year period.

³² Silverman: 103.

³³ By 'Fatima-related' themes is meant themes which resonate with the Fatima experience, as identified in my research analysis (chapter three).

³⁴ The overall number of articles examined, namely 1609, is distributed as follows: *The Furrow* (638 articles), *Doctrine & Life*, (647 articles), *Irish Theological Quarterly*, (170 articles), and *Milltown Studies*, (154 articles).

³⁵ This analysis focuses exclusively on theological *articles* and *review articles*, in an attempt to provide comparisons based on materials of more or less equal weighting/priority.

An in-depth *content analysis* of the Bishops' letters and journal articles is also provided. This analysis examines the manner in which Fatima-related themes, when in evidence, are treated. As with my analysis of primary research data (chapter three) and my dialogue between the Fatima moral experience and *mujerista*/womanist theologies (chapter four) this content analysis concerns itself with *commonalities* and *differences*. In other words, the journal articles are explored with respect to points of similarity with the Fatima experience and points of significant difference, particularly in relation to *interpretation* and *prioritisation*. Relevant examples are taken to illustrate key research findings and to explore creative possibilities of dialogue with the Fatima experience.³⁶

Having outlined my research methodology I now wish to provide a summary theoretical justification for the same.

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN RELATION TO THE CASE OF FATIMA

In providing a more detailed theoretical foundation for my selection processes, I begin with methodological discussions pertaining to the issue of *culture*, including ethnography, cultural themes and transformation. This is followed by an examination of sources relating to narrative and discourse, especially with respect to gender, a central category in my Fatima-based research.

2.3.1 Culture and Ethnography, Cultural Themes, and Transformation

Since Fatima is a distinctive sub-culture within Irish society and since my primary research incorporated ethnographic methods, theoretical explorations of the intimate relationship between culture and ethnography, which are predominant concerns in the fields of anthropology, the social sciences and cultural studies, were an important source of reflection. The contributions of James Spradley, James Clifford and Clifford Geertz, in particular, provided an analysis of culture and a thoroughgoing account of ethnography which resonated with my experience as a researcher and which influenced my own practice significantly.

Culture has been defined, described and theorized in numerous ways.³⁷ James Spradley adopts the definition of culture as “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and

³⁶ While I acknowledge that certain theological contributions which deal with topics other than those of *direct* interest to the context of Fatima are also potentially of significance, it is considered within the scope of the objectives of this present research to focus explicitly on the treatment of Fatima-related themes which are clearly in evidence.

³⁷ On attempts to synthesise various definitions and descriptions of culture see Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2003).

generate social behaviour".³⁸ He suggests that in every society people make constant use of "complex meaning systems to organize their behaviour, to organize themselves and others, and to make sense out of the world in which they live".³⁹ These meaning systems (or system of meaningful symbols) constitute culture and ethnography implies a theory of culture.⁴⁰ Spradley highlights the role of humanity in shaping culture and notes the close similarity between the above concept of culture as a system of meaningful symbols and the theory of symbolic interactionism, as presented by Blummer.⁴¹ In line with Spradley, I would argue that the unique set of social relationships characteristic of Fatima have undoubtedly shaped a communal or collective perspective within which the community's value system and morality is firmly situated. As a participant observer, this awareness raised a crucial question for me; one which had practical implications for my research choices, namely, "*what is the nature of the social interactions upon which Fatima meanings are based?*" Pursuit of this question led to the decision on my part to opt for a research analysis which would include 1) a comprehensive social analysis of the Fatima community (chapter one), and 2) a particular examination of the category of 'social relations' both within the Fatima community and without (chapter three).

One ethnographic research objective, which I started out with, was to enable cultural meanings to be communicated predominantly by the inhabitants of Fatima themselves. In the process of seeking to allow Fatima residents articulate their own meanings, I, like, Hollway and Jefferson, quickly became aware that an approach where the *unmediated* voices of members of the culture under investigation are given primacy of place has its practical limitations.⁴² Due to reduced levels of awareness, research participants often do not actually in fact know how to articulate their experience, being too close to the actual experience itself and being unfamiliar with the necessary analytical processes. While in my research interviewees were generally comfortable telling the story of their lives, critical reflection on that story, through questioning on my part as the interviewer, often proved confusing. Inevitably, I provided significant interpretations, as the researcher, and this raised for me certain questions of validity, reliability and ethics (especially in

³⁸J. Spradley. *The Ethnographic Interview*. (New York/Chicago/San Francisco/Dallas/Montreal/Toronto/London/Sydney: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979) 5, also Spradley, (ed.). *Culture and Cognition: Rules, Maps and Plans*, (San Francisco: Chandler, 1972).

³⁹ Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*: 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 5.

⁴¹ Ibid.: 6-7.

⁴² For a critique of the "tell it as it is" approach see Wendy Hollway & Tony Jefferson: *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: free association, narrative and the interview method*. (London/Thousand/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000) 2-3.

relation to power distribution) in my research.⁴³ The question as to where hermeneutic authority resided in my own ethnographic work became significant.

Clifford, in his essay, entitled “On Ethnographic Authority”, specifically tackles this complex issue.⁴⁴ He argues that ethnography is largely interpretive, rather than explanative, of the cultures with which it interacts.⁴⁵ While he affirms that ethnographic fieldwork is an unusually sensitive and effective method, and that “as a means for producing knowledge from an intense, intersubjective engagement, the practice of ethnography retains an exemplary status”, he does make clear the limited claims which any ethnographic researcher can make in relation to hermeneutics.⁴⁶ Reflecting on this, while I was concerned to facilitate as far as possible the Fatima community’s self-interpretation of its particular culture, I was also prepared to explicitly acknowledge my inevitable role in the translation/interpretation process. Given the unquestionable subjectivity of my role in interpretation, I found it necessary, as a balance, to include also the subjective interpretations of significant others involved in the everyday life of the Fatima community, to assist my analysis, by means of a research questionnaire with Fatima-based workers. In the context of *authority*, Clifford also explores the concept of polyphony, citing Bakhtin, who is concerned with the representation of non-homogenous wholes.⁴⁷ In my own research I felt a sense of responsibility to the many diverse voices (*polyvocality*) in the community, hence my decision to conduct a relatively large amount of one-to-one qualitative ethnographic interviews with women relative to the overall population size as well as the research questionnaires with Fatima-based workers.⁴⁸ In an attempt to analyse many different Fatima voices I chose to explore certain *commonalities* and *differences* in the ethnographic accounts by means of maximum collaboration with all research interviewees.⁴⁹ This approach was not without its complications. During the field work process I was required to own the extent to which I, as the researcher, held the balance of power both in regard to interpretation and interpretative

⁴³ See Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, *The New Language of Qualitative Method*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) vii; 2-4; 19-37.

⁴⁴ Clifford: 257-283. For a feminist perspective on interpretation, see Johanna Latvala, “Anthropological Fieldwork and The Ethics of Interpretation: Studying the World ‘In Between’”, paper delivered, *Gendering Ethics/The Ethics of Gender: An International Interdisciplinary Conference*. Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, 23-25 June, 2000.

⁴⁵ Clifford: 257.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 259

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 275.

⁴⁸ Given that 50% of the Fatima population at the time of research were identified as children and youth (<15 years) and allowing for the large number of single women as heads of the household, the research sample of women would then be roughly in the region of 20 out of 200, in other words, 10%. See Corcoran: 3.

⁴⁹ As an example of such an approach see Delores Williams, “Womanist-Feminist Dialogue: Differences and Commonalities” in *Sisters in the Wilderness: the Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998) 178-203.

authority. I revised my initial approach to the write-up of research findings, for example; I did not opt for an approach which might include extensive, unedited transcript materials at the write-up stages of research since it was felt that, while this would potentially give fuller ‘voice’ to Fatima women, the resulting absence of an analysis would weaken the overall ethnographic account. Furthermore, from an ethical perspective, such an approach was unfeasible since, given the relative small size of, and the closeness of the Fatima community, confidentiality could very easily be violated if extensive extracts from individual women’s stories would be made publicly available, in unedited form. This meant owning my own experience and authority as a participant observer, within the research process.

Clifford also examines this role of experience, whereby experiential authority is based upon a feel for the new context, “a kind of accumulated savvy and sense of the style of a people or place”.⁵⁰ From this perspective the experience of the researcher acts as a “unifying source of authority in the field”.⁵¹ He refers specifically here to Dilthey’s influential view (*verstehen*), where an understanding of others arises from the sheer fact of co-existence in a shared world or “common sphere”.⁵² While initially a subjective/intersubjective exercise, it quickly becomes dependent upon “permanently fixed variables”, or stable forms to which understanding can return.⁵³ In my case the concept of ‘stable forms’ proved helpful and in time became interchangeable with the notions of cultural themes. The identification of *cultural themes* is a tried and tested practice in ethnography. In identifying cultural themes, ethnographers typically choose initially to adopt an *inventory* approach whereby they identify all the domains or larger units of cultural knowledge and divide them into categories, such as kinship, material culture and social relationships.⁵⁴ From an early stage of research, self-descriptions, both personal and communal, by members of the Fatima community, led to recurring cultural themes (chapter three).⁵⁵ I opted not to follow an overly technical approach, presented by Spradley, of making detailed ‘domain’, ‘taxonomic’ and ‘componential’ analyses.⁵⁶ Instead, I employed a more fluid and intuitive means of identification of cultural themes based upon extensive participant observation coupled with repeated readings of interview transcripts and close cross-referencing of recurring themes identified. In this manner, and in line with a Geertzian approach, a ‘thick description’ of a Fatima ethical system was established (appendix B).⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 267.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.: 268.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*: 185.

⁵⁵ Ibid.: 185-203.

⁵⁶ Ibid.: 107-119; 132-154; 173-184.

⁵⁷ Geertz, C. *The Interpretation of Culture*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Cultural themes consist of a number of symbols linked into meaningful relationships.⁵⁸ Themes are assertions with a high degree of generality since they apply to numerous situations. With respect to Fatima, two over-arching cultural themes in Fatima, previously identified in more generic study of Fatima culture, namely the Corcoran Report (1998) which was corroborated by my own research, were: *a community that endures* and *an enduring community*.⁵⁹ Sub-themes in this report included: living life as a prison sentence; the indefensibility of public spaces; the upkeep and maintenance of the estate; securing a release date; second class citizenship; absence of trust; survival strategies; community spirit; marginality of men, and mechanisms of cohesion. Referred to as *cultural themes* or *urban myths* by Corcoran,⁶⁰ as *symbolic representations* by Fahey,⁶¹ also as *cultural metaphors*, by Gannon,⁶² communal metaphors such as the ‘war zone’ or the ‘prison sentence’ were clearly identifiable in Fatima discourse, as is demonstrated in chapter one.⁶³ As indicated earlier, my own research uncovered the following over-arching themes: 1) *children: protection and future*; 2) *women and men: perceptions and roles*; 3) *relationships: familial and social*; 4) *individual and community: inseparable realities*; 5) *survival: persistence and resistance*; 6) *drugs: a significant culture shaper*, and 7) *celebration: living life in the moment*.

A closely related approach to the uncovering of cultural meaning, found in the contribution of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, is the highlighting of the *generative word* or of *generative themes* within a culture.⁶⁴ My own research is partially influenced by Freire’s thought given that it: seeks to identify generative words within a culture (which I prefer to call ‘cultural themes’ in this work) and also incorporate a transformatory approach.⁶⁵ Freire outlines his understanding of the generative theme in his foundational text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.⁶⁶ Here he explores the notion of people’s thematic universe or meaningful thematics, which is the complex of their generative themes. A co-facilitation and dialogical process enables the unfolding and discovery of ‘generative’ themes within a culture and furthermore stimulates people’s awareness in regard to

⁵⁸ See Morris E. Opler, “Themes as dynamic forces in culture”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1945, 53: 198-206 at 198. (Opler first introduced the notion of ‘themes’ into anthropology).

⁵⁹ Corcoran: 18-41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 18;

⁶¹ Fahey, *Social Housing*: 133.

⁶² Martin J. Gannon, *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 23 Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: Sage Publications Inc., 2001).

⁶³ One twelve year old resident commented “It’s the fucking pits, a prison. It could be brilliant but...” FGU, *Regeneration People, Place and Partnership* (Dublin: FGU, 2000) 1

⁶⁴ On ‘generative words’/‘generative themes’ see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin Books, 1970. rep. 1993) 68-105.

⁶⁵ Significantly, *mujerisa* theology is similarly influenced by this Freirian approach.

⁶⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin Books, 1970, rep. 1993).

these themes (which is a means towards transformation).⁶⁷ Influenced by Freire's contribution, I was concerned to create a co-learning research environment and make as fair an exchange as possible to the local community, by allowing research participants to play a significant part in the research process, both in its direction and execution. I wish to stress, however, that while a Freirean influence is evident in this research, an explicitly Freirian methodology, in its fullest sense, was not employed. Transformation was limited to the personal level in my research (of researcher and participants). I make no claims to transformation at the level of the community as a whole, since community transformation was the prerogative of the gatekeepers, FGU and the politico-ethical requirements of the research necessitated that this reality be respected.⁶⁸

While the contributions of Spradley, Clifford, Geertz and Freire (among others) enabled me to critically reflect upon and clarify many aspects of my ethnographic practice, these same authors failed to address crucial aspects of research pertaining to *gender* which, in my view, required some serious consideration, not least since my research prioritized women's experience in Fatima. In contrast, Katherine Borland, Ann Oakley and Kim Knott (among others), in examining research upon women and analysing the problematics of the concept of a feminist ethnography, provided indicators of an appropriate, gender-sensitive approach to my own ethnographic practice.

2.3.2 Narrative and Discourse: Gender Perspectives

As indicated above, the identification of cultural themes, described earlier, is achieved not only by immersion in a culture and a process of close participation-observation, but also by means of an analysis of the discourse and the narratives characteristic of the culture, hence the importance of the ethnographic interview and/or oral narratives.⁶⁹ According to Silverman, participation in a culture includes participation in the narratives of that culture, or its "collective stories", and having a general understanding of its stock of meanings and their relationship to each other.⁷⁰ Given that my research focus was primarily concerned with women's lives in Fatima, a crucial aspect of my narrative analysis was that of *gender identity*. Linda Hogan's claims that the issue of gender has "become a defining feature of contemporary culture, if not *the* defining feature", and

⁶⁷ Ibid., 80-105; footnote 14: 79.

⁶⁸ It is for this reason that I prefer use of the term 'cultural themes' as opposed to 'generative themes' throughout this work.

⁶⁹ On narrative and oral history see Sherma Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York/London: Routledge, 1991), also Louise Collins, "Imaginative Mothering: The Context of Stories" and Eileen Clark, "The Ethics of Gender in Oral History". Public Addresses. *Gendering Ethics/The Ethics of Gender: An International Interdisciplinary Conference*, Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, 23-25 June, 2000.

⁷⁰ This is a term attributed to L. Richardson, cited in Silverman: 124.

that it is now an integral part of the modern mind to be attentive to possible differences that a person's gender makes to one's "experiences, perspectives and opportunities", convinced me that an ethnographic account of women's lives which failed to directly address the issue of gender, however complex, would be wholly inadequate.⁷¹ This, of course, led to an examination, among other things, of gender-bias in academic research, as highlighted by David Morgan in his article "Men, masculinity and the process of sociological enquiry".⁷² An exploration on my part of specifically gender-sensitive processes involved in ethnographic research proved insightful.⁷³ Like Diane Millen, Katherine Borland, Ann Oakley, and others, I had definitive concerns in regard to the ethics of conducting feminist research on non-feminist Fatima women, which, I established would be exploitative in the case of Fatima.⁷⁴ I was also aware of questions posed, by Oakley and also Judith Stacey, as to the very possibility of, and validity of, a feminist ethnography.⁷⁵ On reflection, I decided to incorporate a gender analysis of data, as a part of a broader data analysis, since this would provide me with an effective means to uncover values, as well as moral codes and practices, central to the Fatima community. Furthermore, I decided to incorporate an ethical reflection into my analysis.

As expected, the challenges of gender presented themselves very early on in my research. Before addressing these challenges, it is helpful to outline how feminist analyses of gender impinged upon both my understanding of gender in itself, and of its implications for my research. Ursula King, for example, highlights, not only the importance of gender as an analytical category, but also the relationship between gender and the social order.⁷⁶ Further issues which are central to a feminist analysis and which resonated with my experience of the ethics of research included a

⁷¹ Linda Hogan, "Gender Relationships in the Family: A Theological Perspective", public address, "Developing Parish Seminar", All Hallows College, Feb 11-12, 2002.

⁷² David Morgan, "Men, masculinity and the process of sociological enquiry" in Helen Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981): 83-113.

⁷³ See Sandra Hale, "Feminist Method, Process, and Self Criticism: Interviewing Sudanese Women" in Gluck and Patai, *Women's Words*: 121-136, also Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, "Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes" in Liz Stanley, (ed.) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1990, rep. 1991) 20-60.

⁷⁴ See Dianne Millen, "The Ethics of Conducting Feminist Research on Non-Feminist Women". Public Address. *Gendering Ethics/The Ethic of Gender: An International Interdisciplinary Conference*. University of Leeds, 23-25 June, 2000; also Katherine Borland, "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research" in S. Berger Gluck and D. Patai, (eds.) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, (New York/London: Routledge: 1991) 63-76.

⁷⁵ A. Oakley, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms" in Helen Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*: 30-61; also J. Stacey, "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" in Berger Gluck and Patai, (eds.) *Women's Words*: 111-120.

⁷⁶ Ursula King, (ed.) *Religion and Gender*. (Oxford, U.K./Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1995)5.

concern for authority, transparency and responsibility in research.⁷⁷ I was particularly interested in the specific question of how the issue of gender might impact upon my particular research methodology, in terms of access, methods, interpretation, analysis, etc. I was aware from the outset, for example, that my female gender had both positive and negative potential for my research conducted in Fatima.⁷⁸ From my very entry into the community, prior to any field work, gender influences had already featured strongly in both my perceived and expected roles in the community, which, in turn, impacted directly upon research.⁷⁹

More positively, reflecting the position outlined by Kim Knott, my entry into, and access to, the community was not experienced as problematic, and, from the perspective of research, the more gyno-centric field work approach, which I consciously adopted, was not regarded as threatening or confrontational.⁸⁰ In my own case, my direct involvement in the children's, hence mothers' lives, by means of the surrogacy mothering role which I adopted in the community, and by virtue of the fact that I was a neighbour, living in the estate, facilitated easy access to interviewees.⁸¹ While Carol Warren cautions against gender myths of fieldwork research, including "the greater communicative skills and less threatening nature of the female worker", I did not experience my female gender as inhibitory; in fact the opposite.⁸² Knott further highlights certain feminist research requirements, which were fully compatible with my own ethnographic approach, among them:

- the importance of self reflexivity (including, in her own case, the employment of a methodological autobiography);

⁷⁷ Moral philosopher Margaret Urban Walker, for example, points out, that mainstream moral philosophers are "typically casual about their own *positions to know* what they claim to represent and theorize". She advocates scepticism in this regard; I was challenged to keep this scepticism to the fore in my research interpretation. See Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understanding*: 49-51

⁷⁸ For a discussion on gender as an issue in the empirical study of religion see Ursula King (ed.) *Religion and Gender*: 6-14.

⁷⁹ As indicated in the introduction, the expected role in my case, from the perspective of the host community, was the traditional female role of child protection, care and development. An explicit role of spiritual leadership appeared to be reserved for the (male) priest.

⁸⁰ See Knott on the 'methodological autobiography' in an unpublished transcript of a recording made on 22 August, 1990, University of Leeds. An informal conversation with Bishop Fiachra O Ceallaigh, Auxillary Bishop of Dublin (Dec. 1995) indicated that female religious sisters generally integrated more easily into the lives of disadvantaged communities in the Dublin Diocese than their male counterparts.

⁸¹ By surrogacy in this context is meant the child-minding and child-protection roles which I naturally assumed within the community, an aspect that is discussed in some detail by Kim Knott, in "Women Researching Women Researched: Gender as an Issue in the Empirical Study of Religion" in Ursula King (ed.) *Religion and Gender*, (Oxford, U.K./Cambridge, USA.: Blackwell, 1995) 199-218.

⁸² Carol A.B. Warren, *Gender Issues in Field Research*, Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 9 (Newbury Park/Beverly Hills/London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1988) 64.

- awareness of attitudes to female researchers, accessing women's lives as a female researcher, and
- the prioritization of dialogue, transformation, polyvocality, reciprocity and flexibility in research.⁸³

She also highlights the ethical responsibilities borne by the researcher, especially in relation to the pain of others (often ensuing from the research process itself) and issues of power and hierarchy in the relationship between the researcher and the researched.⁸⁴ Her contribution raised for me crucial questions pertaining to the specific nature of *women's discourse*. In practice the nature of female-female discourse and female-male discourse, within and beyond boundaries of sex/gender and class, became a significant question, following on my pilot research. I became increasingly interested in the power dynamics at play in the context of women's discourse, an aspect of research explored by Kristina Minister. In her work "A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview", Minister examines the nature of women's and men's speech and the various power dynamics at play in speech as communication.⁸⁵ She highlights my own experience, that women's communication patterns do not fit academic analyses of speech since male socio-communication culture is assumed to be the norm in social science and oral history interviewing.⁸⁶ Her explorations of various research findings on the characteristic qualities of women's communications were most helpful in allowing me to develop an appropriate interviewing style with women in Fatima. This along with my own intuitive sense of the research undertaken, led me to affirm women's natural means of socio-communication in my research methodology. Significantly, I very quickly gave way to prioritizing women's conversational rhythm in interview processes, perceiving that a more focused and directive approach to the interview process to be excessively intrusive and controlling. I am convinced that this contributed significantly to accessing, in a respectful manner, much more intimate, and ultimately more relevant aspects, of Fatima women's lives.⁸⁷

⁸³ See Knott on the 'methodological autobiography' in an unpublished transcript of a recording made on 22 August, 1990, University of Leeds.

⁸⁴ Knott, "Women Researching": 199-218 at 203.

⁸⁵ Kristina Minister, "A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview", in Berger Gluck and Patai, *Women Words*: 27-41. For a fuller discussion see Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker, "A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication," in John J. Gumperz, (ed.) *Language and Social Identity: Studies in Sociolinguistics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1982) 203-207, also Lea P. Steward, Pamela J. Cooper, and Sheryl A. Freidley, *Communication Between the Sexes: Sex Differences and Sex Role Stereotypes* (Scottsdale, Ariz.: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1986).

⁸⁵ Minister: 31.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.:35-37. See also Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses" and Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, "Black Women's Life Stories: Reclaiming Self in Narrative Texts" in Berger Gluck and Patai, *Women's Words*: 11-26 and 43-58, respectively.

With respect to my research analysis, significant gender distinctions and sensitivities are also strongly reflected in the research employed in *mujerista* and womanist ethics. While, as indicated in the introduction to this work, I did *not* employ a feminist theological methodology in this thesis, both of these sources proved helpful *dialogue partners* for the purpose of further illuminating my understanding of a Fatima morality (chapter four).⁸⁸

Apart for the potentialities of engaging in a creative dialogue with the above sources, another significant aspect of research which considers consideration at this point is the ethics of research itself. Numerous ethical challenges accompany any attempt at ethnography that demand on-going reflexivity. In the following section I will reflect upon some of the more significant ethical challenges which arose in practice in my own research.

2.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sensitive research addresses some of society's most pressing social issues and policy questions. Although ignoring the ethical issues in sensitive research is not a responsible approach in science, shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial, is also an avoidance of responsibility.⁸⁹

Ethical issues, anticipated or otherwise, inevitably arise in the pursuit of research.⁹⁰ Cohen *et al.* point out that researchers are required to strike a balance between academic integrity, the rights of the research subjects, and values potentially threatened by research. In other words, they are required to conduct a 'cost/benefits ratio'.⁹¹ The changing directions of interest and access during the research process means that unanticipated ethical challenges arise during the course of the research itself. Most typically, ethical questions arise during research regarding the following: informed consent, the securing of and guaranteeing of confidentiality, the possibility of deceit or the betrayal of the community, the appropriateness of the payment of interviewees, conflicts of values between researcher and the researched, the expectations, requirements and demands of funding bodies, the power distribution between the researcher and the researched, the appropriate

⁸⁸ A point to keep in mind is that *mujerista* theology reflects a Hispanic Roman Catholic perspective while womanist theology originates from, and reflects Black Protestant perspective.

⁸⁹ Joan E. Sieber and Gary B. Melton, "Ethical and professional dimensions of socially sensitive research" in *American Psychologist*, 43: 49-55 at 55;

⁹⁰ On the ethics and politics of research see Maurice Punch, *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*; also Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*: 45-64. For an account of ethics and applied theology see Pauline Logue Collins, "Research in Applied Theology: Exploring Ethical Issues", in *All Hallows Studies*, Summer 2006: 95-104.

⁹¹ Cohen *et al.*: 49

and informed use of data, avoidance of harm and overall benefit.⁹² In terms of such ethical considerations, my primary research, particularly the personal ethnographic interviews, may be categorized as ‘sensitive research’ since it penetrated the intimate, private and relational spaces of twenty women’s lives.⁹³

Beginning with the issue of *informed consent*, ethical guidelines of professional associations and academic institutions typically stress the importance of informed consent, not only at the outset, but also during the course of the research itself as new opportunities and challenges unfold.⁹⁴ The British Sociological Association, in its guidelines, *Statement of Ethical Practice* (1996) writes, that “it may be necessary for the obtaining of consent to be regarded, not as a once-for-all prior event, but as a process subject to renegotiation over time”.⁹⁵ Importantly, each case of research requires reflection on relevant and appropriate ethical principles, and part of the research task is to judge between competing ethical values. The principle at stake in debates about consent is *respect for human autonomy*. The social sciences, in the Mill and Weber tradition, have been primarily committed to the value of human autonomy.⁹⁶ Prioritizing human autonomy, including proper respect for human freedom, requires two necessary conditions: 1) subjects must agree voluntarily to participate in research - that is without physical or psychological coercion – and, 2) this agreement must be based on full and open information.⁹⁷ A meaningful application of this principle of respect for human autonomy gives rise to much debate.

The question of access (or “infiltration”) is, according to Maurice Punch, “pivotal to the whole relationship between researcher and researched”.⁹⁸ It is generally accepted that deceptive practices are neither ethically justified nor practically necessary. On the other hand, excessive

⁹² See Mason, cited in Silverman: 200-201; Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*: 45-64; the British Sociological Association, *Statement of Ethical Practice*. Research guidelines provided by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds, also The British Psychological Society, “Revised Ethical Principles” in *The Psychologist*, June 1990: 269-272.

⁹³ On sensitive research see Claire M. Renzetti and Raymond Lee (eds.) *Researching Sensitive Topics*, (Newbury Park/London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993). 249-266, also Joan E. Sieber and Barbara Stanley, “Ethical and Professional Dimensions of Socially Sensitive Research” in *American Psychologist*, January 1988: 49-55.

⁹⁴ See Richard G. Mitchell, “Secrecy and Disclosure in Fieldwork” in W.B. Shaffir and R.A. Stebbins, (eds.) *Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research*, (Newbury Park/London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1991) 97-108.

⁹⁵ The British Sociological Association, *Statement of Ethical Practice*, (Durham: BSA Publications, 1996) 2.

⁹⁶ Challenging what is perceived as an excessive emphasis on autonomy/the individual/the subject, feminist theological contributions have insisted instead upon a *communitarian ethics*. See Clifford G. Christians, “Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research” in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research 2nd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000) pp. 133-155 at 138.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 138.

⁹⁸ Maurice Punch, *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*: 12.

attempts at transparency can often over-extend the researcher and possibly invite resistance. Punch suggests that “divulging one’s identity and research purpose to all and sundry - will kill many a project stone dead”.⁹⁹ Clifford G. Christians similarly suggests that some information cannot be obtained without at least deception by omission and the standard resolution for this is to permit a modicum of deception where there is an explicit utilitarian or proportionate reason for doing so; evoking the principle that *the benefit* (which must be clearly of value to society) *must outweigh any possible harm*.¹⁰⁰ In such cases certain basic ethical guidelines are suggested: not to lie directly, not to break promises, not to steal documents, etc.¹⁰¹ Less typically, in the field of theology and religious studies, ethical issues present themselves around the employment of covert research processes, including participant observation processes, where one’s role as a researcher is not revealed (as, for example, in researching religious cults or the occult).¹⁰²

In the case of my own research the context of the research and the general outline of the interviews were explained and an opportunity was provided, prior to interview, for questions and clarification. At this stage participants were invited to sign consent sheets (appendices E and F). In general, the practice of signed consent proved unproblematic. However, in some cases participants resisted what was perceived as the excessive formality of the signed written consent, preferring to give a verbal consent. Also some, who chose to sign after the interview, left at quick notice forgetting to sign or choosing not to. In these cases I did not pursue the participants further for consent signatures, for two reasons: 1) there might have been literacy difficulties, in which case I had no wish to cause embarrassment, and 2) for reasons of confidentiality, I could not presume to go to the participant’s flat or work space without invitation.¹⁰³ Having weighed the values at stake, I had to trust the verbal agreements given, the good will of the participant, and the relationship of friendship already established. To compensate, it was made clear that the participants could withdraw their interviews in full or in part at any time. It was further agreed that, were the completed work to be published, the nature of the publication would be discussed with participants and further consent would be obtained at that stage. In fact, only one woman requested at a later stage that I keep part of the interview ‘off the record’. The more common practice was that women told me what was ‘on or off the record’ during the interview itself;

⁹⁹ Cited in Christians: 139.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 139 (italics mine); also Maurice Punch, “Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research” in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.) *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues* (Thousand Oaks/London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998) 156-184 at 171-175.

¹⁰¹ Punch: 172.

¹⁰² In such cases, ethical officers or committees within the academic institute in question are required to screen research applications, and the benefits of the potential outcome of the research must be shown to significantly outweigh any possible harm to persons involved.

¹⁰³ This was for two reasons, 1) culturally, in Fatima, entering another’s flat is normally by invitation and 2) interviewees might not have discussed their participation in research with their partners, families or colleagues; it was therefore essential to guarantee confidentiality.

confidential aspects of the interview were not taped, therefore not transcribed nor formally analyzed (although they provided an important backdrop to interpretation)

Consent is almost always depends upon a guarantee of *privacy and confidentiality*. However, the lack of consensus on what is public and what is private is highly problematic. Both convention and ethical codes of a variety of professional associations insist upon safeguards in regard to the identity of the research participants. The ethical principles at issue here are; *respect for persons and their dignity, avoidance of harm, and respect for privacy*. Christians writes: “professional etiquette uniformly concurs that no one deserves harm or embarrassment as a result of intensive research practices.”¹⁰⁴ The usual methodological practice of coding interview transcripts and changing certain non-essential details, in order to ensure anonymity, provides only a limited protection, however, particularly where direct extracts are used from interview transcripts and where research communities are relatively small, as in the case of Fatima. Aull Davies rightly suggests that “the individuality that is preserved in linguistic habits means that the use of extensive direct quotations makes informants recognizable”.¹⁰⁵ This I found to be the case when one interviewee, in my own research, discussed research previously conducted in Fatima, and identified a code-named research participant by linguistic means; “It is easy to see who that was... you know by the way she is speaking... and her agenda”.¹⁰⁶ Tension surrounded my use of direct quotations (which I still considered necessary in order to give voice to Fatima women). Ironically, by selecting *not* to include numerous potential extracts, in attempting to ensure confidentiality, I believe I may well have disappointed some interviewees who had hoped that their contribution would be clearly recognizable (an aspect of research discussed by Aull Davis)¹⁰⁷ A further related dilemma is the challenge of maintaining confidentiality while writing up research. The literature cites, as an example, the case of Holdaway, who conducted research on a police station and used a pseudonym to refer to the station, in his write-up. However, since his bibliography included select publications, it was clear to the reader that the police station in question was the Metropolitan Police of London.¹⁰⁸

The issue of the *ethical return* due to the interviewees in the research process is one issue which I have repeatedly experienced in my research. Concerns about what promises of return could realistically be made to the research community, in terms of workload, time constraints and financial limitations, were a very real preoccupation. Also, the question of the appropriateness of offering payment for interviews is one with which I grappled. Traditionally academic research

¹⁰⁴ Christians: 139.

¹⁰⁵ Aull Davies 51.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

¹⁰⁷ Aull Davis: 53.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Punch: 176.

has been viewed as valuable in and of itself, and it is contended that research participants, by helping to advance knowledge, are thereby rewarded. More recently, this presumption has been challenged. Some researchers take the view that research participants have a right to a return for their contribution (even financial), particularly if the academic researcher and/or academic institution in question receive public acclaim for the research in question. Here there is a conviction that, in terms of power relations, the interviewee had a right to some fair exchange remains. For example, Teela Sanders, who conducted research on women's prostitution in the nineties opted to pay her interviewees (all of whom had direct experience of prostitution) £20 per interview.¹⁰⁹ From a theoretical perspective, she saw this payment as a vehicle for expressing the values of the research process. The interviewees were recognized as experts in the area of female prostitution and the interview was regarded as a professional exchange. Sanders felt that, in this, it was being communicated that the opinions of the interviewees were valued. On a more practical level, since interviews were conducted during interviewees 'working hours' compensation was considered an ethical requirement. There was the related issue of *protection* for those women, whose 'pimps' might resent their working hours being impinged upon. Moreover, the researcher wished to communicate that, as a researcher, she was not just a 'taker'. But Sanders continued to struggle with on-going and disquieting questions: Was offering payment another form of economic exploitation or a genuine opportunity to give voice to participants? Was she just another punter? Might the money exchanged be used to buy drugs? Might women who participated in the research be put at risk? What might the consequences for the sex-work community be as a result of her research? One further fear was that an offer of payment might draw a different clientele; persons interested in getting quick money, but not necessarily interested in the research project, *per se*.

Patricia Bell and Patricia Holmes similarly comment on the power problematics of payment, in the context of their research on prostitution:

...the aims and interests of researchers may not overlap with those of the researched. This is particularly an issue when researchers' behaviour mirrors that of 'punters', that is, taking what they want and departing. There is also an issue that this behaviour may stimulate a similar response from prostitutes and that they service the researcher in terms of giving them what they think they want.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ As for example in Teela Sanders' research on women involved in prostitution: "Feminist Ethics in Researching Prostitution", paper delivered., *Gendering Ethics/The Ethics of Gender. An International Interdisciplinary Conference*. Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, 25th June, 2000.

¹¹⁰ Patricia Bell and Patricia Holmes, "Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research on Prostitution", paper delivered, *Gendering Ethics/The Ethics of Gender. An International Interdisciplinary Conference*, Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, 25th June, 2000.

Regarding my own research, my instinct was that the majority of participants, *since friends*, would be offended if payment were included. The personal expression of thanks and a celebratory meal, for members of the focus groups, who had committed to a number of meetings, was considered a more appropriate approach. Furthermore, a substantial amount of research was already operative in the community because of regeneration plans, none of which included one-to-one payment. To offer payment would, then, mean setting up a precedent that would potentially be unhelpful to other research bodies operative in the estate; it would also, most likely, require further discussion with gatekeepers.

Related to the above concerns, is the ethical issue of *betrayal*, which also surfaced within my research. I wondered if realistically, in terms of workload, time constraints and financial limitations, I could be true to the promises of return I spontaneously offered the community to at the initial stages of research.¹¹¹ Furthermore, what was I to do about negative aspects of Fatima life which might surface? How could I ensure a just and sensitive handling, especially in light of the fact that two research interviewees explicitly communicated concerns that neither they, nor the community, be exploited by my research?¹¹² Renzetti and Lee emphasize the fact that any research analysis might well be expected to expose unsavoury aspects of the lives of interviewees and others.¹¹³ I was aware that my analysis would inevitably expose certain negative aspects of the moral life of the Fatima community (particularly as judged by 'outsider' moral standards). It was hoped to fairly present relevant, but *apparently* negative aspects, of research findings in such a manner that my account would be carefully and sensitively contextualized, while also retaining academic integrity. Interestingly, I found encouragement from the ethnographic interviews themselves. More than one interviewee explicitly expressed the desire that both the good and the bad be told about Fatima; a real and balanced portrayal of the life of the community was expected.¹¹⁴ Significantly, at no time during the interview processes was I requested to minimize apparently 'negative' aspects of life in Fatima. I was also aware that 'betrayal' extends to the research academic community itself, as when academics spoil the field for subsequent researchers.¹¹⁵ Individuals and communities who have experienced insensitive, unprofessional or unethical research are negatively disposed to future approaches by researchers and academic

¹¹¹ Early promises included: on-going creative workshops and the funding of such workshops, editorial control of interviews, the organization of a formal evening in All Hallows College, or Fatima Community Centre, where the women interviewed receive certificates acknowledging their part in the research process, etc. In reality only the former two promises were met. My unanticipated physical departure from both the Fatima and the All Hallows communities, in June 2002, meant that the latter promise was not wholly fulfilled.

¹¹² Interview with Gemma, 22/05/2001 and interview with Sheila: 15/03/2001.

¹¹³ See C.M. Renzetti and M. Lee, *Researching Sensitive Topics*, 254-256.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Niamh, 04/03/2002; also Sheila, 15/03/01.

¹¹⁵ Punch: 177.

institutes are thereby disadvantaged. This is especially the case when the researcher enters into a personal relationship with research participants. As Punch puts it : “(i)n the end, we leave the researched behind in the field setting and this can lead to acute feelings of abandonment and betrayal”.¹¹⁶ While I received no feedback to the effect that I spoiled the field for subsequent researchers, the fact that I left the community, in 2002, prior to the completion of my research, and that the completed research was not available to research participants for commentary, at that time, was a source of concern.

Another significant issue is the ethics of *research funding*. The central question here is who ultimately controls the research? Funded research is fraught with difficulties. After all, funding bodies have motives for wanting the research done; few, if any, are entirely altruistic. The research in question may, for example, be required to vindicate policies and practices. Questions raised include: to what extent is the funding body dictating and controlling the research process and outcomes and to what extent is the researcher independent of the funding body? Are there explicit or implicit pressures to direct or manipulate research outcomes and interpretations? Can academic integrity be assured? In practice the degree of autonomy given to the researcher in terms of methodology, change of direction, write-up, etc. varies considerably. Julianne Cheek writes that taking funding from a funding agency is not a neutral act and in applying to a funding agency the researcher must “consider the potentially conflicting agendas of funders, participants, and researchers”.¹¹⁷ Receipt of funding implies a relationship with that funder that obligates both parties in certain ways. Expectations and assumptions must be clarified prior to receipt of monies. Who actually owns the data or findings of the research? How might the data be used subsequent to the research? What happens if the findings are beneficial to the participants but may displease the sponsor? Might the sponsor veto the publication of research findings? This is particularly significant in the case of research on vulnerable or disenfranchised groups. Final contract requirements and conditions should be carefully scrutinized, with a view to the potential harm to either the persons researched or to academic integrity. With respect to my research, I was fortunate not to have my research compromised by sponsoring bodies.

Given my interest in gendered aspects of research, feminist insights on the ethics of research were highly relevant. Moral philosopher Margaret Urban Walker highlights the significance of a feminist ethics, writing: “...it puts the *authority* and *credibility* of representative claims about moral life under harsh light, and challenges epistemic and moral authority that is politically

¹¹⁶ Ibid.: 178.

¹¹⁷ Julianne Cheek, “An Untold Story? Doing Funded Qualitative Research” in Denzin & Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* : 401-420 at 409.

engineered and self-reinforcing”.¹¹⁸ Feminist scholar, Eileen Clark’s examination of the ethics of gender in oral history also provides a helpful account of feminist ethical concerns.¹¹⁹ She regards the purposes of oral history, for example, as those of redressing the gender, class, and race biases of ‘his’story, as well as of giving voice to subaltern people, by by-passing academic orthodoxies. Clark points out that feminist oral history is generally characterized by its challenge of traditional methodologies. Moreover it has a strong emotive component, is committed to praxis and concerned with the promise of making the story heard. It asks pertinent questions, such as what duty of care do we have, as we raise interests and expectations? It does not rest easy with a fundamental or minimalist ethics, that we merely do not do harm, but tends towards the further demand of justice, that we do good (beneficence). Here an ethics of justice is combined with an ethics of care.

Referring to Oakley’s work on interview processes, Clark draws attention to the ethical requirement of sensitivity to the differences involved in interviewing women and men. She draws attention to voice changes, silences, body changes, flow of speech changes, tone, inflection and pauses used. A record of the body language is required to more truly represent the exchange.¹²⁰ She also examines the dilemmas that can arise in relation to confidentiality, as, for example, when interviews say “I’ll tell you this but it is a secret!” The additional knowledge may have very direct relevance to and significance for the research; not to include this information might invalidate the research conclusions, but, on the other hand, to include it would be to betray confidentiality. I am in agreement with Clark: in such a case of conflicting values, (confidentiality versus academic integrity), the rights of the interviewee to confidentiality is paramount. Clark also raises the question of certain potentially ethical problems regarding interpretation. Sometimes we can apply an analytical framework with which the interviewees are not in agreement, as, for example, a feminist analysis with women who do not espouse feminism; a dilemma of my own. Feminist researcher Borland provides a refreshingly honest and insightful account of tensions experienced when she conducted an oral history on her grandmother.¹²¹ The research analysis focused on a day at the races during her grandmother’s youth. Borland interpreted her grandmother’s narrative in feminist terms exclusively, which evoked anger and

¹¹⁸ Urban Walker: 22.

¹¹⁹ Eileen Clark, “The Ethics of Gender in Oral History”, paper delivered, *Gendering Ethics/ the Ethics of Gender. An International Interdisciplinary Conference*, Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, 23rd June, 2000.

¹²⁰ In my own write-up of transcripts, I noted such aspects as sighs, pauses, awkwardness, laughter, energy etc. I also listened repeatedly to the tape recordings so as to access meanings more clearly. It was striking how easily the sole use of a script, without attention to bodily expressions, easily led to plausible, yet false interpretations.

¹²¹ See K. Borland, “ ‘That’s Not What I Said’ - Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research” in Berger Gluck and Patai (eds.) *Women’s Words*: 63-75.

disappointment in her grandmother (who did not espouse feminism). The grandmother she felt that her unique experience had been manipulated in order that her granddaughter's feminist ends could be advanced. This example raises questions about the process of 'befriending' - adopting a stance of empathy - often prioritized in feminist research. Ethically it involves maintaining a careful balance between the need for intimacy and distance; a 'constant movement in and out', of sharing the other's world, yet acknowledging that you are not in fact in that world, but in your own. Another feminist concern is how the women are presented in the write-up stage; as 'victims' or as strong women, striving for agency?¹²² In my own work I opted, as an ethnographer, for a both/and approach on this question, given that both profiles were readily evident in my interviewees' self interpretations. Finally, feminists such as Daphne Patai, Karen Olsen, Linda Shopes, Rina Benmayor and Sue Webb (among others) alert the researcher to the ethical challenges in relation to *power issues* when the researcher is interviewing 'down' . By this is meant research among groups less powerful (economically, politically, socially) than the researcher herself'.¹²³ One has to honestly reflect on the inherent politics involved, including the temptation of self-advancement in the academy at the expense of persons who have participated in research. Standing further argues that this is even more acute in the case of research on working class women.¹²⁴ She writes:

In the academic world, the language used often expresses values and understandings held by white, male, 'scientific' culture. It seems to me that, as bell hooks argues, one of the many uses of academic language is to reproduce an intellectual, white, male, middle-class hierarchy where the only work seen to be theoretical is work which is... highly abstract, difficult to read, and containing obscure references" (hooks, 1994) This ensures that certain knowledges are heard, while others are obscured and hidden.¹²⁵

Clearly then, unique ethical problems arise in feminist research, particularly in relation to women's personal stories or oral histories, which are prioritised methodologically. A feminist oral history is characterized by its challenge of traditional methodologies, and by reflections upon feminist ethical considerations. It has a strong emotive component, is committed to praxis and

¹²² This question is raised by Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner, in "The Ethics of Social Scientific Research Methods", paper delivered, *Gendering Ethics/the Ethics of Gender*, An International Interdisciplinary Conference, centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, 24th June, 2000.

¹²³ See Daphne Patai, "U.S. Academics and Third World Women: Is Ethical Research Possible?"; Karen Olsen and Linda Shopes, "Crossing Boundaries, Building Bridges: Doing Oral History among Working-Class Women and Men" and Rina Benmayor, "Testimony, Action Research, and Empowerment: Puerto Rican Women and Popular Education", in S. Berger Gluck and D. Patai, *Women's Words*: 137-153; 189-204 and 159-174. See also Sue Webb, "Counter-arguments: An ethnographic look at 'Women and Class' " in Liz Stanley (ed.) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1990, rep. 1991) 205-20.

¹²⁴ Standing: 189.

¹²⁵ Ibid.:194.

concerned with the promise of making the story heard. The feminist ethics asks pertinent questions, such as ‘what duties of justice and care do we have to those involved in the research process, as we raise interests and expectations?’

Related to questions of duty and care to research participants, the burdens of both *responsibility* and *guilt* borne by the researcher can be considerable.¹²⁶ My own experience was that, in many cases, the research interviews provided a space where women encountered immense personal pain and sometimes disillusionment. It was not enough to be temporarily sympathetic and move politely on; I now bore responsibility for the women who had revealed themselves. Kim Knott puts it this way:

You know, fieldwork is active work, where we are in relationship with people. Questions of responsibility, ethics, politics come into these things. How can they be left on one side? ...there will be occasions which come up that demand that we be ourselves in the interview situation. To try not to be, to pretend to be behind a glass screen, to pretend not to be in relationship with somebody is a vain hope and is unethical.¹²⁷

In these situations I was also reminded of the ‘ethical relation’ which occurs in human encounters, particularly as proposed by the philosopher Levinas, who, in his analysis of the ‘ethical relation’, insists that in the ‘face-to-face’ encounter between humans, the ‘I’ is responsible for the ‘Other’.¹²⁸ Personal anxiety regarding the handling of interviews which evoked pain and strong emotion, and a real concern regarding the provision of follow-up support, were a constant preoccupation in my own work; some guilt revolved around the following issues:

- 1) the difficulty of communicating the complex nature of academic research processes to interviewees, including the personal benefits to myself as researcher,
- 2) the very real possibility of exploiting women, who were prepared to be extremely vulnerable and disarmingly open, in the one-to-one ethnographic interviews, and
- 3) the interviewees’ ability to read typed transcripts and to comment on a written text, was an unrealistic expectation, in some cases, because of general literacy difficulties.

Regarding the burden of *responsibility*, the fact that a relationship of friendship and trust has been established between myself and interviewees, led to the problem that interviewees did not self-censor their conversation as readily as they would have in a situation where the interviewer is an unknown. On several occasions I felt an ethical obligation to halt tape recordings of interviews in order to clarify whether the woman being interviewed was content to have certain sensitive

¹²⁶ This aspect of research is insufficiently and inadequately examined in the literature, in my view.

¹²⁷ See Kim Knott, “Women Researching, Women Researched”: 199-218.

¹²⁸ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1985).

aspects of the conversation on record. Those interviewed were often, in practice, inclined to leave interpretations solely to myself, the perceived 'expert', despite many opportunities to engage more pro-actively, as indicated above.¹²⁹

Finally, as discussed in the introduction to this work, a significant methodological decision taken was to employ a classical ethnographic approach as opposed to a feminist approach with non-feminist Fatima women. In fidelity to the goals of ethnography, which presents cultural, including moral, meanings from the perspective of lived life of those researched, the research analysis uncovers a Fatima moral system on its own terms (chapters three and four) and subsequently critiques formal sources of moral theology from this base (chapters five and six).

2.5 CONCLUSION

In my primary research I was concerned to devise a culturally-appropriate methodology, taking into consideration the education/literacy levels of participants, the use of appropriate (Fatima) language, the preferred means of communication, and the politics of the local community. This chapter outlines my multi-method approach which included such processes as: immersion and participant observation, ethnographic interviews, focus groups, creative workshops and a research questionnaire with non-resident workers in the estate. I also included in the chapter central theoretical underpinnings of my research fieldwork practice. In this context I provided a critical examination of culture and ethnography in an attempt to identify those specific ethnographic practices most appropriate to my research goals, concluding that an ethnographic approach with focusing on an analysis of *cultural themes* would best serve my purposes. Also, since gender is a central category in my research, I included a specific examination of gender perspectives pertaining to narrative and discourse. The chapter furthermore highlighted a number of ethical challenges and dilemmas which were encountered over the course of the research, including issues of informed consent, confidentiality, the return due to the community, promise-keeping, potential betrayal of the community, and issues of power relations. This, together with the ethical problematic of the critique of emergent findings, is an aspect of my research which is later elaborated upon in greater detail (chapter seven).

Having presented a comprehensive account of, and justification for, the methodological aspects of the research, including ethical challenges arising, I now present an in-depth analysis of research findings in the case of my primary research processes.

¹²⁹ In reality, out of the twenty women interviewed only two returned to me with concerns.

CHAPTER THREE

VALUES AND MORAL AGENCY IN FATIMA: AN EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL THEMES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Seven years as a participant observer of Fatima everyday life alerted me to the possibility that a unique moral life was being lived out within the boundary confines of the Fatima community; one with its own internal logic. As one Fatima resident put it: “In Fatima we have our own rules...”¹ It appeared, upon observation and by means of an initial review of the literature, that the Fatima moral system differed from the dominant ethics in Irish society and from discussions of morality presented in formal sources of theology in the Irish context. The purpose of this chapter is to begin to test this hypothesis by identifying and exploring central values and defining features of the moral practice of the Fatima community. This is facilitated by means of the classical ethnographic method of isolating significant cultural themes (chapter two). Since this documentation and exploration of Fatima’s value system and morality is one of the primary aims of this research, I wish to emphasise the centrality of this chapter with respect to the thesis as a whole. My analysis prioritises the ethnographic category of self-description and variously facilitates a Fatima moral voice. It provides a comprehensive, analytical account of the Fatima ethical experience, *on Fatima’s own terms*, in the form of a comprehensive ‘thick description’ of Fatima cultural themes.² This is an original contribution to the field of social ethics (or moral theology) in the Irish context and, as such, provides an important foundation for future comparative research in the field (chapter seven).

In order to facilitate a workable organization of my research findings and analysis, the seven over-arching cultural themes, first isolated by means of participant observation and initial pilot interviews, are used as a basic structural framework. These include: *children: protection and future; women and men: perceptions and roles; relationships: familial and social; individual and community: inseparable realities; survival: persistence and resistance; drugs: a significant culture shaper, and celebration: living life in the moment*. Taking each of these over-arching cultural themes in turn, I give voice to a Fatima ethics by highlighting and exploring selected aspects of Fatima women’s oral histories (including, self-descriptions), focus group narratives and the findings of questionnaire research with non-residential workers in the Fatima estate

¹ Comment by a Fatima resident, recorded in field notes, 17/03/2001.

² For a fully comprehensive list of all Fatima-related cultural themes, see appendix B.

(among other sources). Themes and sub-themes which are more prevalent and/or more energised in the narrative accounts are prioritized in these explorations. A further determining factor with respect to selectivity is originality. I focus on aspects of Fatima life not already comprehensively addressed elsewhere in the public forum. However, in order to situate this, necessarily selective, narrative analysis within a more comprehensive framework, I include an inventory of the over-arching themes, themes and sub-themes in tabulated form (Tables 1-7).

Importantly, I do not intend to construct a theology of Fatima, *per se*. This analysis is strictly ethnographic (in the traditional or classical sense) and is intended as:

- 1) an original case study demonstration of a ‘thick description’ of inner city ethics, which, being ethnographic, articulates the research-community’s moral voice and experience on its own terms and therefore provides a unique hermeneutical tool for a critique of dominant ethical systems in society;
- 2) an analytical model for future comparative research on inner city ethical systems, and
- 3) an in-depth sociological description of inner city ethics, which provides a necessary and solid foundation and resource for any future ethics or contextual theology of the Irish inner city.

Finally, I wish to note that there is an inevitable tension when the ethnographic approach uncovers communal meanings which are ethically problematic from alternative ethical perspectives. In this exploration, while I uncover Fatima themes by means of ethnography, I do not espouse a relativist ethical position; in other words, I do not take the view that the emergent findings are beyond critique. Instead, I take the view that every ethical system has both strengths and limitations and requires critical refinement by means of a dialogue with other perspectives. Therefore, while in this chapter I primarily seek to give voice to a Fatima ethics on Fatima’s own terms, in line with classical ethnography, I also identify throughout the analysis cultural themes and moral stances which are not compatible with a variety of alternative ethical systems, such as official and traditional sources of Christian ethics, moral philosophies (deontology, teleology and virtue ethics) and/or liberationist and feminist perspectives. Contentious ethical findings are further elaborated upon in the concluding chapter when the problematic of the critique of emergent findings is explored (chapter seven).

Having clarified the purpose and structure of this particular analysis, I begin with an exploration of the primary value identified in the life of the Fatima community, namely, the care and protection of Fatima children.

3.2 FATIMA CHILDREN: THEIR PROTECTION AND THEIR FUTURE

The primary value of a profound *care for the children* of Fatima emerges from the data as the most characteristic, over-arching, cultural theme in the life of Fatima. This central value was clearly communicated in the one-to-one interviews with women residents, where, as a value, it was intimately bound up with perceptions of mothering. Manifest in many ways, this central theme can be organized according to inter-linked sub-themes, such as: *good mothering, conflicts in the mothering role, the responsibilities of mothering, concerns about children's health (including housing), being there for the children, and child protection*. Interviews revealed that being a good mother is an enormous source of both pride and concern in the community, as is the provision of a better future for the children. The mothering role also extends beyond the immediate family to the wider community. Single women, grandmothers and neighbouring mothers have traditionally acted out surrogacy mothering roles; a phenomenon which is still apparent and has moral significance, as we shall later see.

Sarah's story can be taken to illustrate some of the more prevalent themes and concerns pertaining to care of the children and perceptions of 'good' mothering that typically surfaced in the ethnographic interviews.³ Asked for a self-description, she immediately casts herself in the role of mother, without reference to her partner, and also aligns herself closely with the Fatima community. Indeed it is generally observable in Fatima that *mothering* can often be substituted for *parenting* since many mothers are lone mothers without partner support (chapter one). Sarah's almost complete self-identification with the mothering role highlights the primary value in Sarah's life, namely her children and their future. When asked how local people might describe her she says:

It is a hard one! (*laughs*) God, they'd have to say I am dedicated to the kids cos I mean they are my life ... I don't really have a life after the kids, kind of... they're just everything... like everything I do is for them and if it is not involving them it is for them... so they'd have to say I'm totally... you know ... my mind is set on the kids and that's it. There's nothing much else to me really, if you know what I mean...⁴

Sarah clearly idolizes her children and in many ways seeks to live through them; her future and theirs are intimately connected. She encourages her children to stand up for themselves, speak their minds, display their personal talents and apologize to no one for their existence. Like the majority of Fatima mothers she is also determined to get adequate accommodation for the

³ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001

⁴ Ibid.

family.⁵ She is proud of herself as a mother and especially of the fact that her children are now notably independent and confident. Like many other interviewees, Sarah spontaneously used the term “a good mother” to describe herself.⁶ Indeed this term was identified in my research as a ‘key phrase’; one recurring often in the self-definition of Fatima women.⁷ My research also revealed clear cultural differences in understandings of *good mothering* between Fatima members and non-resident questionnaire respondents. This difference is well summed up by one questionnaire respondent: “Care of children (a value) does not translate always into care of hygiene, clothes, homework, discipline, supervision”.⁸ Different interpretations of events are also in evidence. For example, while young children wandering around the Fatima estate, until very late hours, is interpreted as child neglect by certain questionnaire respondents, this is not necessarily the case from a Fatima perspective since a cultural moral code in Fatima is that community members watch out for the children in the estate, particularly within blocks.⁹

Cultural differences are therefore present regarding interpretations of and the practice of mothering. Cultural differences are also evident in the *conflicts inherent in the mothering role* itself. This was a further sub-theme, which characterized Fatima women’s interviews. In interviewing Sarah certain conflicts of values inherent in her mothering role came strongly to the fore. She pointed out that people in general in the flats would describe her as “organized with the kids and a good mother”, a description she values, whereas her brother, with whom she was once very close, would probably see her as boring because she is now “settled” with children and insisting on basic house rules (such as no beer parties, no drug use, no loud music nor parties in her flat).¹⁰ Her mothering role has therefore been a source of *personal* conflict in her family setting. It has also been a source of *moral* conflict in relation to both her immediate and wider family. She recounts, for example, the dilemma of reporting her violent partner to the Gardaí (police), in order to protect her children. The outcome of this action was that he was given a two-year jail sentence and she was ostracized and intimidated by his family for ‘ratting’ (reporting):

⁵ Repeatedly throughout the research processes the dream of getting “a house” (by means of a transfer out of the estate or a re-housing within the community) was highlighted.

⁶ Significantly, none of the women interviewees identified themselves as a “bad mother”.

⁷ See Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, “Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story” in Gluck and Patai, *Women’s Words*: 77-92 at 79-80.

⁸ RQF, general comments, respondent H.

⁹ Non-resident workers also expressed concerns about the appropriateness of intervention regarding issues such as the hygiene of the children, their diet, their exposure to smoking and their perceived general neglect. Significantly, *none* of these issues were raised by Fatima residents as problematic in their explorations of concerns and tensions in their mothering roles. RQF, Q.11, respondents B, N, P and R.

¹⁰ The term ‘settled’, as used here, refers to coming off drugs, providing regular meals for the children and the setting down of house rules. Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

I wasn't eating. I wasn't sleeping. I was crying all the time. It was *horrible*, you know. People were calling me a rat and everything... I had his Ma giving me a hard time as well... you know I tried to explain to him in letters and all like... I felt I had to do it because... for the kids' protection really ... do you know what I mean? ¹¹

Sarah's situation indicates the enormous *responsibilities of mothering* (another oft-repeated sub-theme) especially where the partner is absent, unsupportive and/or violent, which interviews reveal is very often the case. Discussions regarding the responsibilities inherent in mothering clearly indicate that women in the community would appear to bear most, and often all, of the responsibility for childrearing. Marie, a lone parent, who describes herself as a "hell of a good mother", comments that "you just have to cope... you've brought two children into the world and it's up to you to look after them... that's the way I look at it."¹² Side by side with this overall sense of responsibility was another recurring motif, namely, the *absence of choices*, which was closely aligned with a sense of *powerlessness*. This is a sentiment found explicitly in Nicole's interview. When asked to comment on her self-description of being a good mother and rearing her children well, she laughs, saying: "sure I've no choice... I have to!"¹³ It was notable that this key phrase, "I have/had no choice", recurred often in research interviews. Despite the commonplace perceived lack of choice regarding mothering and the powerlessness associated with this, the value of *being there* for the children, no matter what the circumstance, is clearly highlighted throughout many of the interviews, though at times this is a source of an internal conflict. This is well illustrated in Mel's account of an incidence of domestic violence, perpetrated against her by her partner, where she ran out of the house, leaving her son behind:

I was afraid that if his Da missed me with a punch he'd get him... he busted my lip and everything and I remember running to the door and I always swore that if I was leaving I'd never leave without me child, and I left without him (the child)... I remember getting to the hall door and having my son by the hand and me partner lifted me up by the throat and I don't know how he [*her son*] let me go but I just got the hall door open and ran like hell.¹⁴

Mel adds that having separated from her violent partner, and now being a lone mother, she is at her happiest. Lone-parenting provides her with the ideal opportunity to be there for her child at all times, as well as being able to pursue her own personal and educational development in a local, child-friendly study programme. For Mel, lone-parenting, together with the support of her extended family and friends, provides a more peaceful and healthy environment to rear her son

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Interview with Marie, 23/05/2001. Some small non-substantive changes have been made to the text in order to preserve confidentiality.

¹³ Interview with Nicole, 08/10/2001

¹⁴ Interview with Mel, 13/12/2001

and guarantees maximum protection for herself and her child. A contrasting case, however, is found in Mary's story, where we find a mother experiencing the internal conflict between *being there* for her son (who had assisted in the theft of a neighbour's property) and her respect for her neighbours:

The lady came to me and told me what happened... she didn't want to go to the guards cos she knew me ... I wasn't happy. I wanted things to be sorted out cos he should never have done what he done ... I had to see this woman every day and I had the guilt... seeing her, knowing he was actually in her garden while her place was getting robbed ... so I told (the police)... and he paid for his crime.¹⁵

For many Fatima mothers, *being there* for the children also means providing ongoing care in situations of ill-health; a defining feature of Fatima, for adults and children alike. With Debbie, for example, her *children's health*, in particular, is brought to the fore as a primary value: "I have three girls... three, six and nine... they're after suffering with their kidneys... we've been through the mill"¹⁶ Further health problems identified in interviews included: damaged kidneys, meningitis, cochlear septicaemia, surgery for circumcision, surgery for grommets, fluid on the hip and a broken arm, as well as tonsil, adenoid and nose problems. In interviews, health problems are often blamed on the unhealthy Fatima environment and on inadequate housing conditions, particularly the dampness in the flats.¹⁷

Protection of children's health was but one illustration of the overall child protection, which is an integral part of Fatima life. An analysis of child protection, and the moral codes and practices surrounding child protection, elicited a number of practises deemed morally wrong or unacceptable by the Fatima community, the most serious of which was putting children at risk, by means of drug pushing (which is unambiguously regarded by the community to be immoral).¹⁸ Child sexual abuse, or allegations of such in Fatima, is commonly reacted to in a

¹⁵ Interview with Mary, 15/05/2001. A notable historical case of a Fatima mother abandoning her children and her husband, Desmond Doyle, challenging the Irish courts to gain custody of his children, is the substance of the autobiography by Evelyn Doyle, *Evelyn: a True Story*. (London: Orion, 2002). This autobiography was made into an award winning film: Paul Perder (writer), Bruce Beresford (director), *Evelyn*, Irish Dream Time, 2002.

¹⁶ Interview with Debbie, 26/04/2001. As with Sarah, Debbie does not include any reference to her partner in her self-description, but does her children.

¹⁷ Interviews with Anita, 30/05/2001 and Debbie 26/04/2001. Dampness in the flats as a health issue was also identified in the research questionnaire findings. Here it was viewed as an injustice to the adults and children who deserve better. RQF, Q.9, respondents F and Q.

¹⁸ RQF, Q.14, respondent B.

violent manner.¹⁹ Interviews indicated that a specific form of child neglect, frowned upon in Fatima culture, is the neglect of children by their own mothers.²⁰

The question of child protection also arose (to a lesser extent) in the context of the abuse of children in Religious-run institutions in the State. During my time in Fatima, and subsequent to that time, certain significant television and radio productions and general publications graphically exposed the abuse of women and children in Religious-run institutions, including reform or industrial schools, residential care institutions, orphanages and ‘Magdalen laundries’ (chapter one).²¹ One individual spoke of his personal experience, as a child, in a Religious-run reform school “down the country” with dread, sadness, anger and a strong sense of injustice, but not without pride in having overcome such a turbulent childhood and having carved out a meaningful existence despite the odds.²² I was alerted by this, and similar discussions, to the direct link between poverty and placements in orphanages and reform centres.²³

The research questionnaire interviews also provided insight into the care of children in Fatima. It is noteworthy that fourteen questionnaire respondents, out of eighteen, spontaneously identified care of the children as the primary value in the Fatima community.²⁴ Questionnaire responses are insightful. Many parents want their children to achieve what they themselves did not achieve; that parents would fight tooth and nail for their children, even when the children are clearly in the wrong; that parents don’t let rules get in the way of care and compassion where the children are concerned, and that, while parents are often hard on their children, they still try to give them the best of everything, sometimes to the detriment of their own well-being and sanity.²⁵ Focus-group interviews similarly highlighted care of the children in a number of ways. In the *Training for Transformation* group, for example, Colette described an animated

¹⁹The practice of burning out the flats of residents suspected of child abuse would appear to be a commonplace practice in Dublin communities that are culturally and socio-economically similar to Fatima. This is a unique child-protection role that males in such communities assume.

²⁰ RQF, Q.15, respondent D.

²¹ See Mary Killon, *Child Mistreatment in Ireland*. M.A. Research Thesis. (Unpublished), M.A. in Culture, Religion and Society in Modern Ireland, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. 2001.

²² Informal interview with Seamus, 15/07/1998.

²³ This discussion is taken up later, in chapter six.

²⁴ One respondent summed the general view up by saying: “there is not one mother, no matter how dysfunctional, that does not love her kids”. RQF, Q.9, respondent R.

²⁵ RQF, Q.9, respondents B, C, I, N, P, Q and R. Participant observation confirms these observations. Commonly parents struggle with enormous debts in order to provide for their children’s needs and demands, particularly at times such as Christmas, First Communion, Confirmation, etc. People from the wider local area often comment on the perceived excessiveness and folly of this expenditure. There is also a suggestion by non-residents that some of this expenditure is motivated primarily by the desire to *be seen to provide* by neighbours and outsiders alike.

group session conducted with Fatima residents, where the group members explored images from poetry and their relevance to life in Fatima. She recalls one particular image of going through great personal suffering yet getting up the next morning for the sake of the children which was like “gold-dust to the women”, in that they identified intimately with the experience. In this same interview Frank commented: “there is an incredible concern about children... maternal... a hugely strong maternal thing. They would kill for their children... very protective, you know.”²⁶

I wish to reiterate that the above narrative-based analysis is necessarily selective. Therefore, it is helpful to situate it within a fully comprehensive inventory of the thick description of cultural themes pertaining to *children: protection and future* (Table 1). This thick description more accurately reflects the complexities of this cultural theme and, moreover, provides for a comparative analysis with other inner city communities. This ‘thick description’ was derived from close and repeated coding and cross referencing of primary research data, with respect to recurring themes, commonalities and dissimilarities, as well as points of ‘generative’ or energised discussion (chapter two). The comprehensive framework reinforces the above observation that Fatima is a predominantly child-centred community. Women in the community, as a rule, bear (willingly) the most part of the parenting and childrearing roles, although with significant support from family and the wider community. They also live many of their personal dreams through their children. Lone parenting, the dominant family type, is generally described positively. Women protect their children fiercely: they cover up for them and defend them regardless from any outsider challenge or threat. Perceptions of child neglect differ from Fatima residents to ‘outsiders’. Predominant concerns, with respect to the children’s future include: access, equal opportunity, educational development and training, employment, housing, freedom from discrimination and stigmatisation.

With respect to problematic ethical areas in the emergent findings, the extent to which the moral worldview of Fatima is child-centred raises questions about the self-valuing of Fatima adults, both female and male. The potentially oppressive nature of an ethical system whereby adults, particularly women, sacrifice their personal happiness and fulfilment in an on-going way, for the sake of their children, finds significant challenges in the tradition of Christian ethics, liberationist/feminist perspectives, and in the predominantly liberal tradition of mainstream Irish society (among other ethical systems).²⁷ Moreover, the fact that women predominantly bear the burden of parenting, due to the general absence of the male, and to the

²⁶ Interview with the *Training for Transformation* facilitators, 03/12/2001.

²⁷ This problematic is elaborated upon in chapter seven, when the challenge of critiquing emergent findings is discussed in the contexts of research methodology and research ethics.

dominance of lone parent households, raises serious ethical questions about the function of women within the community. In order to explore this more fully we next turn to an examination of gender perceptions and roles within Fatima.

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Fatima Children	Parenting	Children are embraced by the community Women's/men's child-related roles Family/community support in pregnancy 'Good' Mothering Self identification with the mothering role Responsibilities of mothering 'Being there' for your child, regardless Conflict within the mothering role Lone parenting as the dominant family model Practical demonstrations of love/care Mother-daughter relationships Provision for children Surrogacy Neglect by the child's mother
	Child Protection	Mother-to-mother confrontation over children Exposure to the drugs culture Perceptions of child neglect Children being 'street wise' Communal care of children V nuclear family Defending children in conflict situations Covering up for children Protection of children's health Protection from sexual abuse/paedophiles Powerlessness Absence of choices
	The Future	Community development & regeneration Living one's dreams through the children Equal opportunity Access Freedom from discrimination Education, development & employment Roles in family & community Providing a house for the children

TABLE 1. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
FATIMA CHILDREN: PROTECTION & FUTURE

3.3 WOMEN AND MEN: PERCEPTIONS AND ROLES

Gender is "the way members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated and expected to behave".²⁸

²⁸ Alice Schlegel, cited in Ursula King (ed.), *Religion and Gender* (Oxford, UK/Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell, 1995) 5.

My Fatima gender analysis begins with an exploration of the perceptions and roles of Fatima women. This analysis is necessarily selective and must be situated within the more comprehensive ‘thick description’ of Fatima themes presented below (Table 2). When specifically asked what words or adjectives might be used to describe women in Fatima, questionnaire respondents suggested the following: Fatima women are real women; not pretentious; they are full of life, ready for anything and brave; they are the backbone of Fatima, the organizers, the ones with energy and voice, the ‘doers’; they are also survivors, extremely resourceful; longsuffering, tolerant and self-contained; they exude at times a great sense of strength and belonging and great fun. Less positively, women in Fatima were also described as being neglected and not listened to; being shattered and very fragile; not using their potential; often depressed and typically underachievers.²⁹ Much of this description can be explained by the roles that women take up in Fatima; roles that are moulded by the female socialization processes operative in the culture of the estate. Fatima women are socialized into a mothering role from an early age, which is a problematic from many diverse ethical perspectives, not least feminist (chapter seven).³⁰ It would appear that, from a very young age, girls are socialized into aspiring towards motherhood, though not in the context of a nuclear family and without an expectation of support from a partner. When asked to identify and name socialisation messages picked up by girls in Fatima, questionnaire respondents provided a clear consensus that, while women get mixed messages, the socialization of young girls is primarily geared towards an independent and early mothering role, one which clearly affirms women’s purpose and strength. Messages include:

- You grow up and have babies, have a good little home and get your rights;
- It is alright to be sexually explicit at a young age... there is no great shame in having a baby at a young age... the permanent, stable relationship is not to be expected;
- A women’s role is as mother and carer;
- You’ve got to be strong and look after yourself. Don’t expect anyone else to;
- You don’t have many choices. Childbearing is expected, not an added bonus;
- Be aware of the power you have, sexually, and be conscious of exploiting it in dress and appearance;
- You have to be strong to survive; you can develop yourself at any stage;

²⁹ RQF, Q.16, respondents D, G, H, N and Q.

³⁰ On socialisation and ‘lone mothering’ see Kay Standing, “Writing the Voices of the Less Powerful: Research on Lone Mothers”, in J. Ribbens and R. Edwards, (eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives* (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998, rep. 2000) 186-202.

- Be tough, fend for yourself, tell lies, be submissive to men, be good mothers, keep your expectations low.³¹

This process of socialization may account for the relatively high incidence of teenage pregnancy and the large number of single mothers in the estate (chapter one). My research confirms the view that new-borns are predominantly welcomed into the community. Donna, one teenage mother, describes her pregnancy as “brilliant”.³² She enthuses: “I am happy about it... I wouldn’t change it or anything. I always wanted to be a mother...a lot of people would have said I was very natural, especially for a young girl”.³³ In one informal interview with a Fatima grandparent, however, the wider implications of teenage pregnancy were expressed, including the burden placed by a teenage pregnancy on the family with respect to child support, and regret that her daughter did not achieve academically as a result.³⁴ In such cases daughters are often heavily dependent upon their mothers and grandmothers for both emotional and practical support. In these descriptions a key phrase is ‘*strong women*’ in relation to Fatima mothers. *Mother-daughter bonds* are very close, and daughters often seek to emulate their mothers.³⁵ Marie proudly highlights her mother’s resilience; though illiterate and a widow, with three young children, she, of necessity, worked outside of the home, after her husband’s death, and reared her children single-handedly.³⁶ Fluffy also speaks proudly of the supporting role played by her mother and insists that the direct and persistent interventions of her mother saved her sister from drugs.³⁷ She draws parallels between herself and her mother:

- F Only for me Ma. If me Ma had never taken me sister out of the flat she would have been dead from drugs. You know... me Ma used to always say to me ‘I’d have done the same for you if I knew... I’d have took you out of your own flat if I’d have known...’.
- I (later) ... your Ma is really strong...
- F Yea, she is very strong now, for the whole lot of us ... like if we have any problems at all we go to her...
- F (later, regarding her partner)... he’s very soft with me. I’m still the strong one at the end of the day. If I didn’t like what he was doing I’d run amuck at him and, if he said it to me, I’d say “tough!”... that’s the way I am...
- I You’re the strong one in the relationship?
- F Yea... I take after me Ma... me Ma’s like that... strong...
- I (later) ... how do you feel, *in general*, in Fatima Mansions... how are the women and how are the men?
- F I think the women is a lot stronger than the men. If there is anything going on they’d get out... the men don’t. They hide behind...[the women]

³¹ RQF, Q. 17, respondents A, B, C, D, G, H, J, K, Q.

³² Interview with Donna, 12/11/2001

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Interview with Terri, 20/16/2002

³⁵ In particular the resilient and responsible roles played by grandmothers and mothers in rearing children in such a challenging environment is strongly emphasised. Interviewee with Marie, 23/05/2001.

³⁶ Interview with Marie, 23/05/2001.

³⁷ Interview with Fluffy, 27/04/2001.

I Why do you think they hide behind? What's that about?

F I think it's they way they were reared, you know. The way your mother brought you up.³⁸

Indeed, that Fatima women exhibit a characteristic strength was highlighted on a number of occasions during the research process. Research questionnaire descriptions of women in Fatima included the following comments: "the women are matriarchal... they could hit or hug you, they are strong, they tell it how it is, they are sexy and sensual ... like peacocks strutting their stuff; proud to be women" also "they are matriarchs in their families and they are community leaders".³⁹ Similarly, in the *Training for Transformation* interview process, Frank explicitly used the term 'matriarchal' to describe the community.⁴⁰ The validity of the notion of the community being a matriarchal one is, in my view, questionable, given that women's power in Fatima is hugely limited, particularly so in the contexts of male-female relationships and of women's relationships with power structures in the wider community. Undoubtedly many Fatima women have a strong and unapologetic sense of themselves, and a keen awareness of their power, within the immediate public sphere of their own local community, and they exercise this power effectively, but both participant observation and one-to-one interviews with women residents have repeatedly indicated that, beyond this limited sphere of influence, women generally experience a very real powerlessness in their lives. Indeed, a repeated theme in the one-to-one interviews, conducted with women residents, was the general inadequacy that many women feel when dealing with outsiders, including experiences of *voicelessness* and *powerlessness*, a general lack of confidence in public meetings, and an inability to comprehend wider politics. Borrowing from Aisling Deignan, I preferred to describe Fatima as a 'woman-identified' community, since this term recognizes the real but limited sphere of power of women within a community (chapter four).⁴¹

Self and community descriptions in my research both indicated a tension or polarity between the characteristics of *strength and vulnerability* in many of the women's stories.⁴² This tension is evident, as, for example, in Paula's description of herself as 'soft' and only gaining self-confidence at this stage, yet if pushed she insists that she can "be as strong as the next".⁴³ It is also evident in Marie's description of having to "split myself in two" in order to manage the on-

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ RQF, Q.16, respondents E and O.

⁴⁰ *Training for Transformation* interview, 03/12/2001.

⁴¹ Aisling Deignan, "Gender and Development: a Case Study". Paper submitted as part requirement for M.A. (Equality Studies), University College Dublin, Nov. 1998. Unpublished.

⁴² The theme of *strength and vulnerability* is clearly reflected in the report *Making Fatima a Better Place to Live*, where the community is described as an enduring community as well as one that endures. See Mary Corcoran, *Making Fatima a Better Place to Live*. (FGU & Dublin Corporation, 1997) 18-41.

⁴³ Interview with Paula, 25/05/2001

going and conflicting demands of child rearing, work outside of the home and her often imprisoned drug addict partner.⁴⁴ The theme is further evidenced in Anita's self-description, which indicates an internal polarization or conflict between her clarity and self-confidence, on one hand, and her inability to act without support, on the other:

- A I've always been clear on everything I've wanted... but I've always been very insecure
 I (later in the interview) ... what do you know you are capable of doing?
 A What do I know I'm capable of doing? ... Anything I want! ... and I know I can do it but it's just, as I say, the insecurity... of feeling I won't be able to do it... one side of me is saying 'you're useless... you couldn't do it...

This same theme of *strength and vulnerability* was also explicitly highlighted in my research questionnaire findings, as pertaining to the community in general, females and males: "I see the community as very powerful and very weak at the same time";⁴⁵ and "these are a resilient people with the capacity to put up with an enormous amount of pain and misery and they can still laugh!"⁴⁶ This theme was also independently identified and explored in my *Training for Transformation* focus group interview. The facilitator, Colette, surmised that people in the group generally displayed two sides; a "tough exterior" together with an "immense vulnerability".⁴⁷ In Fatima having a tough exterior is a necessary requirement for *survival*.

A striking and recurring feature of women's perceptions of men in the estate was the general absence of men, both physically and emotionally.⁴⁸ Questionnaire responses regarding how *men* in Fatima might be described had a most surprising degree of unanimity in relation to the *perceived absence of males*.⁴⁹ Responses included the following: Men? I would say- *non existing*- I only got to know one man...they hide or something... I don't know where they are; quiet, but...; not a visible presence... they have a certain amount of authority but are not involved in community development; they are invisible, marginalized, henpecked, lost; lazy and don't take initiative; they are invisible and insignificant; inactive distant, withdrawn; absent... I don't see a lot of them; they don't engage in too much chat; they are absent and

⁴⁴ Interview with Marie, 23/05/2001.

⁴⁵ RQF, Q.7, respondent O.

⁴⁶ RQF, Q.7, respondent R.

⁴⁷ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

⁴⁸ Interviews with Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001; Nicole, 08/10/2001; Marie, 23/05/2001; Donna, 12/11/2001; Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001; Sarah, 03/03/2001; Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001 and Melanie, 13/12/2001.

⁴⁹ This phenomenon of male absence and marginalization is reminiscent of descriptions of males in Elliot Liebow's classic ethnographic text *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*. Hyland Lewis. Foreword. (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1967) 5.

more powerless here than anywhere else... paranoid; there are men in Fatima? I know very few. You hear about them from the women and that is about it.⁵⁰

In the Corcoran Report (1998) the general absence of, and marginalization of, men is similarly singled out for special attention as a striking feature of the estate.⁵¹ Subsequent research by Deignan provides a more in-depth analysis.⁵² Traditionally, while males in Fatima were rarely involved in domestic or childcare duties, and were often not the sole breadwinners in the home, they were nonetheless considered the heads of the household and played a significant role in the maintenance of family life. More recently, the female-headed lone parent family has become the most typical household type. Though statistically recorded as 'lone parents' these family types typically include a co-habiting male partner. Deignan points out that in Fatima women control the environment in terms of being the main earners, owners of property leases, guardians of the children and community leaders.⁵³ Apart from this striking depiction of the absence of men, other questionnaire responses in regard to males in Fatima were also of interest. Included were the comments that: males were seen to be a product of their environment, believing it to be acceptable to beat up women; that men refuse women their independence; that they drink excessively and squander money with no accountability; that they are intimidating, sometimes violent and aggressive; that they are lazy, under-motivated and are generally irresponsible as parents.⁵⁴

More positive descriptions were also provided, such as that: some men in the estate were genuinely nice, very co-operative and accepting, once they don't feel threatened; they can be pleasant, good humoured, witty and funny; some are actively engaged in parenting and there are "some decent guys who go out to work".⁵⁵ Indeed a number of the women, in the privacy of a confidential one-to-one interview, spoke of having very happy and rewarding relationships with supportive and loving partners.⁵⁶ Interestingly, in the *Training For Transformation* interview, Frank made the point that, while there are many men in Fatima that their women partners will openly criticize, there are also many good men in Fatima that women will support: "in the group men were important, not dismissed as unimportant... my sense was that decent

⁵⁰ RQF, Q.19, respondents A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I, J, K, L, N, O, P, Q and R.

⁵¹ Corcoran: 39-40.

⁵² Deignan: 2

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ RQF, Q. 19.

⁵⁵ RQF, Q.19, respondent K.

⁵⁶ Interestingly, from the perspective of cultural mores, there appeared to be a certain reluctance to speak positively about one's partner, whereas negative speech about one's partner seemed not only acceptable, but also commonplace and public.

men were valued and bastards were called the bastards they were”.⁵⁷ The widespread failure to represent more positive aspects of men’s lives and the failure to present a balanced and factual account of the reality of the Fatima male experience, *from the Fatima male perspective*, was the subject matter of an impassioned comment by community resident Sheila:

... people do things like that and it usually has an eroding impact on the community... people look at it and feel damaged and it does not help what the outside think of Fatima.... To do that to the men in the community... there’s a lot of men who work in this community...⁵⁸

Perceptions of men, by women in the estate, were explored in several interviews. In the *Training for Transformation* interview both negative and positive perceptions of men, by women in the estate, were identified. Collette describes her personal embarrassment and discomfort, as a facilitator, on her first day with the Fatima group, because of sexual comments made loudly to a male worker by local women: “Oh, I’ll have you, I’ll have you... be in my small group, come over here to me... there is no chair... oh, sit on me...”⁵⁹ This same male worker subsequently described the manner in which Fatima women relate to males, in general:

They are sexually explicit and have often passed violent comments towards me as a male worker but would back off if challenged; it’s a way of getting back at men... sexual humiliation of the male worker... that’s where women see power...bravado coming from their feelings of displacement.⁶⁰

Questionnaire explorations regarding the *socialization of boys* and the messages they pick up about being a man in Fatima led to the following comments, which tended to reinforce a general *machismo* and limited responsibilities for males:

- a tough exterior... be macho;
- it’s acceptable to subjugate women;
- you’ve got to be hard;
- be good at fighting your corner;
- it’s not cool to be into education;
- be tough, look after yourself... early school leaving is part of the macho culture;
- be macho... a big boy...big boys don’t cry;

⁵⁷ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

⁵⁸ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

⁵⁹ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

⁶⁰ RQF, Q.11, respondent C, and ‘general comments’, respondent D.

- you have to be macho, aggressive... assert your space... fight your corner... not much is expected of you in terms of development and achievement, and
- don't lick up to authority.

There was also a general consensus that males do not tend to take up significant roles in the community and are notably absent from community development processes, with the odd exception, namely, the men who run the football club and one male youth worker working on the Fatima Community Employment (CE) Scheme, at the time of research. Traditionally, men in Fatima have not applied for CE positions, most likely due to its limited financial incentive and also due to difficulties associated with entering what is traditionally seen as women's sphere of dominance and control in the estate.

Finally, it is notable that, despite extensive research and preparations on behalf of the community, and Dublin Corporation, regarding the regeneration of Fatima, no comprehensive proposals regarding gender and development were in evidence by 2002. The above illustrations of male gender perceptions and roles have to be considered within the more comprehensive framework, provided in the thick description below (Table 2). Here we see that further related cultural themes include: male bonding rituals, including beer parties in the blocks, the male 'pub/bookies' culture, male machismo and aggression, males as role models for Fatima children, and the socio-politics of the (sur) naming of children.

With respect to problematics arising within the emergent cultural themes, the above analysis points towards certain oppressive aspects of Fatima gendered relations. The negative implications of the Fatima socialisation processes for human dignity and flourishing, division of labour, and equality in power relations are illustrated. While gendered relations are variously examined in diverse ethical systems, the feminist analysis of gender socialisation provides, in particular, an in-depth critique of gender roles and socialisation processes in society. Because of its direct relevance to the Fatima socialisation processes uncovered here, the feminist critique of socialisation is later discussed in greater depth (chapter 7).

Apart from gendered relations within Fatima, further relationships which are examined in the following section are also revelatory of Fatima's inherent values. These include relationships with family, friends, the local community, wider communities ('outsiders'), Irish society and the churches.

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Fatima Women & Men	Fatima Women	Female socialisation Socialisation & early mothering Self description Women's strength Women's vulnerability Voicelessness & powerlessness Female employment & training Community involvement Mothering Teenage pregnancy Newborns welcomed into the community Grandmothers & mothers-roles in childrearing Matriarchal or women-identified community? Women-men relationships Women and leadership The Women's Centre Body image Girls/female youth Gender & development
	Fatima Men	Perceived absence of males Socialisation Machismo culture Parenting Employment & training Community involvement Marginalisation Aggression Males as role models Lifestyle- pub/bookies Men-women relationships Boys/male youth Naming children (surnames)

TABLE 2. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
 WOMEN & MEN: PERCEPTIONS & ROLES

3.4 RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILIAL AND SOCIAL

The ethnographic interviews conducted indicate that while conflict characterizes many familial, friendship and community relationships, and while gendered relations are problematic, positive values such as *solidarity, loyalty, fidelity, support, inter-dependency, care, compassion, tolerance, protection and transparency* are central to Fatima life.⁶¹ Beyond the boundary of Fatima relationships are mostly characterized by a general lack of trust. In this section we will examine in brief the nature of a selected number of significant Fatima relationships: 1) familial and friendship bonds; 2) community solidarity; and 3) relationships with the wider community,

⁶¹ By 'family' here is meant both the immediate and extended family since an intimate network of kin relationships characterizes Fatima life.

and 4) relationships of stigmatisation and discrimination. It must be noted that these selected relationships, are only properly understood within the context of the comprehensive ‘thick description’ of Fatima relationships provided in Table 3.

3.4.1 Familial and Friendship Bonds

Family relationships have traditionally been keenly valued in the Fatima community, where numerous flat dwellers are related to each other through both blood and partner relationships. In an interview with Sheila, we see that particular dominant family names have always been a central part of Fatima culture.⁶² She speaks of a deep personal rootedness in Fatima, tracing her maternal family line from her great grandmother to grandmother, to mother, to herself and her children, all former or present residents of Fatima. In the early years, in particular, dominant family names were an important part of the Fatima culture. That pattern changed during the last two decades, due to the increased transience of the community population (chapter one). Familial and friendship loyalties remain notable features of Fatima life. Indeed these loyalties were singled out as having a distinctive value in the *Training for Transformation* interview.⁶³ Referring both to “conflicting values” and to a “hierarchy of values”, the facilitators gave the example of where a visit to a family member, who might be sick or in need, typically takes precedence over commitments in relation to employment and education.⁶⁴

Regarding loyalty in friendships, a striking example of *solidarity* was experienced during the early establishment of the Fatima, *Back to Basics* project, a community-based women’s education programme.⁶⁵ The first group of thirteen women, who sat official state examinations, made a pact among themselves that if anyone failed their examination the whole group would repeat their papers in support of that person. Subsequent discussion about this decision indicated the extent to which female friendship bonds in Fatima are characterized by both a notable inter-dependence and a profound care. They provide a solid support for people who are struggling and directly influence women’s personal life choices. Colette, the *Training for Transformation* facilitator commented on Fatima friendships: “I felt a real caring... a caring-ness... friends were really important as well, you know, kind of looking after your friends and protecting your friends...”.⁶⁶

⁶² Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

⁶³ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

⁶⁴ Indeed it is common practice in Fatima to take time off work, as a mark of respect, when there is a death in the local community, irrespective of family connection.

⁶⁵ Interview with Olive, organizer of the *Back to Basics* programme. 05/02/2002.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

3.4.2 Community Solidarity

Solidarity experiences also characterize Fatima's wider internal social relationships. These experiences are born out of long-standing familial, friendship and community loyalties and clearly help to cultivate a vibrant community spirit in Fatima. My own participant observation indicated that open doors, chats over the balconies or in the yards or at the wash-lines, and the borrowing of food and money are normative behaviours in the Fatima community. Sheila similarly suggests that strong friendships and neighbourliness, though on the decline in recent years, are still characteristic features of Fatima life.⁶⁷ Most interviewees remember an earlier time when neighbourliness was even stronger than at present. This is illustrated in the following extract from an interview conducted with Mrs. Nolan (Minnie) and her son Anto:

- M ... you had people to go to... maybe you wouldn't have any tea...
 A ... you could leave your door open and your key in the door overnight...
 M I used to go to Mrs M. and Mrs W. We had babies within three months of each other... you know the way? I'd be up on my feet and looking after hers... but as regards the neighbours themselves there was never any disagreements... got on great... we used to do our stairs in turn... mine would be Monday and Mrs. W. Wednesday... whatever you could fit in... they were always spotless and clean and never anyone around or sitting on the stairs. ... and we used to go out on the balcony on, say Christmas Eve... all along the balcony... "Happy Christmas Mrs. Nolan (or maybe me name if she knew me well). Happy Christmas Mrs. M. (*very energized and acting it out*)... we used to stand there for ages and look at the sky...
 I Were there strong characters in the blocks...like controllers?
 A They were staunch... they were *staunch*...
 I Staunch?
 A They wouldn't allow strangers up the stairs or on the verandas...⁶⁸

The question of the present-day Fatima community spirit, and how it manifests itself, was also put to research questionnaire respondents who commented that Fatima is still a community where people are interdependent, look out for each other, respond generously to suffering, pull together, participate in projects, exhibit great compassion for the weak, the 'down and outs' and the drug addict, know how to have fun and are determined to turn the estate around through regeneration.⁶⁹ One comment on the solidarity exhibited in Fatima was that the community is a type of "tribal group" in that there is evidence both of a "survival culture" and of community "inter-dependence".⁷⁰

It must be noted that there is also clear evidence of significant internal fragmentation and community feuds in Fatima. Paradoxically, huge levels of tolerance of community members lie

⁶⁷ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

⁶⁸ Interview with Minnie and Anto, 10/06/2000.

⁶⁹ RQF, Q.8, g, respondents A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I, J, K, M, N, O and R.

⁷⁰ RQF, Q.8. g, respondent M.

side by side with an often relentless and inter-generational intolerance between specific families. Examples of both stances are found in research questionnaire responses: “people in Fatima can take a turn against someone for a very small reason and it becomes a major feud... there is very little forgiveness... they sweat the small stuff big time... little issues bring out great immaturity.”, or alternatively: “... its a very forgiving community, even when people have brought trouble on themselves... there is a lack of judgement.”⁷¹ The topic of fragmentation, feuding and forgiveness was also discussed briefly in the *Training for Transformation* interview, where Frank spoke of the characteristic stubbornness of the community, which defies rationality, and Colette spoke of the unforgiving side of the community reflected in its “what *they* did to *us*” stance.⁷² Closely aligned with the fragmentation and feuds present in Fatima is a very real problem in relation to *trust*, both within the community and without.

3.4.3 Relationships with the Wider Community

The Corcoran Report (1998) comprehensively explored the somewhat complex nature of Fatima’s relationship with ‘outsiders’ at the time of my research and in this report *mistrust of outsiders* was identified as a significant aspect of Fatima life.⁷³ The report clearly indicated that Fatima residents experience themselves to be treated as second-class citizens by statutory authorities and that the inadequate services provided in Fatima reflect the overall status of community members in society. The report also referred to certain urban myths prevalent in Fatima that indicated the extent to which the community had internalised a sense of second class citizenship.⁷⁴ It highlighted the absence of trust in the community, particularly in relation to Dublin Corporation officialdom, politicians and the Gardaí.⁷⁵ Participant observation and my own research analysis corroborated this viewpoint. Furthermore, issues of *trust and mistrust* were specifically addressed in the *Training for Transformation* sessions conducted in the estate.⁷⁶ In the preparatory phase of this programme, when the facilitators engaged in initial exploratory contacts with only a few members of the community, they imbibed a clear sense that trust and mistrust issues were significant. Subsequently, while working closely with the group, the facilitators concluded that, not only had they, as outsiders, to earn the trust and respect of the group members, but there was also clear evidence of problems of trust among the

⁷¹ RQF, Q 8, h and g, respondent O.

⁷² *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

⁷³ Corcoran:18-19

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*:27-28

⁷⁵ Corcoran: 29-30.

⁷⁶ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

members themselves.⁷⁷ This observation regarding the *absence of trust* was further substantiated by the one-to-one interviews conducted in my own research. Sheila, for example, comments on Dublin Corporation's failure to genuinely consult with the local community during a refurbishment of Fatima conducted in the eighties:

S I knew from the beginning the Corporation would do what it wanted...

I It wasn't a real consultation?

S Just lip service to what we said... very early on I saw it ... manipulating people round to what they wanted... and they got what they wanted, so this is why I was not really involved after that... I have such a distrust of the... maybe I'm wrong... I hope I'm wrong... They don't take the community much into consideration... they had those plans maybe ten years before refurbishment...⁷⁸

The general mistrust of outsiders, which characterises Fatima life, reflects itself in cultural mores, such as; 1) the *prohibition of ratting* (reporting offenders to the authorities), 2) the practice of *covering* (making excuses) for others in the community, regardless of whether these excuses are justified or not, and, 3) the general practice of *lying*, in order to protect personal and communal interests. Punishment for ratting can certainly be severe. One research questionnaire respondent commented: "ratting or disloyalty to mates is handled either by violence or utter isolation".⁷⁹ Ratting is not only considered by residents to be a form of disloyalty to the community but, importantly, it is also seen as a potential risk to the safety and security of individuals and the community itself. This view was borne out by an interview with Donna who volunteered that she would keep information regarding theft by community members to herself, because "you don't want trouble at your door".⁸⁰ The practice of *covering for* others in the community, especially family and friends, even when they are in the wrong, is commonplace. *Covering* is regarded as a demonstration of loyalty, which is more highly valued than the objective truth of the situation at hand (particularly where 'outsiders' are involved). One research questionnaire respondent noted that: "not covering for others ... (leads to)... others giving out, or getting on your case, for being too uppity and colluding with the system".⁸¹

On the general morality of *truth and lies*, in such and similar circumstances, one questionnaire respondent commented that it very hard to get to a truth of a Fatima situation, since lies are an integral part of the culture of protection. In her experience children could be beaten if they told

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001. It is to be noted that a distinction is made in research interviews between Corporation workers on the ground and the organization as a whole; corporation workers on the ground were not referred to in a negative manner by any of the interviewees/focus groups.

⁷⁹ RQF, Q.15, respondent C.

⁸⁰ Interview with Donna, 12/11/2001.

⁸¹ RQF, Q.15, respondent D.

the truth in particular circumstances: “it’s [lying] really second nature and bred into them ... it’s very convincing ...compelling...at first you believe it and then you cop on.”⁸² Donna indicates that lies are positive since they play a role in the protection of community members:

- I What about lying... telling lies... or when lies might be right or wrong?
 D Sometimes they are, sometimes they aren’t... sometimes you have to lie... protecting yourself and someone else... I wouldn’t only do it to protect myself... but someone else.
 I So you are saying it is a right and good thing to lie to protect, or be loyal ... is that what you are saying?
 D Yes... it is good to be loyal... some things are better not heard, even though you would probably feel guilty, and wonder if you should have said something, but then you say “no!”.⁸³

Positively, in regard to relationships with outsiders, the values of *authenticity* and *respect* were identified as being significant. The importance of *authenticity* surfaced, for example, in the questionnaire findings. One respondent commented: “It is a very rooted and grounded community... spontaneous... honest... you know exactly where you stand. No double talk. You get what you see.”⁸⁴ Another adds: “Honesty is important... they tell you to your face if you are violating their codes.”⁸⁵ Daily life in Fatima is peppered with behaviours related to *authenticity* which in other sub-cultures in Ireland would be easily judged as offensive or inappropriate. For example, one resident who forced outsiders, who walked unannounced into her living room, out of her flat, to knock on the door before entering, saying “you won’t fucking do that in my flat”,⁸⁶ or residents in education programmes, when frustrated, saying to tutors: “You’re wrecking my head”.⁸⁷ The *Training for Transformation* facilitators were also very aware that they had to earn the respect of the Fatima group before co-operation could be truly possible and that in earning that respect they were expected to be *real*.

- C For me... distinctive to this particular group... the feeling of coming in and I am not at ground level beginning the relationship, but way below it. Before I can earn their respect I have to make my way up all these levels. In most groups you are a facilitator trying to work your way down... In Fatima I felt I was at a minus... what was that? I think it was a class thing; conscious of how I speak, how I am perceived, conscious of how many external interventions have been made, unknown baggage... for me that was very distinctive and I was conscious that I was way down there... it was a wonderful feeling of privilege and enjoyment to feel that they allowed us... gave us the opening... let us in... great... very distinctive... the first time it happened...

⁸² RQF, ‘general comments’, respondent Q.

⁸³ Interview with Donna, 12/11/2001.

⁸⁴ RQF, Q.7, respondent M.

⁸⁵ RQF, Q.8, g, respondent E.

⁸⁶ Informal conversation with a neighbour, 13/05/2002.

⁸⁷ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

F My experience of the group in Fatima, and you see it elsewhere but it is exhibited sharply there is: “are you real or are you not?” People will value you and respect you if you are real. So, people are very good crap detectors... very quick to see... they challenge you to be real, not to be clever or smart but to be real and present... I suspect it is a cultural thing... there is a mix of professional competence and human connectedness and in different groups the balance of those are valued differently. In Fatima, in the first instance, people will forgive you for a lack of professionalism but are slower to forgive you for a lack of human connectedness...⁸⁸

3.4.4 Relationships of Stigmatisation and Discrimination

Research would indicate that the notable stress placed on *respect* in the Fatima community is intimately aligned with *personal dignity*, which arises from the lived experience of being shown a general lack of respect by outsiders. Significantly, on a number of occasions during the research, comments made by ‘outsider’ interviewees indicated that people from Fatima are, at times, considered by others to be somewhat *less than human*: “but they are not animals here... they are humans like everyone else.”; “I want to say ‘they are still people, same as everyone else, human beings like anyone else’...”; “I very quickly absorbed that Fatima was some kind of hell-hole, from comments and relatives... an acquired perception... a different breed to anyone else”; “they close people off in society, keep them apart geographically and silence them – keeping them almost *inhuman*.”⁸⁹ It is clear that comments such as these arise out of stereotypical views of Fatima, fuelled often by negative media reports and a general ignorance of Fatima life.⁹⁰ This leads in turn to a debilitating stigmatisation and discrimination. The following are some stereotypical comments, which questionnaire respondents had personally encountered in relation to Fatima:

- can anything good come out of Fatima? It’s the pits;
- those places should be knocked down straight away...look at all the money wasted;
- it’s a crowd of drug dealers, addicts, robbers;
- they have AIDS, they are dirty and lazy...they mug tourists;
- Jaysus, it’s full of junkies...are you not afraid?;
- they are head-bangers down there... everyone in Fatima does drugs... all gurriers;
- Druggies in there... won’t do anything for themselves... aggressive... spongers.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Corcoran: 18. The author refers to “feelings of disengagement, alienation and dehumanisation” of the community.

⁹⁰ One of the strategic goals of FGU was to pro-actively reverse the long trend of sensationalist and negative media coverage, particularly by the tabloid press. Concerted effort was made, and with significant success, to get positive coverage in *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Irish Times*, as well as RTÉ radio and TV, in particular.

⁹¹ RQF, Q.8, I, respondents A, B, D, E, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, O and Q.

The practice of discrimination against Fatima residents is most keenly felt in the areas of education, employment and service provision. Marie was visibly de-energized when speaking of her memory of educational discrimination at secondary school.⁹² She gave the example of children from the flats, and children from houses, sitting at different sides of the classroom while the teacher physically faced towards the children from the houses, concentrating attention on them. The result for Marie was a general lack of motivation, boredom and a profound sense of rejection. She left school at the age of fifteen. With respect to employment it is general practice in Fatima to give a false address when applying for jobs.⁹³ Commonly, service providers in the wider local area refuse to deliver products to Fatima.⁹⁴ Taxis regularly refuse to come into the estate.⁹⁵ Banks, particularly if located in other parts of the city, often make it extremely difficult for Fatima residents to open accounts.⁹⁶

Fatima's capacity to transfer its own experience of being discriminated against into an active discrimination against other socially excluded local groupings is evidenced by the notable rise of the phenomenon of *racism* evident in the estate in recent years.⁹⁷ Apart from school contact, there was little or no communication between the Fatima residents and local non-Irish residents in the adjacent St. Anthony's Road. There were also specific incidents of threat, intimidation and violence.⁹⁸ A conversation among young teenagers in Fatima indicates a mixture of perceptions, attitudes and arguments:

- K I have nothing against coloured people, they've done nothing on me...
- N But they stare at you!
- K So do white people!
- N No, like I don't mean like them... I call them niggers! (*laughs*)
- Le They didn't bother me for a while but when you go up the road they do be staring...
- Ly Or whistling when they drive by in cars... beeping...
- Le I remember one day a man said something to me that was disgraceful.
- N Was he a coloured fella?

⁹² Interview with Marie, 23/05/2001.

⁹³ *Ibid.* This is something Sheila personally disagrees with, seeing it as an indicator of shame. She insists that her children, like herself, have been brought up to be proud to be rooted in Fatima; they refuse to be "victims".

⁹⁴ During the time of research one of my neighbours successfully took a legal case to the *Consumers Complaint Board*, against a local electrical business, for refusing to deliver to Fatima.

⁹⁵ For residents it is common practice, when hailing a taxi, not to name Fatima as the destination since calls made from Fatima for taxi services are frequently ignored.

⁹⁶ The unreasonableness and impoliteness of the banking services in relation to Fatima residents was illustrated graphically in one *Training for Transformation* session, where situations of powerlessness were role-played by residents, March 2000.

⁹⁷ Significantly, from the late 1990s the demographic profile of the surrounding local area changed dramatically due to the influx of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

⁹⁸ One such case, which happened during the period of research, was that a brick was thrown through the window of a car driven by a black resident.

- Le Yea... you get more hassle from coloured people than white people.
 S I never had anything against them but you look down the road... they are taking over...
 N It's not that! They are getting jobs here!
 Le They get more than us... the Government is giving them money. They get money for socializing! Isn't that disgraceful!
 Ly We have homeless people on the street... they have massive houses that we could not afford... cars... mobiles...
 N I heard one of them got battered yesterday (*laughs*)
 K I think that's terrible!⁹⁹

It must be noted that while a racist attitude appears to be on the increase in Fatima, is not a whole-scale attitude in the estate. Indeed, many individual interviewees decried this new development of Fatima life, particularly since their children have developed friendships with children from other cultures in their school environment.¹⁰⁰

As indicated earlier, the above analysis is necessarily selective. It focuses exclusively on selected significant *familial and social relationships*, which characterise Fatima's everyday life. This examination of the internal social relationships within Fatima highlights the values of *solidarity, loyalty, fidelity, inter-dependency, compassion, tolerance* and *authenticity* (among others). Relationships with outsiders, in contrast, tend to be characterized by *mistrust*, for the positive purpose of protection of the community. *Cultural mores* include the prohibition of ratting, 'covering' for family and friends, and the practice of lying to 'outsiders'; behaviours which strongly reflect Fatima's internalised sense of second class citizenship, as well as its very real concern for its own well-being in the face of non-Fatima power holders. The experience of *stigmatisation* and *discrimination* came to the fore in many of the interviews conducted. These findings, while strongly indicative of a Fatima ethics, are partial, however, since not all of the Fatima-based relationships are examined in detail. Further relationships which might have been examined, including relationships with the wider local community, wider society, the environment, the media, the wider churches etc., are identified in the 'thick description' of Fatima relationships, offered in tabulated form below for comparative purposes (Table 3).

From the perspective of a critique of emergent findings, certain problematic areas are also identified. The reverse side of *solidarity* and *loyalty*, both defining community values, for example, is the on-going reinforcement of a separatist stance towards 'outsiders', which, as demonstrated above, is manifest in acts of *mistrust* and *resistance* and in the *telling of lies*. Related to this, Fatima's discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards other local oppressed cultural and ethnic groups, such as the Travelling community, asylum seekers and refugees, is a further problematic finding.

⁹⁹ Fieldnotes, 06/07/2001

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with Fluffy, 27/04/2001; Marie, 23/05/2001 and Sheila, 15/03/2001.

The above examination of Fatima's social relationships also makes it clear that there is an intimate and complex relationship between the life of the individual and the life of the community in Fatima. This is a predominantly recurring cultural theme, which we will next examine in some greater detail.

OVER-ARCHING THEMES	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Fatima Relationship	Familial & Kinship Relationships	Family as a wider kinship Role of family networks Mas & Das Children at the centre Mother-daughter relationships Partner relationships Levels of support Male-female relationships Tensions in the family Domestic violence Solidarity & inter-dependence Loyalty, fidelity & support Care & compassion Tolerance V intolerance Intergenerational intolerance Forgiving & unforgiving Protection Transparency Spontaneity & honesty- being 'real' Family feuds Dominant family names
	Fatima Community Relationships	Rootedness in the community Conflicting values in relation to self and family The transience of community Relationships with neighbours Neighbourly feuds Feuding & fragmentation Prohibition on ratting/reporting Covering for community members Mistrust of outsiders/general absence of trust Lying for protection of community member(s) Solidarity: self & community development Solidarity & 'looking out for one another' Solidarity & Fatima community spirit Friendships Authenticity- 'being real' Conflict in relationships
	Social Relationships	Them V Us - insiders & outsiders Loyalty/Disloyalty Disloyalty & punishment Celebration Inclusion/Exclusion Trust/Mistrust Enemies Power relations Personal dignity Human V inhuman/non human Lack of privacy

		<p>Lack of respect for confidentiality Requirement of respect/dignity Stereotypes & discrimination Racism</p>
	Local Environment	<p>Geographical location Green spaces Care of animals LUAS transport Cul de sacs/ramps Regeneration plans Consultation processes Housing and health A Fatima address</p>
	Relationship with the Wider Local Community	<p>Stigma & discrimination Public V private space Threat of violence Mistrust of outsiders A survival culture; outsider as threat Uneasy relationship with adjacent communities Local drugs treatment services Housing Authority Health Authorities Local schools School Attendance Officer Local pubs/bookies/clubs Local culture/arts services The Gardaí (Police) Asylum seekers/refugees/ immigrant workers- racism Mountjoy Prison</p>
	Media Relations	<p>Negative V positive media coverage Media strategy Media and regeneration</p>
	Relationship with Wide Society	<p>Stigmatisation/discrimination Second class citizenship Perceived as less than human Ignorance Benefits of the Celtic Tiger Trust/mistrust Exclusion/access Absence of culturally sensitive education</p>
	Relationship with Religion & Churches	<p>Affiliation/practice Role of Church/priest Perceived absence of priest Private/popular spirituality Belief/non-belief Passing on the faith Clerical/institutional abuse Images of God Community rituals Prayer forms Our Lady of Fatima Shame and alienation</p>

TABLE 3. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILIAL & SOCIAL

3.5 THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY: INSEPARABLE REALITIES

An analysis of Fatima's relationships surfaces the tension between a communitarian and an individualist ethics. Interviews conducted with women in Fatima provide clear evidence of an inseparable and indeed complex relationship between the *self* and the *community*. Without a doubt, *community* is seen as an important value in Fatima. Significantly, when residents are referring to Fatima itself, they most commonly use the term 'the community'. My research indicates evidence of a *communitarian ethics* operative in the community, where the life of the community often takes priority over that of the individual. This is reflected in the community's self-identity and in its characteristic values of *solidarity, inter-dependence, loyalty, tolerance, support of the vulnerable members of the community* and *communal celebration*, referred to earlier. But my research also indicates an often-fraught tension between a communitarian ethics and an individual ethics in 1) many women's personal and familial lives, 2) between Fatima residents, and 3) between Fatima residents and non-resident workers involved in the development of the estate. With respect to Fatima women's personal and familial lives, in a number of interviews there was a clear conflict of values between the desire to do the best for one's self and one's children and being committed to the development of community life.

In Sarah's story, for example, we see an emerging self-confidence as she is invited by FGU to become involved in community development in the flats. Community involvement led to an increased happiness in living in Fatima and to personal pride in her contribution to the development of the community.¹⁰¹ She comments: Well I was kind of very proud to be asked... I couldn't believe that I had been asked... Why me? At the same time I was chuffed... I just said like, "What have I got to offer?"¹⁰² Anita similarly developed increased self-confidence and a defensive pride in Fatima as she became more actively involved in the life of the community.¹⁰³ Like many women with physical and mental health problems in Fatima, she spoke at some length about the isolation, fear and depression of her early days in Fatima. She describes herself as: "feeling awful, no longer looking after myself and not caring about anything anymore".¹⁰⁴ It was not until she became involved in the local community, through the Fatima Community Employment (CE) scheme that she was able to regain her self-confidence. Ironically, this involvement subsequently led to an internal conflict of values, since, though she was involved directly in local community development through her employment, and felt hugely committed to this, she also felt the need to actively pursue a transfer out of the estate for

¹⁰¹ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Interview with Anita, 30/05/2001.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

the sake of her own health and the health of her children. A similar conflict of values occurs in Debbie's story. She experienced pressures – both internally and externally - to remain as a supportive presence in Fatima throughout the regeneration process, yet also felt it necessary to pursue a housing transfer in light of the immediate health and safety problems of her children:

I always wanted to get out of Fatima... in the top of me head I always wanted out of Fatima.... well it never bothered me when me first child was a baby and I shut the door but now they are out and seeing things and saying “her Ma’s a junkie”... you know what I mean? Yea. I want out but I am involved in the flats and the children are involved in the flats, in the *Homework Club* and the *Majorettes* ... like as (*names a community worker*) says to me “do you really want to go?” ... like, I’m involved.... yea, like they are saying “in five year’s time Debbie, you’ll have your house, you’ll have your central heating” but as I say “I cannot afford to wait five years ... me kids are constantly sick because of the dampness, the weather, the smell of the stairs”¹⁰⁵

A number of the women interviewed found it difficult to communicate their own priorities to non-resident community development workers in this regard. Typically they recounted that they felt that their potential betrayal of the community was being reinforced by ‘outsiders’. Moreover, guilt and internal conflict were accompanied by a general sense of inarticulation. This illustrates a collective experience of *voicelessness*, which emerged as a ‘key pattern’ in many of the interviews conducted in my research.¹⁰⁶ Mrs Kelly, for example, presents a somewhat conflicted self-description in terms of *voice*.¹⁰⁷ Though a recognized community leader of many years she struggles with shyness and a general lack of confidence in the public forum: “in a certain way I’m shy... in certain ways... I’m not saying I’d be afraid to speak if I had to... but ah! ... a little bit backward at speaking... shy at speaking”. In Nicole’s story too, timidity regarding the public forum, comes to the fore.¹⁰⁸ She describes herself as not shy normally; only at “big meetings” and she regrets times in the past that she did not speak out. Sheila addressing the issue of women’s voicelessness, exhibits little patience for high-powered jargon at community meetings:

Some people are inhibited by the chair, secretary ... if they are not used to it... now you do need that but sometimes it’s better to let go of that... let people speak... sometimes you just need to say “shut up!”. I know it’s not nice and could sound rude, but to be able to do that ... you need that ... if you do they have no control... I used to get bored ... the meetings would go on and on ... (would they ever shut up!) ... people going off on a tangent... you should be training people to have the confidence

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Debbie, 26/04/2001. Both Anita and Debbie were subsequently offered and accepted housing transfers out of Fatima.

¹⁰⁶ For a critique of the analysis of voice/voicelessness in female narrative see Claudia Salazar, “A Third World Woman’s Text: Between the Politics of Criticism and Cultural Politics” in Berger Gluck and Patai, *Women’s Words*: 93-106 at 98-102.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Nicole, 08/10/2001.

to do that... not have people nodding and agreeing... you challenge people to talk in the group. I often remember people saying afterwards "what does that word mean?" ... yea, all the big words... and once a poor girl sitting there looking dumbfounded and after I was explaining the words to her and I said "it's only ould shit!" ... though I end up using it myself (*laughs*)... they think you are illiterate if you don't!¹⁰⁹

This general alienation from the discourse of sites of decision-making within Fatima, and from the discourse of wider society, indicates the fundamental isolation of the Fatima community. It highlights the 'difference' between Fatima residents and 'outsiders'; a relationship which, as indicated above, is characterised by suspicion and distrust. A thick description of this above-examined conflicted relationship between the self and the community further highlights significant and distinctive cultural themes and sub-themes, which strongly indicate the complexity of the self/communal identity which characterises a Fatima self-understanding (Table 4). These include self esteem, betrayal, feelings about being identified with Fatima, a sense of difference from others, a forgotten community, local leadership & empowerment, outside perceptions of Fatima, and the support of vulnerable members of the community.

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
The Individual & The Community	The Self	Self descriptions in relation to the community Self esteem/confidence Self versus roles (personal & communal) Individual versus community- a complex relationship Perceived betrayal of the community-guilt & shame Strength versus vulnerability Voicelessness & difference regarding the wider community Self & Resistance
	The Community	Feelings about being a part of Fatima Fatima referred to as 'the community' locally Community a central value Solidarity & interdependence Loyalty & tolerance Conflict of values: self versus community Community involvement & self esteem Community development & guilt/shame Fear of community betrayal Housing transfers and children's health versus Commitment to the community A forgotten community? Alienation from the wider community & a sense of difference Local leadership & empowerment Support of the vulnerable in the community Spirit of Fatima & communal celebrations Outside perceptions of Fatima

TABLE 4. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES: *THE INDIVIDUAL & THE COMMUNITY*

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/01

The above discussion mirrors debates between communitarian and individualist ethical perspectives. The communitarian perspective has been demonstrated to be the predominant form within Fatima, but at some cost to individual personal development. Critiques of communitarian ethics typically point towards a failure of the ethical system to adequately respect and provide opportunities for individuals and minorities (chapter seven). Most certainly one defining feature of a communitarian ethics within a closed system, such as Fatima, is *alienation from wider society* (identified as a sub-theme above). This experience is often associated with *resistance stances* and *survival strategies*, which are the subject matter of our following exploration.

3.6 SURVIVAL: PERSISTENCE AND RESISTANCE

The historical capacity of the Fatima community to endure enormous hardship and to survive by means of creative resistance strategies is already documented in some detail in the Corcoran Report (1998).¹¹⁰ Two particular aspects of the Fatima survival culture which were highly energized points of discussion in my own research narratives, and which I wish to examine in some closer detail here, include: 1) Fatima's tradition of *poverty management*, and 2) the *negotiation of conflict* within the Fatima community. These are selected since the sub-themes associated with both of these categories were significantly greater in frequency than others, as is clearly demonstrated in the 'thick description' of Fatima themes below (Table 5).

3.6.1 Fatima's Tradition of Poverty Management

Traditionally, financial hardship and domestic violence have both been an unrelenting part of the struggle for survival in Fatima. Despite this, the early days in Fatima are often remembered nostalgically and the '*good old days*' are often spoken about.¹¹¹ Older residents remember the luxury of the original (pre-regeneration) blocks of flats compared to inner-city tenements. However, their memories also make clear that poverty management has always been a central aspect of survival in Fatima. Residents speak of the constant juggling of debts, going to the pawn shop, hiding from the 'Jew man' (money-lender), getting 'little dinners' from the nuns in Weaver's Square, hauling fuel from the log-yard in Cork St., belonging to and having large families and minding babies, gossiping in the 'pram sheds', going out to the dances and the

¹¹⁰ Corcoran: 18-41.

¹¹¹ An example of the determination of Fatima residents to keep the memory of Fatima alive is found in the extensive historical research, which has been carried out by the Fatima *Women's Education Programme*, including archival research, interviews with early residents, the collection of old photographs and, significantly, the hosting of a public exhibition in the community, and nationwide, in 2001.

cinema and working from a young age in local factories on the buildings or as domestics.¹¹² The *Good Old Days* group, in particular, remember the struggle and the creativity of keeping food on the table and members speak of the shame of sneaking down to the nuns in Weaver's Square for dinners.¹¹³

Mary's story illustrates the constant challenge of poverty management that characterized early life in Fatima.¹¹⁴ She speaks of her dependency on the 'uncle' (pawn shop), the pot man (pot seller) and the Jew man (money-lender). The pot man provided the pots that she brought to the Pawn, with her 'bundle' on Monday mornings.¹¹⁵ If she did not have anything to pawn she borrowed from a friend or neighbour. She would sneak down and go into a 'snug', in the pawn shop, for privacy, using a false name, Chick Harris. She remembers going to the pawn shop as a shameful experience, even if "the whole nation was doing it". If, for example, a row broke out in the flats, the children would chant: "Your mammy goes to the pawn!". The Jew man, in contrast, came to the flat weekly; lent money and demanded interest. She recalls times when she did not have the repayments, hearing him hammering forcefully on the door for ages. There was always some payment being missed.

For Mary the juggling of debts was "a way of life" and a strategy for survival; necessary for the provision of the children which demanded a creative resourcefulness. In Mary's story, themes such as *shame, financial dependency and the constant struggle to provide*, as well as *neighbourliness, solidarity, inter-dependence, provision for the family, humour and resilience* are evident. This is reflective of the cultural themes emergent in the wider research data.

Such poverty management continues to be a defining feature of Fatima life (chapter one). Money-lending, borrowing from neighbours, juggling debts, running out of money for the electricity meter, borrowing heavily at Christmas, etc., are commonly observed.¹¹⁶ Natasha, for example, speaks of juggling debts as a way of life with which she is quite comfortable: "I've never been without a debt in me life...I don't think I'd be able to cope if I hadn't got a debt...would hate to win the lottery."¹¹⁷

¹¹² See *The Spirit of Fatima*, appendix H.

¹¹³ The *Good Old Days* focus group, 14/06/2001

¹¹⁴ Interview with Mary, 15/ 05/2001.

¹¹⁵ The 'bundle' was the items to be pawned wrapped up in sheets.

¹¹⁶ The term 'relative poverty' is used in current literature (chapter one).

¹¹⁷ Interview with Natasha, 30/05/2002.

3.6.2 The Negotiation of Conflict

An examination of the ‘thick description’ of Fatima cultural themes and sub-themes below indicates the predominance of experiences of *conflict* within the community (Table 5.) This theme was also specifically identified as a prevalent cultural theme by the *Training for Transformation* group.¹¹⁸ Colette volunteered that when group members, in one group exercise, were invited to list all the words that they associated with *conflict*, she was struck by the amount of “really physically violent words” that people suggested, adding that it said evidently something about people’s personal experience of conflict. Frank followed through on this comment, suggesting life in Fatima tends to be very polarized; middle ground is seldom reached. He suggested that people in Fatima are systemically forced into aggression. Debating whether this might be a cultural or a class phenomenon, he drew a comparison with certain communities he had worked with in Pakistan, where people also lived very closely together. Both of these cultures were, in his estimation, examples of ‘public cultures’, characterized by: strength of passion (be it hate or love); people trying to find ways to protect themselves; some people becoming incredibly immersed and others being completely withdrawn.¹¹⁹

A most notable example of conflict acted out in Fatima, both privately and publicly, is domestic violence. Sheila suggests that domestic violence is associated with poverty and is tolerated to a huge extent in the community: “Probably there would be a lot of cases of domestic violence in Fatima... I think it’s down to the environment... unemployment...drugs... that adds to it”.¹²⁰ She highlights the apathy of the community in this regard: “... like if I hear an argument now I don’t even go out on the balcony to see what is happening... you hear it all the time...”.¹²¹ Several of the women interviewed spoke either of the personal experience of domestic and/or sexual violence, or of violence of various forms being perpetrated on a family member, friend, or neighbour. Resistant behaviours were also described, such as one woman putting tranquillizer pills in her partner’s meals.¹²² Women’s own exercise of domestic violence against their partners (who are most often violent or abusive) was also observable, though to a significantly lesser degree. Examples include: verbal threats, locking their partner out of the flat, throwing household implements and furniture, or hitting their partner with household instruments. One woman recounted an experience of violence, which she perpetrated on her

¹¹⁸ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Informal interview with Mrs Ryan, 23/08/2000.

husband, after what she describes as years of provocation and violence from him, which demonstrates her internal conflict in relation to leaving the marriage:

I left and went back and left and went back loads of times. I think if I had stayed I'd be in Mountjoy doing time for murder... and I wished I had had that in me! On a particular day... I'll never forget it... I was after cooking the dinner and waiting for one or two of them to come in... I had the potato masher in me hand... I went at him with the masher and jammed him against the wall and had a big carving knife, and said: "now I am going to finish you, what I should have done years ago!" I don't know what happened to me... I cut him... but it's a pity I didn't dig deeper. Something just told me "No!" I threw the knife and said: "Damn you! You are not worth it!" I left with me clothes. I wouldn't mind I was just after scrubbing... me tights were in bits... a skirt and a top. That's the way I left... I came into me mother... a great women, she was.¹²³

At a more collective level women exercise, on occasion, a role in restricting domestic violence, once it spills from the domestic to the public spheres. Deignan comments that, due to cramped living conditions, incidences of violence regularly spread into public spaces where neighbours tentatively seek to minimize any serious injury or assault but rarely call on state agencies or guards: "The subtlety with which violence is handled has become almost an intricate art form. Women watch with intense detail for points of entry to arrest the situation causing the least amount of offence to the male perpetrators...".¹²⁴ She adds that local men rarely interfere. Experiences such as these are indicative of the practical wisdom characteristic of the community and which functions to facilitate survival. This phenomenon of practical wisdom is highlighted by Deignan:

There is a distinctive wisdom and knowledge you get from being oppressed and dependent; the capacity to survive at the bottom and the struggle to achieve... you learn about tolerance, compassion, forgiveness, support, community, interdependence of people. Society values reasoning but this is put into question here (in Fatima)! There is a spirit of resistance "we will not play your games"... an irrationality here... It is a non-rational way of knowing. People here do things for no obvious or logical reason; they don't analyse it, just feel it... I have seen people laying into others for no reason... even when they become aware that they have made a mistake it makes no difference. They won't argue the point of their racist attitudes, for example, they just decide to hate and that's it. If you try to reason with them you get nowhere!¹²⁵

While conflict is demonstrated in the above analysis and in the thick description of Fatima cultural themes to be one of the most dominant themes in Fatima life, further themes in relation

¹²³ *Good Old Days* focus group, 14/06/2001. 'Mountjoy', referred to here, is the main State prison which is based in Dublin's North inner city.

¹²⁴ Deignan: 8.

¹²⁵ RQF, general comments, respondent O.

to survival include: *suffering, voice/voicelessness, choices, and stability-instability*. (Table 4) Problematic areas, from various ethical perspectives, are also identified. A particular concern in relation to conflicted relationships is the high incidence of and tolerance of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual violence.¹²⁶ This question is taken up later in this work in the context of mainstream and feminist critical analyses of domestic/sexual violence (chapter seven).

One further area where the conflicted nature of Fatima life is called into play is its debilitating drugs culture. In the next section I will examine defining values and (im)moral practices that are operative in the face of the threat posed by the prevalence of drugs in the local community.

OVER-ARCHING THEMES	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Survival	A Survival Culture	Resistance strategies Resilience Protection Family, friends, neighbours- support networks Cultural relevance of education Parenting, drugs & health education Suffering, pain & grief Powerlessness Strength /vulnerability
	Poverty & Survival	Lack of financial resources Financial struggle & shame Charity & cover up/shame Neighbourly inter-dependence Neighbourly solidarity & sharing Pawn shop, moneylenders & charity Constant financial dependency Constant struggle to provide Provision for the future Savings- life policies & funeral expenses Self reliance & solidarity 'Putting up with' as way of life Limited employment Stigmatisation & discrimination Poverty management- juggling debts Lack of choice Poor housing conditions Pressure <i>to be seen</i> to provide Pressure to provide for now and the future Humour, resilience & inventiveness
	Voice	Self esteem & voice Opportunity for expression, or lack of Voicelessness Voice & the Public sphere

¹²⁶ The extent to which 'conflict' is prevalent is graphically seen in Table 5, where entries under 'conflict' are extensive. Ethical critiques in relation to conflict, as uncovered in my research, are examined in the concluding chapter.

	Choices	Life style & survival decisions Absence of/limited choices Cost of choices made Pub/club
	Stability & Instability	Debs/Celebration Community festivals Sense of humour
	Conflict	Conflicting values Conflicting loyalties Negotiating conflict A polarized community Order V chaos Strength V vulnerability Internal conflict of values Moral dilemmas/decision-making Practical wisdom & conflict situations Perceptions of self in conflict Conflict and language Family/kin conflict Mother-child conflict Conflict within the core family Conflict with wider relations Conflict and physical threat Conflict in friendships/partnerships Being forced systematically into aggression/deceit Domestic & Sexual violence- public V private Domestic violence- environment, alcohol, drugs & unemployment Ignoring domestic violence Violence & a 'public culture' Male-female, female-male and adult-child violence Self protection strategies Women's self development Employment/training Immersion V withdrawal Money conflicts Divisions, feuds & cliques Breakdown of friendships Forms of punishment Conflict with neighbours Flat 'blocks' independent of each other Maligning/gossiping Threat of reporting/ratting Threat of violence Verbal, physical, sexual abuse Community & local drug dealers Conflict with 'outsiders' Conflict within & between development groups Gate-keeping conflicts Resistance strategies Conflict and survival Conflict and difference Conflict and reconciliation

TABLE 5. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
SURVIVAL: PERSISTENCE & RESISTANCE

3.7 DRUGS: A SIGNIFICANT CULTURE SHAPER

Research also highlights the enormous cultural impact of drugs on the community. Repeatedly, in the interviews and group processes, the impact of drugs on the daily lives of residents came to the fore, revealing above mentioned themes and values, such as *good mothering* and *care of the children*, as well as further central values held by the community, including: *truth and transparency, respect of property, trust, tolerance, care and compassion, communal responsibility, abhorrence of drug dealing while sympathy for the addict and self-reliance*. An examination of drugs, as a significant culture shaper in Fatima, will illustrate these values.

The Corcoran Report (1998) gave particular attention to the Fatima drugs culture, identifying it as “the single biggest issue which impacts on the quality of life” and “fundamentally a problem of social order in that there is a sense among residents that public space is outside of their control and has been taken over by undesirables”.¹²⁷ This statement has been strongly borne out by my research. The challenge of daily life in a drugs culture was a central preoccupation in the interviews conducted. Clearly, in Fatima, for example, if you engage with drugs you are isolated from the general community. One research questionnaire respondent comments; “... in such cases the community gravitates towards ‘its own’ and they won’t put themselves out for the isolated person, who loses the network of next-door support”.¹²⁸ Many mothers, who are former drug users, agonize about the impact of their former life-style on their children. Sarah expresses such fears:

Yea, I feel like I could be a bit better. I feel like I’m *a lot better (laughs)* than I used to be. Well I was always kind of ... nothing ever affected the ... when I say I used to take E or whatever, you know it wouldn’t affect them... I *hope* it didn’t affect them... I don’t think it did affect them. Do you know what I mean? As far as I was concerned it wasn’t affecting them. They weren’t kind of hungry or... there was nothing like that... they weren’t neglected in any way or anything but they still had a mother that was taking E, which was wrong, do you know, that kind of a way like? So, em... I don’t know.¹²⁹

With Liselle too we find insight into the internal conflict and pain of a mother who was involved in drug use at the time of her son’s birth.¹³⁰ After birth her baby was detained in the hospital, while undergoing detoxification, and this was a turning point in Liselle’s life. Significantly it was precisely the affirmation of her ‘good mothering’ that enabled her to move

¹²⁷ Corcoran: 19-23 at 20-21.

¹²⁸ RQF, Q.15, respondent L.

¹²⁹ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

¹³⁰ Interview with Liselle, 28/08/2001.

on from her personal guilt and become a proud and dedicated mother completely clean of drugs:

- L Do you know that when I was in the Unit I had to feed him at eight in the morning... so I had to sleep over there cos he got the mother's instinct straight away and wouldn't feed from anyone else... so I had to sleep over there... but changing him and looking at his body and all... thinking "how could I do all that harm to a little person?"... but he's great now... I'm happy now...
- I Were you able to move on from that feeling of guilt?
- L Do you know what made me move on? There was a matron in the ward and when he was leaving ... the matron came down when I was leaving the hospital and gave me a big bunch of roses, a box of chocolates, a big kiss and a hug and she says "you're a great mother"... I burst into tears... she made me feel happy... she said "you never missed a feeding time, you'd bring over his clothes and his nappies... everything... and I used to be tired as well ... only after having a baby and running over eight in the morning, then 12, then at 3 then at 6, then at 9, then at 12 in the night...."¹³¹

A general sense of *powerlessness* regarding the inability to protect the children from exposure to and possible involvement with drugs features strongly in the interviews. Anita describes herself as doing the "usual things... out watching them like a hawk".¹³² Paula comments: "...what are you supposed to do? Drugs are all round the flats and you can't watch kids all the time".¹³³ There is also the very real tension between the values of protecting the children from the drugs culture and a realistic exposure to, and education in regards to, the drugs culture.¹³⁴ The general sense of powerlessness in face of the Fatima drugs culture is also seen in Sheila's anger at how the community and Irish society at large society have failed so many Fatima (and other) addicts and at how the wider community refuses to take responsibility for its own addicts.¹³⁵ Natasha specifically describes her own earlier fears for her son who had become involved in drugs:

One sister has two young fellas dead from drugs... one died with drugs and the other hung himself... the other sister, her son died over drugs as well and another sister, her son hung himself over two year ago, this year... all over drugs... that's why I didn't think my young fella would get involved, looking at all that... every time he went to the bedroom I kept checking on him and all... I used to say: "at least you have the rest of your children... I have no-body... he's all I have... I have only the one".¹³⁶

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² *Drugs Culture* focus group, 29/06/2001.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ One mother comments that she did not overly protect her children from the reality of drugs in Fatima, precisely in order to educate them about the harm of drugs. *Spirit Level*. RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

¹³⁵ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

¹³⁶ Interview with Natasha, 30/05/2002.

Questions regarding appropriate responses to the *drug dealer* often led to animated and highly volatile discussions. In general, while there is a tolerance of the drug addict in the life of the community, the feeling towards the dealer is one of enormous hostility. Dealers, and often their partners and friends, are generally watched, isolated, confronted, threatened and harassed. Distinctions are made between big and small-time dealers, and a level of tolerance for small-time dealers, as well as dealer-addicts, is found among some residents. Regarding such tolerance, ‘marching’ (forcing drug dealers and their families out of Fatima) to get rid of drugs, is something that Sheila strongly disagrees with.¹³⁷ She states that, while she strongly disagrees with drug dealing, she would never report dealers since this might lead to eviction and, in her view, “a house is a basic human right, regardless”. She insists on balance and fairness “you can’t *carte blanche* throw people out”.

The inhumane treatment of drugs users, small-time dealers and their families was regarded as unacceptable by a number of the other women interviewed also. In two interviews it was *explicitly* seen as a moral issue. Mrs Carney puts her general lack of involvement in community development work down to one particular incident of what she described as unfair and humiliating treatment of vulnerable individuals of the community by some early development workers.

In the past I got involved ... There was a bit of conflict with the other committee that had been here... two people had got involved with something (I won’t say who or what)... two individuals... I didn’t think it was up to the people but they (the people on the committee) started putting them down in front of everyone... like there was a girl and ... “you must do this and that”... like making a show of the girl... I didn’t think it was right. They should have called her aside separately, privately... not in front of a whole committee... everyone thought it was alright but I came down to the office and said “get my name off that... I don’t want anything to do with that... cos I don’t know, you don’t know... we have children and we don’t know... they could do anything... just take my name off!”¹³⁸

For Mrs Carney, regardless of the activity of the people concerned (about which she neither made comment nor judgement) *it was morally wrong to humiliate others in public*. Marie too speaks of her anger at the public humiliation of families that are evicted from the estate for anti-social behaviours.¹³⁹ On the morning of my interview with Marie we were both witnesses to such an incident. Marie expressed strong objection to a woman and her children being kicked out of a flat, regardless of her behaviour, when so many flats were lying vacant or boarded

¹³⁷ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001. It would appear that by ‘marching’ here is meant the more pro-active confrontation of drug dealers and their families by leaders in the local community.

¹³⁸ Interview with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001.

¹³⁹ Interview with Marie, 23/05/2001.

up.¹⁴⁰ Further themes which were uncovered in this research relation to drugs and morality include: *theft*, *dishonesty*, *lies*, *scabbing* (looking for money) and the *lack of transparency*. Fluffy's story illustrates some of the vices commonly associated with drug use in the estate.¹⁴¹ Through her introduction to 'raves' she and her partner became addicted, first to E's, and later, to heroine (which she smoked for a total of six years). Among her named concerns were:

- *neglect of her child*: "you end up neglecting... no matter who it is, you neglect the children... like, putting a child into a room so you can take heroin... that's neglect, you know what I mean... the child sitting there for an hour or two...";
- *theft*...as the stronger one in the relationship, she sent her partner out to rob and sell drugs, to feed their habit;: "you better go out and get it!";
- *denial and deceit*: "Jesus, I'm not on anything... I wouldn't touch anything like that...I've seen all me friends... I've seen all me family...you know...";
- *scabbing*, which is the regular borrowing of money from her mother on the pretext of needing food: "I'd go to me Ma and say 'I need £50 for messages (shopping)' and she'd bring me to the shop and buy messages. I'd be mad. I didn't even need them. I used to have me Ma sobbing her heart out.";¹⁴²
- *shame*: "I was afraid to go on the methadone programme because people would know in the flats. But people already knew";
- *lies and further deceit*: "Jeaney, I'm not on that methadone programme. I'm finished with that", and
- *guilt*: "looking back, what I did to me Ma and me partner... I do be roaring crying over it, I do..."¹⁴³

The theme of *theft* recurs in, and is central to, Liselle's story. She recounts a time before the birth of her son when she and her partner lived the high life on drugs and from the takings of his robberies, but a later time agonizing over this lifestyle and breaking from it:

So I met this fella and he was like everything to me ... a friend, lover, everything... and he had plenty of money and I thought this is a great life, you know... I'm going to live like this for the rest of my life... but I wasn't caring where the money was coming from... he was out robbing banks, so like, every second day he'd come in and loads of money on the bed...I thought it was great... and I started taking ecstasy

¹⁴⁰ Six months after my departure from Fatima, a case of an evicted tenant (male, aged 38) who died outside his flat door some weeks after his eviction by Dublin Corporation came to national attention. The man was evicted for being 600 Euro in arrears and for anti-social behaviour. The then Minister of Health and Children, Micheál Martin, described this tragedy as "unacceptable" and a failure of the system. (01/02/2003), www.rte.ie/news/2003/02/01/homeless.html, viewed 02/02/2003.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Fluffy, 27/04/2001.

¹⁴² The *Drugs Culture* focus group, 29/06/2001.

¹⁴³ Interview with Fluffy, 27/04/2001.

and then I got to a stage where I got on to heroine...he got locked up and I was left high and dry...(later in the interview)... you see that money over there that I'm earning now, I'm happy with that cos it's peace of mind... I know where the money is coming from...¹⁴⁴

The cultural theme of *trust/mistrust*, discussed earlier, is also in evidence in discussions regarding Fatima's drugs culture. The inability of the drug user to trust people in general, and its repercussions on personal, familial and community relationships, is a very real issue. Former addicts, such as Liselle, speak of their on-going difficulty in trusting people, linking this directly with drugs involvement, together with its accompanying paranoia and general withdrawal from relationships; "well, it takes a lot for me to trust people; that's from the drugs... cos you don't trust a lot of people, on drugs..."¹⁴⁵ Partners and parents of addicts comment on their difficulty in trusting also because of repeated broken promises and the deceitful behaviours that accompany the addiction.¹⁴⁶

The broader Fatima drugs culture, including widespread robbery, sale of stolen goods, treatment of local addicts and participation of addicts in Fatima-based methadone programmes, is reflected in concerns expressed by non-resident workers in their questionnaire interviews. When asked if they ever experienced moral conflicts in their working role in the community, they offered such examples as 1) the dilemma of being offered a stolen mobile phone, as a gift, and feeling under pressure to take it, since to refuse might be perceived as a personal insult; 2) feeling generally uncomfortable in a climate of illegal dealing, and 3) feeling that the local drugs treatment methadone programme is morally objectionable since it is merely a legalized form of further addiction.¹⁴⁷

It must also be acknowledged that, ironically, the drugs culture also contributes to many of the more positive values lived out daily in Fatima; *respect, courage, fidelity, tolerance* and *compassion* as well as the willingness of the local community to support the most vulnerable members of the community. An example of Fatima's compassion for struggling members of the community was described in Fluffy's interview when she spoke of supporting a friend who became involved in prostitution as a result of drug addiction, despite her personal abhorrence of prostitution.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, Fatima's initiative to take on a *communal responsibility*, for its own addicts, in its housing of its own Fatima treatment centre (on site) is an indicator of moral

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Liselle, 28/08/2001.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ *Drugs Culture* Focus Group, 29/06/2001.

¹⁴⁷ RQF, Q.10, b, respondents D, E and M.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Fluffy, 27/04/2001.

courage and moral responsibility on the part of the local community.¹⁴⁹ *Solidarity* experiences are also in evidence, as, for example, a local 'whip-around' (collection of money) and the purchase of goods, for a resident who was robbed by a local drug addict, or the general and informal neighbourhood watch that is an integral part of Fatima life.

While the above account illustrates central aspects of the moral dimension of the Fatima drugs culture, as described in ethnographic interviews, the 'thick description' below (Table 6) indicates in a more comprehensive fashion the many complexities involved. The multi-level impact of the drugs culture is specified, as well as such issues as; maternal suffering, anti-social behaviours, exposure to the physicality of drugs use and dealing, resistance behaviours, fear, threat and intimidation, health concerns, loss and bereavement, escapism, alcohol and heroine as predominant drugs, prostitution, imprisonment, the door-to-door reception of stolen goods and the morality of treatment services and programmes.

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
The Fatima Drugs Culture	Exposure to the Drugs Culture	Impact on self, family & youth Impact on family Impact on local & community Tolerance of the drugs culture Anti social behaviours/social order Syringes in public spaces Drug use & dealing in public spaces Threat & intimidation Health concerns Child protection Drugs culture & education (or lack of) Wider society fails to protect Fatima Living in fear Boredom & Chasing the 'Buzz' Pain avoidance
	Alcohol as a Drug	Repeating familial patterns Alcohol and addiction Alcohol & Violence
	Morality & Drugs	Poverty & drugs Ratting/reporting Deceit & lies V truth & transparency Theft and destruction of property Prostitution Imprisonment Trust & mistrust Tolerance, care & compassion Stigmatisation Shame, guilt, denial & humiliation 'Scabbing' (looking for money) Respect for property

¹⁴⁹ The *Fatima Drugs Treatment Centre*, established in the late 90's, was one of the first of its kind in Ireland. It modelled local community responsibility for drug misuse.

		Receiving stolen goods 'door-to-door' Respect, courage & responsibility Fidelity V betrayal Care & compassion Personal/communal resistance strategies Community rituals & rejection of drugs Community-based treatment services Treatment of community's addicts Behaviours towards community addicts /dealers Self reliance & solidarity of the community 'Marching on' the drug dealer Humane treatment of users 'Whip-arounds' for victims of drug abuse Informal neighbourhood watch/alertness Self reliance & solidarity Role of mothers & 'good mothering' Partner support & friendships Treatment services & methadone programmes Drugs & development/ education groups Powerlessness V power Stereotyping of addict/ humanity of the addict Respect/sympathy for the addict Supportive roles- family & community Debts & eviction Struggles with recovery Abhorrence of & 'marching on' the dealer Compassion for partner/children of dealers Prescriptive drugs Drugs & depression HIV/AIDS Death & bereavement Suffering & evil Prejudice & judgement Anti social behaviour Fear, threat & intimidation Security Silence
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TABLE 6. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
DRUGS CULTURE: A SIGNIFICANT CULTURE SHAPER

The ethical landscape of the drugs culture is highly complex. Central aspects of the Fatima drugs culture which require critique, in my view, include: exposure of the child to drugs (child abuse), collusion with the drugs culture through the buying of stolen goods (theft), inappropriate vigilante activities, and the perpetration of physical violence on drug users/dealers. Despite these challenges, the capacity of the Fatima community to celebrate life is striking. The following section examines the characteristic features of communal celebrations that distinguish everyday life in Fatima.

3.8 COMMUNITY CELEBRATION: LIVING LIFE IN THE MOMENT

A further and vital part of Fatima's survival mechanisms is its notable capacity *to celebrate* life's events. The characteristic wit and sense of humour in Fatima, and the common practice of

practical joking, offers an antidote to the constant presence of conflict and threat.¹⁵⁰ *Celebration*, as a theme, was explored in particular in the *Training for Transformation* group interview, where Frank commented: "I think there is a huge connection to fun; fun is important ... celebration; people could see it as a release or an alternative... let's have fun... let's create fun..."¹⁵¹ Interestingly, during one group exercise, when he was dividing up the larger group into a number of smaller groups, some group members insisted that a "have a laugh" sub-group be added to his list of suggestions. His colleague, Colette, commented: "once they were *allowed to name themselves* they settled down."¹⁵² Certainly Fatima's celebrations are manifold, for example, regular nights out in local pubs, followed often by dancing in clubs in town, birthday cakes shared in public settings, male bonding beer parties in the block, as well as big spending sprees for events such as First Communion, Confirmation, Christmas, and funerals, often to the point of substantial debt.

This theme was also spontaneously highlighted by the *Fig Tree* Group, which intentionally places 'celebration' as central to the life of their group. Group members' birthdays and important life events are always celebrated; home baked sponge cakes are supplied by one member, candles are lit, the environment is decorated, tea and wine are poured and greeting cards are shared as an integral part of the prayer meeting. Significantly, this fundamental attitude spills over into the group's spiritual celebration of Fatima life *as it is*:

It's as though you have to polish your life or put fancy words around it and then it's OK, rather than *it being OK because it's life* [emphasis mine]... God has such tremendous respect for us in our lives; there's no way they have to be dickied up or changed, or have fancy words put on them to be important to God...¹⁵³

As well as private prayer group celebrations, such as the *Fig Tree*'s, spectacular community festivals, which Corcoran describes as providing community cohesion, are also significant moments of celebration and ritual.¹⁵⁴ During the period of research three elaborate community festivals were organized by FGU local residents and outside partners; the *Burning the Demons* Halloween bonfire festival event (1997), the *Fatima Regeneration Festival* (2000) and the '*Gone but not Forgotten*' Halloween event, (2001), which creatively celebrated the life of

¹⁵⁰ Natasha recounts a situation in her first day at work in the Community Centre where the other women sent her into the main office to get a "bucket of steam"; she was so nervous she did as they asked. Interview with Natasha, 30/05/2002.

¹⁵¹ *Training for Transformation* focus group, 03/12/2001.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Fig Tree* Focus Group, 22/05/2001.

¹⁵⁴ Corcoran: 41. 'Ritual' is used in a broad sense here. A more detailed analysis of the symbolic communal meanings of these localised celebratory events is provided in chapter seven.

Fatima, past, present and future.¹⁵⁵ During the research period Fatima residents participated also in an elaborate St. Patrick's Eve Parade of Elements (1997) which was a source of great pride. Regarding these events, one resident make the comment:

The bonfire that was over in the canal a couple of year ago... and the boys were playing in the band (*JUST*) and I'll tell you they came from everywhere to look at it... and last year at the end of the summer project they had a parade that they were talking about for months afterwards. They had little children dressed up as butterflies. There was even a man dressed up as a flower... the flat I live in I can see right into the football pitch and that's where it all goes on, so I have a ringside seat... just unbelievable to look at all the colourful costumes, hear the music... they have this bongo band (I do call it!)... they keep playing the drums. It's like something you'd see on T.V. for a carnival.¹⁵⁶

A further example of community celebration is the *Debs* event (formerly known as the Debutante Ball).¹⁵⁷ However, it would appear that *Debs* events have a significance of their own in Fatima; in my view they appear to mark an unspoken initiation into adulthood and also act as a substitute for a formal wedding, since weddings - largely for economic reasons - are not generally a part of Fatima culture. My fieldwork notes describe one such *Debs* event:

Preparations went on for a week before J's *Debs*... his granny described it as an event "bigger than a wedding". Parallels between the *Debs* and a wedding were indeed striking. The flat was cleared out and decorated with flowers and/or bunting etc. Huge amounts of food and drink are available. A house party is organized and relatives, neighbours and close friends are invited. The family gathers inside and neighbours often spill out to the outside of the flat because of the crowds. The 'stretch limo' arrives and the departure is tearful and intensely emotional; in this case the son telling his nanny and aunt how much he loves them. As is traditional, J. had collected coppers in a bag for the *grushie*- the practice of throwing coppers over the guests and the children before departing. The young men and women have a wonderful opportunity to dress up in their finery... it is all given a huge amount of significance, not unlike a threshold moment or an initiation into adulthood.¹⁵⁸

Residents' capacity to *celebrate life* is in many ways a necessary coping strategy as well as an act of resistance and defiance in the face of more insidious forces at work in the community. A

¹⁵⁵ For a summary account of the *Fatima Regeneration Festival* (2000) see Pauline Logue, "The Butterfly: a symbolic expression of the soul of an inner-city community" in Martin Byrne, *The Boundary Wall: Evolving Consciousness of North Wall People*, (Dublin: ELO Press, 2000): 88-89.

¹⁵⁶ Mrs Donohoe, *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

¹⁵⁷ In this context, the Debutante Ball marks the graduation from secondary school.

¹⁵⁸ Fieldnotes, 30/11/2001. The tradition of the *grushie* is described by Patrick Ryan as follows: "The 'Grushie' is a tradition at Dublin weddings. When the bride or the groom leaves the home on the wedding morning he or she is showered with countless amounts of coins. The coins are then left there for the gathering children to collect. See P. Ryan, *Distant Babylon: A Voice from the Ground* (Dublin: Linden Publishing Services, 2005)109. In Fatima, the practice extends to the *Debs* event.

comprehensive thick description of Fatima celebration is provided in Table 7 below. It must be noted that this celebratory aspect of Fatima life, while positive and community-building in many aspects, is not without its problems. The accumulation of inordinate debts, in an attempt to provide for the family at times of festivity, the relatively heavy dependency on alcohol consumption, and the notable incidence of gambling, in particular, are common-place sources of suffering, and therefore require further analysis and critique (chapter seven).

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Celebration	<p>Celebration of Life in the Present</p> <p>Community Celebrations</p>	<p>Buzz/Fun Humour/wit- 'have a laugh' Fun as a release/escape Practical jokes Humour and survival Celebration as resistance Fun as an antidote to/alternative to conflict Bonding & Socialisation Hopes & dreams Communal spirituality Communal Rituals Celebrating life "as it is" / in the moment Celebrations and financial debts</p> <p>First Communion & Confirmation 'Debs' ball & 'Grushie' Christmas/St. Stephen's Day & Halloween celebrations Community festivals/rituals/pageants The Spirit of Fatima Beer parties in the blocks</p>

TABLE 7. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
CELEBRATION: LIVING LIFE IN THE MOMENT

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter addresses a primary objective of the research, namely, to provide an analytical account of the everyday ethics of one Irish inner city community. A systematic thematic analysis of the value system and moral practice of Fatima is provided, as well as an elaborate and 'thick description' of Fatima's ethical worldview. This analysis of Fatima's value system and moral practice is structured around seven over-arching cultural themes, originally isolated by means of participant observation and initial pilot research. A detailed and systematic description of further related cultural themes and sub-themes operative within this inner city community is provided.

It was repeatedly demonstrated in this chapter that Fatima's self-description or 'moral voice' reflects a distinctly *communitarian survival ethics*. A moral world, shaped and defined

primarily by the struggle for survival, gradually unfolds as characteristic cultural themes are systematically isolated from my research data. *Community* emerges as a central value, related to which is the *care and protection of Fatima children*. Sub-themes voiced in this context are manifold and include: *good mothering, the responsibilities of mothering, value conflicts inherent in the mothering role, the importance of 'being there' for the children (in a culture of drugs and inordinate violence), care for the children's health and safety, and adequate housing*. Significantly, it is demonstrated that interpretations of responsible parenting do not correlate directly with perspectives of persons from outside the community. Examining wider Fatima relationships, communal values include: *solidarity, inter-dependence, communal loyalties and a tolerance of vulnerable members of the community*. In this context, tensions are evident between individual and communal needs and advancement.

This analysis also demonstrates that relationships with outsiders tend to be characterized by mistrust and experiences of discrimination are manifold. Resistance behaviours demonstrate the extent to which the Fatima community regards herself to be set apart from 'outsiders'. Values which surface in this context are: *sharing and interdependence, creative responses in relation to oppressive systems, respect and care for the most vulnerable in the community, human resilience, resistant wit, and practical wisdom*. Explorations of survival in face of a rampant drugs culture reveal such values as *widespread tolerance, care and compassion for the addict, self-reliance on the part of the community and its willingness to take communal responsibility for its own addicts*.

With respect to gender, evidence was provided of the presence of distinctive cultural moral mores and their transmission via the maternal generational line. The Fatima community is largely 'woman-identified' (as opposed to 'matriarchal') and Fatima men are noted by their general absence, both in the domestic sphere and in the wider Fatima community. Sexism, a defining feature of the estate, is shown to be inseparable from classism and there is clear evidence of the feminization of poverty. Women's sphere of influence is shown to be very limited, both within Fatima and beyond; themes of *voicelessness* and *powerlessness* recurred often in this context.

As indicated above, the communal capacity to *celebrate life* also defines the Fatima community. This quality, which is interwoven into daily life, is most vividly demonstrated in the elaborate community festivals, which serve to gather the hopes and dreams of the community. 'Debs' and religious events, such as First Communion or Confirmation, are also celebrated lavishly. Research indicates that this celebratory capacity is a coping strategy as well

as an act of resistance and defiance. It is also illustrative of the liminality of Fatima's religious/faith life with respect to the official churches.

With respect to the wider relevance of these research findings, I suggest that the analysis offered in this chapter provides a thick description of the ethics of one Irish inner city community, which can act as a basis for future replicable and/or comparative studies (chapter seven). More specifically, by means of an inductive, organic and community-sensitive ethnographic research methodology – here termed the 'cultural themes process model' - a 'thick description' of the value system of other inner city communities can be similarly documented with a view to comparative analysis. By this means both the distinctiveness and the commonalities of other inner city value systems may be uncovered and critically examined in the future. Moreover the 'thick description' of inner city values and cultural themes provided in this work may be seen as a significant sociological foundation for future explorations of inner city theology or ethics.

Finally, as is clearly indicated in the general introduction to this thesis, the absence of appropriate dialogue partners in the field of ethics in the Irish context has necessitated an engagement with comparable research within the wider international field of ethics. In the following chapter I engage in a dialogue with two selected feminist theologies, namely, *mujerista* and womanist. This dialogue is organised according to the seven over-arching cultural themes identified in my research. The value of adding this exploration to my thesis is its heuristic function of helping to further identify/map, and clarify, Fatima-based values and their wider significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

VALUES AND MORAL AGENCY IN FATIMA AS ILLUMINATED BY *MUJERISTA* AND WOMANIST THEOLOGIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The value system, moral codes and moral agency identified in the previous chapter as characterizing the life of the Fatima community are undoubtedly reflective of Fatima's particular social locality and history. However, I suggest that comparative analyses might reveal that similar themes and sub-themes are prevalent in other contexts of social exclusion. In the general introduction to this work, while discussing the originality and potential application of this contribution, the significant problematic of the absence of appropriate dialogue partners within the field of ethics in the Irish context was outlined. Despite acknowledged differences in our respective methodologies, the validity of engaging in dialogue with liberationist/feminist theologies emerging from contexts of social exclusion was argued for, on the basis that they explore similar moral landscapes and provide insightful accounts of moral agency in the context of social exclusion¹ Moreover, this body of work provides cogent gender analyses from varying cultural perspectives. An argument was made for the heuristic function of this literature in helping to map out an account of generative values in contexts such as Fatima.

Acknowledging our respective methodological and ideological differences, this dialogical approach is necessarily cautionary. The significant distinction between my ethnographic methodological approach, and that of a feminist theology, must be kept in mind throughout this chapter. My own approach is that of classical ethnographic which seeks to provide a platform for Fatima women's voices, speaking their everyday (non-feminist) experience. Consistent with specified requirements of research ethics, including the 'ethical relation' and academic integrity, this approach requires the (initial) suspension of any judgement of findings from the base of my own personal or ideological worldview (chapter two). In contrast, the feminist interpretive role, which prioritizes the experience and emancipation of women, is formally engaged in a process of critique of patriarchal forces in church and society. It intentionally conducts both a deconstruction and a reconstruction of research findings within an intentionally liberationist/feminist framework.

¹The term is borrowed from Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004) 5.

My initial literature review provided strong indicators that *mujerista* and womanist theologies, as theologies shaped by contexts of social-exclusion, might be effective sources for comparative analysis. To begin, they both provide in-depth women-centred accounts of ethics which parallels the women-centred approach adopted in my work. As feminist contributions to the field of ethics, they highlight the relevant category of women's experience, including women's moral agency, in the specific contexts of social exclusion and community survival. Of particular interest to my research is the fact that their respective ethical analyses identify issues and themes which resonate closely with Fatima life, including *mothering, patriarchy and surrogacy; the individual in tension with the community, familial and social relationships; survival and resistance strategies; suffering and struggle; cultures of violence; voice and silence*, etc. Furthermore, these theologies critique the dominant ethics in both church and society, which mirrors my own primary research aim of critiquing selected formal sources of moral theology in the Irish public forum. For these reasons, while fully acknowledging significant differences in our overall methodology, it is considered that a comparative analysis between selected explorations found in these theologies and my Fatima-based research findings might prove useful in illuminating the emergent cultural themes and values in my work.²

While relevant points of similarity between my research findings and analyses in feminist theology are identified (above), significant points of difference between my own research analysis and the ethical analyses of *mujerista* and womanist contributions also serve to illuminate important aspects of the Fatima experience. One point of difference highlighted in this chapter is the community's relationship to faith, religion, and the official churches, all of which has real implications for its collective value system and moral practice. As we shall see, in *mujerista* theology the religious life of the Hispanic community, though rooted, like Fatima, in Roman Catholicism, plays a much more central role in maintaining cultural identity within the Hispanic community. Also, in womanist accounts, the black liberationist Protestant churches provide effective spiritual resources for the community. This does not reflect the Fatima experience, which is predominantly one of marginalization and alienation with respect to the churches. These points of difference raise important questions about the precise nature of Fatima's relationship with the church and the impact of this relationship upon Fatima's value system and moral practice. Another significant point of contrast, which has implications for Fatima's value system, is the description of personal and communal oppression, which is presented in both *mujerista* and womanist theologies, namely the triple oppression of racism,

² Importantly, this *comparative analysis* is not understood "in the narrow, if well-established, sense of 'hard-science' methodology employed to support some universal theory or meta-narrative". See Andre Gingrich and Richard Fox (eds.) *Anthropology, by Comparison*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2002)1.

sexism and classism. My analysis, in contrast, centres on the double oppression of sexism and classism, which reflects the particular experience of the Fatima community. With respect to racism, the analysis also uncovers inherently racist attitudes and practices within the community (chapter three).

With the above in mind, the organizing principle of the dialogue which follows is the seven over-arching cultural themes, which were identified and explored in the preceding chapter. The chapter also points to research findings that are problematic from the perspective of alternative ethical frameworks, an aspect of my research analysis which is further discussed in the concluding chapter.

4.2 CHILDREN: THEIR PROTECTION AND THEIR FUTURE

... enduring whatever they must so their children can reach for the stars...³

A profound *concern for children and their future* was a primary theme identified and explored in my Fatima research findings. This concern is also highlighted in both *mujerista* and womanist theologies, where related sub-themes include: *good mothering and responsibility, matriarchy and survival, loss of innocence and maternal suffering*. On the theme of *good mothering and responsibility*, parallels with Fatima are striking. When explicitly exploring moral questions of good and evil, one Hispanic mother, Adela, suggests that the worst evil has to do with not being a good mother.⁴ A striking aspect of good mothering in both of these accounts is self-betterment. Adela comments "... (m)y life right now is my children, for me there is no other life, I have given my life to my children. For me I wish I could better myself so I could do better for them."⁵ Adela does not plan to "become stagnant"; she hopes to study and better herself; "to become better *for them*..."⁶ Fatima based interviews similarly emphasize the value of self betterment for the exclusive purpose of child education and development. The popular Fatima based FÁS initiated 'Back to Basics' adult education programme is a case in point where, as indicated in the previous chapter, up to thirty mothers returned to individually tailored adult education programmes with the explicit purpose of supporting their children with homework and school projects. Many Fatima mothers take the view that it would be a grave wrong to deprive their children of an education and opportunities for development in order to advance themselves as persons in any way. One Fatima mother, Marie, for example, insists that

³ Delores Williams: *Sisters in the Wilderness: the Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998) x.

⁴ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango: 83.

⁵ *Ibid.*: 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 83-84.

“you’ve brought two children into the world and it’s up to you to look after them...” and another, Sarah, comments “my mind is set on the kids and that’s it!”⁷ Indeed, as indicated in the previous chapter, interviews suggest that, in Fatima, the self-identity of women, who happen to be mothers, is almost exclusively located in their mothering role, and self development is intimately linked to child development.

In *mujerista* accounts, further responsibilities associated with effective or ‘good’ mothering are also emphasized. Indeed, Hispanic mothers on the whole see themselves as bearing the most part of the burden of care and responsibility within the family. As in Fatima based research, the striking lack of *paternal* responsibility is underscored. *Mujerista* researchers Isasi-Díaz and Tarango comment that in the Hispanic community it is the women who “take direct responsibility for what they do or do not do.”⁸ Adela, when explicitly pushed to identify what might be ‘sinful’, volunteered that it would be a serious sin if her children were to “acquire bad habits” because she is the one responsible for them.⁹ Regarding decision-making, Marta says that it was responsibility for her children that always made her “take a whole bunch of decisions”.¹⁰ Maria similarly emphasizes maternal responsibility when she comments

God has given us that thing so beautiful, to have the right to be mothers. But at the same time God has given us a really hard job not only of carrying the child for nine months, and bringing it into the world, but also the responsibility goes on because the work contract of a mother never finishes. It is for all eternity... I believe that the one who has real maternal instinct, the job of being a mother goes on, that job never ends. On the contrary I believe that it multiplies... your responsibility keeps stretching.¹¹

The question of deprivation, associated with marginalization and poverty, arises strongly in this analysis. Maria, for example, suggests that her sense of responsibility is probably so great because of all she did not have in her own life.¹² This parallels the experience of Sarah, from Fatima, who spoke about the lack of parental support she experienced as a child and of her desire, in light of that experience, to provide her children with constant stability and support. She comments “I didn’t always have someone there for me growing up and ah... I went through a lot of stuff... and I want to be really there for them at all times.”¹³

⁷ Interviews with Marie, 23/05/2001 and Sarah 03/03/2001.

⁸ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango: 90.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 83-84 (emphasis mine); also interviews with Melanie, 12/12/2001, Marie, 23/05/2001, and Fluffy, 27/04/2001.

¹⁰ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha. In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993)108.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 96.

¹² *Ibid.*: 130.

¹³ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

The womanist analysis of good mothering and the care of children similarly offer rich sources of reflection. Womanist theologians present the black mother as strong and hardworking and doing everything in her capacity to ensure the survival of her children, a profile which closely reflects the traditional Fatima mother. Research questionnaire findings suggest that Fatima mothers are the “backbone of Fatima”, often exuding “a great sense of strength and belonging”, “hard working, with an external persona that is hard/tough”, left to carry all the responsibility”, “resilient and survivors”, “extremely resourceful, longsuffering and with high levels of tolerance”, etc.¹⁴ Womanist theologian Delores Williams highlights the virtues of *hard work, courage, strength, women bonding and faith in God*, in the Black mother; virtues which are also a significant part of the Fatima story, though in different form:

The great truth of black women’s survival and quality-of-life struggle is that they have worked without hesitation and with all the energy they could muster. Many of them, like Hagar, have demonstrated great courage as they resisted oppression and they went into the wide, wide world to make a living for themselves and their children. They depended upon their strength and upon each other. But in the final analysis the message is clear: they trusted the end to God.¹⁵

Echoing this view, womanist writer, Rodgers, describes her mother as “the great black bridge I crossed over”, and Walker, in her work *Jubilee*, sums up her understanding of the black mother as a mother of children and a race, despite all the odds.¹⁶ Williams locates this virtue of *strength* in the ability to carry out tasks (productive and reproductive) as well as the ability to endure pain and suffering while engaged in these tasks.¹⁷ This identification of the centrality of mothers’ strength corresponds closely with Fatima findings.¹⁸ But it is Williams’ distinction between strength and power that is more particularly helpful in clarifying the Fatima experience. Citing Gerda Lerner she writes that, historically, a part of the mothering and nurturing functions of black women were the tasks of protecting, providing for, resisting oppression and liberating, all of which required strength, but a strength not necessarily synonymous with power, nor indeed any real sense of a black matriarchy.¹⁹ Townes writes that the concept of the African-American matriarch became dominant during the dramatic changes in the Black family profile in the 60’s, and onwards, where the numbers of female-headed houses increased dramatically. Significantly, she insists upon the inaccuracy of the term ‘matriarchy’ in relation to black women’s experience:

¹⁴ RQF, Q.16, respondents C, D, F, G, L, and M.

¹⁵ Rodgers and Walker, cited (respectively) in Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 238-239.

¹⁶ Cited in Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 37.

¹⁸ Interviews with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001, Anita, 30/05/2001 and *Training for Transformation*, 03/12/2001.

¹⁹ Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America* (New York: Pantheon Books: 1972) xxiii.

By definition, matriarchy means decision-making power; it is the power of women over their own lives and their power over the lives of others. In a society and in a church that has white men in overwhelming positions of power, women in positions of economic and social subservience, and the African-American community fragmented, the notion of African-American matriarchy is ludicrous.²⁰

This womanist analysis throws light on the experience of Fatima.²¹ In particular it raises the question (as I do in my work) of the appropriateness of the use of the term 'matriarchy' in relation to the Fatima (chapter three). Womanist insights strengthen my earlier viewpoint that Fatima women cannot in any real sense be described as 'matriarchal' despite their apparently prominent role in the life of the local community.²² As indicated in the previous chapter, while the personal strength of many Fatima women is an indisputable theme testified to in many of my research interviews, the exercise of power and decision-making by women in Fatima is, in fact, hugely limited. Any exercise of power is largely defined by 'outsiders' such as governmental departments, statutory bodies, Dublin Corporation, FGU non-residential leadership, FÁS, etc. A distinction needs to be made between women's personal and collective strength, within the limited familial and communal sphere, and the decision-making powers women actually possess in relation to community development and societal participation. Participant observation over my years in Fatima indicated repeatedly that resident representatives in Fatima who were co-opted onto several local committees and management teams felt that they were given no real power to shape change.²³ Indeed interviewees including Mrs Kelly and Nicole spoke explicitly of a profound experience of voicelessness in such situations.²⁴ It was notable that in the majority of these instances it was pointed out by residents that adequate training was not provided for local residents to ensure an equal and effective role on such committees. Furthermore, there was a perception that residents were often hand-picked by influential non-resident members on those same committees and schooled in terms of required responses to various negotiation bodies.²⁵

²⁰ Townes: 78- 91 at 83.

²¹ Emilie M. Townes, *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*. (ed.) The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner Studies in Black Religion, Vol. VIII. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. 1993. Fifth Printing. 1999) 78-91.

²² Interview with *Training for Transformation*, 03/ 12 /2001.

²³ The presence of representative residents on community management teams is a requirement, not only for general credibility, but also for receipt of funding in social partnership arrangements. The role played by such members is not generally evaluated.

²⁴ Interviews with Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001 and Nicole, 08/10/2001.

²⁵ In the case of FGU, for example, the leadership of the organization also acted in the double role of employer for a number of resident members, hence there were conflicts of interest and a number of residents privately indicated that speaking their mind on occasion was more than their job was worth.

This significant relationship between women's strength and women's power is also examined in *mujerista* theology. Isasi-Díaz points out that, as powerless persons, Latinas lack authority, autonomy and opportunities to be self-defining, and status.²⁶ *Mujerista* theology insists that severe limitations, in terms of personal choice and power, lessen the Latina ability to develop creatively. In this limited context mothering is one of the few opportunities to be self-defining and creative. In this context Isasi-Díaz raises questions which are directly relevant to the Fatima experience and which I therefore quote at some length:

Si yo pudiera- if only I could- that is the repeated cry of Latinas who have very few, if any, avenues for developing and expressing their creativity. It seems that only in the roles of mothers can Latinas find some space to be creative. But then, whatever creativity Latinas might have in the way they nurture and educate their children is seriously curtailed by the expectations society has of motherhood and also by the imperative need Latinas have to teach their children how to survive. How can we teach our children to be free if we have to keep them inside the house so they will not be shot to death? How can we teach our children to ask questions, to dream dreams and see visions, when we know that to survive one has to comply?²⁷

The fact is that, in Fatima, the threat to physical survival was real, given the intensity of the drugs problem.²⁸ Similarly the dilemma of allowing children to "dream dreams" was in evidence. An example may serve to illustrate this point. In my role as education co-ordinator with *The Children and Adults Development Project (CADP)* this specific question arose regularly. Several conversations, at the levels of management and staff, as well as with parents, centred on the ethics of encouraging children to dream an alternative future for themselves than would be normative for the Fatima culture, in light of the very real levels of discrimination against the Fatima community and the possibility of ultimate disillusionment. The strongly held views of different residents communicated the inherent tension well. John, for example, insisted on preparing Fatima youth, including his own children, for the 'real world' of Fatima, arguing convincingly that it was unfair to falsely raise children's hopes.²⁹ Sheila, in contrast, insisted that every child had the right to dream dreams and that it was the role of parents, community workers, and the government, to provide the hope of a better future for Fatima children:

I'd never be a defeatist... I'd always say you can do anything you want basically... like I know they won't be rocket scientists or anything but I kind of instilled in them that learning is not for a job... ultimately it can lead to a good job but learning is something you just have to do... it can never stop for yourself... you have to push and push and push... but it can be done... you can't be put in a box...³⁰

²⁶ Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 113

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ On at least two occasions during my time in Fatima shots were fired in my particular block and on one of these occasions several children were playing in the public yard.

²⁹ Interview with John, 21/06/2001

³⁰ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

In this regard a central question often reflected upon in the community was: “Which is ultimately fairer: to allow children a (false) hope of escape from the reality of Fatima culture or to consciously expose them to its harsh reality in an attempt to prepare them for the ‘real world’ of Fatima to which they belong”? This relates to the question of the *loss of innocence*. In Fatima-based research, discussions about loss of innocence centred around: 1) the limited nature of Fatima children’s dreams and hopes in terms of future self determination, 2) the loss of childhood due to very early exposure to its general culture of violence, particularly the Fatima drugs culture, and 3) the rapidity with which adult roles are assumed, particularly in the case of young girls who engage in mothering and nurturing socialization roles from their earliest years.³¹

Hispanic and womanist theologies similarly explore the phenomenon of *loss of innocence* and what is helpful in these analyses in illuminating my own research findings is that both of these theologies explicitly link loss of innocence with systemic injustice. An example forwarded is the realization that success in society is aligned with one’s status, in terms of sex, class and race; the assumption by dominant groupings in society, that success is a possibility for everyone, has not been the experience of either the Hispanic or Black community in the U.S. Take Lupe’s story.³² As a Hispanic woman in the U.S. she had grown up to believe that if she worked hard enough she would achieve success. She gave herself to her work completely, had no social life and did not keep up with friends until her new boss accused her wrongly of harming his character through gossip. None of her co-workers, many of whom were her personal friends, stood up for her: “This is the worst thing that happened to me because of what happened inside of me; I gave up expecting that I could be dealt with fairly... I could give my all, and I still would not be treated right.”³³ Her belief that hard work and commitment would lead to success proved to be an illusion and this she attributed to ethnic prejudice.³⁴ This description of ethnic prejudice also throws light on Adela’s insistence that truth, honesty and transparency, however harsh, are a vital part of the mother-child relationship, from its earliest stages: “... when I talk to my children I talk to them the naked truth; I always have accustomed them to this - the good and the bad, they already know about it, even if they are small.”³⁵

This analysis resonates with womanist writings that expose the myth that everyone in society has equal opportunity and that free choice is available to all who seek it. Cannon, for example,

³¹ RQF, Q.17, j.

³² Isasi-Diaz and Tarango: 85-86.

³³ Ibid.: 85-86.

³⁴ Ibid.: 22.

³⁵ Ibid.

writes that the dominant ethics, which assumes the possibility of self-determination, regards as virtues those qualities that lead to economic success, namely, “self-reliance, frugality and industry”.³⁶ This viewpoint can easily be extended to the context of Fatima. Commonplace criticisms of Fatima, by outsiders, include that its members are “spongers” ripping off the State, unwilling to take up employment and overstretched with single mothers who have multiple children solely for the purpose of claiming increased childcare benefits. Such criticism fails to incorporate a critique of the structural injustices embedded in the State’s economic policy and practice (chapter one).

A further related sub-theme addressed by Fatima, *mujerista* and womanist accounts in relation to children, their protection and their future, is that of *maternal suffering*.³⁷ Fatima research interviews are filled with descriptions of maternal suffering even though the term itself is not explicitly used. As Corcoran suggests, the overall emphasis in residents’ self-descriptions is that of *endurance*.³⁸ This relates to central aspects of Fatima life which are highlighted in my own analysis, such as physical or mental health problems, the difficulties of inadequate housing, the humiliation and frustration of stigmatisation and discrimination, the fear and powerlessness of the threat of violence, the widespread negative impact of the drugs culture, the debilitating effects of unemployment, social exclusion and spiritual alienation (chapter three).

Mujerista and womanist analyses of suffering in their respective communities enable a deepening of a Fatima analysis in that they both focus intentionally on the relationship between suffering and systemic injustice or ‘moral evil’. *Mujeristas*, for example, explore suffering in the context of *la lucha* (the struggle); a term which corresponds closely to the resistance culture prevalent in Fatima.³⁹ Isasi-Díaz gives the examples of a Latina grassroots response to the greeting, “How are you?”, namely, “Ahí, en la lucha” (“there, in the struggle”).⁴⁰ She suggests that an anthropological model developed out of the lived-experience of Latinas “centres on a subject who struggles to survive and who understands herself as one who struggles”.⁴¹ The ‘struggle’ is understood positively, both as an act of defiance in the face of systemic injustice and as a sign of personal and communal self respect. Struggle, as a constituent of everyday life and of Latina self-construction, is understood against the background of oppression “due to specific historical injustices that are the cause of great suffering”.⁴² Significantly, it is *la lucha*

³⁶ Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*: 2.

³⁷ Interviews with Marie, 23/05/2001, Mrs Byrne, 22/03/2001 and Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001.

³⁸ Corcoran: 18-30.

³⁹ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha*: 168-169; also *Mujerista Theology*: 129-132.

⁴⁰ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha*: 168.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

and not *suffering* which locates the Latina in *mujerista* theology, since location in *suffering* would imply “that we understand ourselves not as a moral subject but as one acted upon by the oppressors.”⁴³ If, on the other hand, *la lucha* locates Latinas, then Latinas can be seen, not only as “a strategic force in history but rather as historical, moral subjects, aware of our own role in defining and bringing about a preferred future.”⁴⁴ The strength of this analysis is that it provides a strong critique of systemic injustice as experienced in the life of the Hispanic community. It also brings the empowering role of the moral agency of Hispanics to the fore. Both aspects may be readily applied to the Fatima context.

Womanist writings on the theme of maternal suffering in the black community are also insightful. Cannon provides a helpful commentary on suffering in society. She argues that in the dominant ethics one is free to make suffering a desirable norm. Indeed suffering in such a case can be presented as virtuous. In contrast, for the vast majority of blacks suffering *is a given* that is born of systemic injustice. She insists that the ranges of freedom of whites and blacks differ significantly; blacks, she points out, are constricted to “the lowest range of self-determination”.⁴⁵ Importantly also, womanists distinguish between suffering and pain in terms of transformative, examine the inherent connection between suffering and oppression, and explore the notion of suffering as a moral evil. Womanist writer, Audre Lorde, makes the observation that suffering is in fact unscrutinized and unmetabolized pain; a static process that usually ends in oppression, whereas pain is that which is recognized, named, dynamic and containing the possibility of transformation.⁴⁶ Within this model, suffering is morally unacceptable because it denies the possibility of transformation and liberation, and any discussion that accepts suffering as a good “is susceptible of being shaped into a tool of oppression”.⁴⁷ Re-reading Fatima-based research interviews in light of these observations, an explicit identification of the systemic nature of the suffering of Fatima community members is found to be in evidence. For example, in interviews with women residents, on the question of overcoming suffering, there was clear reference to the positive effect of involvement in some form of transformatory action at either personal and/or communal levels.⁴⁸ Furthermore,

⁴³ Isasi-Díaz points out that this position differs from Latin American and Hispanic theologians. See *En La Lucha*: 168. footnote 9;

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 169.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 3.

⁴⁶ Cited in Townes: 84.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 85.

⁴⁸ Interviews with Fluffy, 27/04/2001, Liselle, 28/08/2001, Sarah, 03/03/2001, Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001 and Debbie, 26/04/2001.

descriptions of personal and communal transformation reflect, in many instances, an effective and conscious resistance to systemic suffering, among them sexism.⁴⁹

4.2 WOMEN AND MEN: PERCEPTIONS AND ROLES

... the development of an inclusive ethic requires us to recognize and condemn the extent to which sex differences prevail.⁵⁰

The systemic injustice of *sexism*, which is explored in some detail in my research analysis, is a particular source of women's suffering (chapter three). Significantly, from the perspective of my research context, both the *mujerista* and womanist analyses of sexism emphasise the intimate relationship between sexism and classism (or economic domination). In this section I will therefore examine the relationship between *sexism and classism* and apply these findings to Fatima. I will also explore cultural themes related to sexism and classism, of relevance to Fatima, namely, *models of womanhood, surrogacy roles, and cultural codes*.

The Fatima gender analysis, presented in chapter three highlights the fundamental sexism, which characterizes relationships within the Fatima community. Fatima-based research indicates, for example, that women are socialized to be child-bearers from an early age.⁵¹ They are expected to be compliant in the domestic sphere.⁵² They also tolerate large levels of abuse and violence.⁵³ Research also highlights those inadequate socialization processes that result in the notable chauvinism of many Fatima males.⁵⁴ To illustrate this chauvinism, striking comments regarding Fatima males, made by non-resident workers, include: "Men here think it is alright to beat up and control women... they drink excessively and don't let women have their independence", "early impressions are that they look like really tough guy, into violence", "squandering money without accountability", "cave men...believe the little women should be at home and bow to every whim and take any rubbish they throw at them", etc.⁵⁵

A similar analysis is found in *mujerista* theology where a solid connection between sex roles (or gender relations) and the division of labour (or economic relations) is clearly established.

⁴⁹ Interviews with Gemma, 22/06/2001 and Sheila, 15/03/2001. Here analyses of systemic injustice were offered spontaneously.

⁵⁰ See Katie Geneva Cannon, "Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick", in J.H. Cone & G.S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: a Documentary History. Volume Two: 1980-1992*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.1993. Fourth Printing. 1998) 300-308 at 305.

⁵¹ RQF, Q.17; also interview with Donna, 12/11/2001.

⁵² RQF, Q.17.

⁵³ RQF, Q.13, i, responses.

⁵⁴ RQF, Section Four.

⁵⁵ RQF, Q.19, respondents C, D, G and K.

Citing Amott and Matthaei, Isasi-Díaz writes that gender is rooted in “societies’ beliefs that the sexes are naturally distinct and opposed social beings, and these beliefs are turned into self-fulfilling prophecies through sex-role socialization.”⁵⁶ She points out that allocation of different work to males and females, and in different spheres (private and public) is an intrinsic aspect of gender. She further insists that theories of “complementarity” between male and female have proved fallacious since, most often, work allocation and distribution is accompanied by blatant inequality. Interestingly, from the perspective of Fatima, she insists that sexism is differently experienced, defined and understood by Hispanic women and Anglo women in the United States and that she suggests that Hispanic women resist the definitions of the dominant group.⁵⁷

In line with a feminist methodology, Isasi-Díaz, situates her discussion of *sexism* in the context of Hispanic women’s overall oppression. A description of the socio-economic reality of Hispanic women, provided by Isasi-Díaz highlights the integral connection between sexist and classist aspects within Hispanic culture.⁵⁸ To illustrate, in exploring the nature of this oppression she cites information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau which indicates that the number of Hispanics living below the poverty line in the early 70’s was twice the national average and that the levels of poverty among Hispanics have risen steadily since then, a pattern which closely parallels the experience of Fatima in recent decades.⁵⁹ She also notes that the increasing poverty of Hispanics is in part connected to the ever-increasing proportion of households solely headed by women.⁶⁰ Parallels with Fatima are clearly evident, since, the majority of housing units, at the time of research, were headed by lone mothers (chapter one). The Corcoran Report (1998), for example, states that the most typical household type in Fatima is the lone parent family, a group with a higher than average risk of poverty (chapter one).⁶¹ In fact, 70% of lone parent families fall below the 60% relative income poverty line, compared to 35% of all families with children. Furthermore, the rise in the number of lone parent households is one of the most distinctive features of the estate since the end of 1980.⁶² Then, the nuclear family unit comprising of two parents and children predominated (90.8%). However, that figure has fallen dramatically to 21% in 1998.

Womanist sources also provide a similar analysis linking sexism and poverty in the black community. Cannon argues that the persistent obstacles of poverty and gender discrimination

⁵⁶ Ibid.: 18, footnote 22.

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 19, footnote 24.

⁵⁸ This analysis covers two decades, from the early seventies to the early nineties, and notes significant trends during this period.

⁵⁹ 22.8% as opposed to 11.9%.

⁶⁰ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha*: 24.

⁶¹ Corcoran: 13.

⁶² Ibid.

(as well as racial prejudice) continue to place the black woman and her family in situations of hunger, disease and high unemployment, low levels of education, unacceptable housing, and inadequate health care, all of which have been identified in Fatima research.⁶³ Womanist research also focuses on *models of womanhood* that are intimately bound up with sexism and classism. Williams looks to the biblical slave character Hagar to explore a Black model of womanhood and suggests that the model of womanhood affirmed in the biblical “Hagar-in-the-wilderness symbol”, which most closely corresponds to Afro-American women’s experience, conflicts with Anglo-American ideals about “true womanhood”.⁶⁴ The Hagar model, as described by Williams, is one which also speaks directly to the Fatima experience since it is characterized by *defiance, endurance, poverty management, strength and courage*, all independently identified in my research as defining Fatima qualities (chapter three). Williams writes:

..this African-American notion affirms such qualities as defiance; risk-taking; independence; endurance when endurance gives no promise; the stamina to hold things together for the family (even without the help of a mate); the ability, in poverty, to make a way out of no way; the courage to initiate political action in the public arena; and a close personal relationship with God.⁶⁵

To be inclusive of black women’s experience women’s reproductive and productive histories must be given due attention.⁶⁶ This involves more than physical birthing, the nurturing of children and caring for the family; it also involves women’s thought and creativity and resistance strategies.⁶⁷ Elaborating on this notion, Toinette M. Eugene explores the “myth of the superwoman” (a term borrowed from Michelle Wallace).⁶⁸ She points out that the social activism and self-sacrifice that characterized Black women’s lives historically were more than value indicators and valuable models of unusual courage and strength, “they also represented realistic responses to economic deprivation and political and social inequality”.⁶⁹ Unlike mainstream white women, Black women have been forced into survival situations. Townes insists that Black women are not “special specimens of womanhood; rather they are women who have been given less protected and more burdensome positions in society”.⁷⁰ Woman-bonding and solidarity in friendships plays a significant role in such circumstances.

⁶³ Cannon: *Black Womanist Ethics*: 66-67, also interviews with Sheila, 03/03/2001, Anita, 30/05/2001 and Mel, 13/12/2001.

⁶⁴ Williams: *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 122

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 122.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 158.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Toinette M. Eugene, “Moral Values and Black Womanists” in J.H. Cone & G.S. Wilmore, *Black Theology, Vol. 2*: 309- 320 at 310.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Traditionally in the Black community there was a very high level of adult female co-operation and inter-dependence, a feature that was also identified in Fatima research (chapter three). Like Fatima women, black mothers also often flouted laws and norms or took up traditionally male roles, to be carers and nurturers for family, and community networks and networks of female support facilitated this resistance behaviour.⁷¹ What this analysis highlights is that such resistance behaviours arise directly out of the desire for *survival*, at personal and communal levels, a value that informs lifestyle, relationships and moral agency within the community. Such a view parallels my own Fatima-based research findings of a survival ethics.

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, *mothering surrogacy roles* are also an important aspect of Fatima, *mujerista*, and womanist gender and sex role analyses. Fatima research indicated that there is not only an acceptance of, but, in some cases, an explicit expectation that some women in the community, whether mothers themselves or not, exercise a surrogacy role in cases of need.⁷² Surrogacy is generally affirmed and respected by established and respected community members and critical comments are rare.⁷³ Hispanic accounts present a similar picture. One Hispanic woman Adela speaks of her own surrogacy-mothering role:

I have with me a girl who is now fifteen; she is with me since she was six or seven. My mother picked her up from a woman who did not care for her children. My mother said to me "Look, if you want to do something, take that girl, because that girl's going to end up doing something that is not good." And I brought her, and she is with me; but I never have said that she is not related to me because many people could take advantage of her... so she is my niece, she is my same blood, and I protect her.⁷⁴

There is a significant difference between the above accounts and the black experience of surrogacy, in that black surrogacy was, historically, a racially imposed surrogacy. Black mothers were forced to mother and nurture white children, to the detriment of the nurturing of their own children. Indeed black critiques of social-role surrogacy, such as that presented by Williams, are scathing.⁷⁵ While acknowledging this point of contrast, there are certain aspects of this theological critique that are pertinent to Fatima life, such as William's explorations of the story of the biblical figure Hagar in relation to surrogacy. She points out that, historically, black women and their children were very closely bonded, while the father was often an absent figure, since during slavery fathers were often sent to other plantations or used as studs to father

⁷¹ Interviews with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001, Marie, 23/05/2001, Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001, Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001 and Anita, 30/05/2001.

⁷² Interview with Tessie, 04/06/2000.

⁷³ Informal conversations with community residents Mrs Ryan and Mrs. Duffy, both of whom have acted as guardians for children of family members and neighbours.

⁷⁴ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango: 21-22.

⁷⁵ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 60-83.

numerous children, or were the slave-master, who abdicated all parenting responsibilities.⁷⁶ Developing this point she argues that black fatherhood, being systemically hindered, was, and remains, problematic.⁷⁷ In the absence of the black father, black slave women were forced to carry out multiple mothering roles, as mothers and nurturers to their own children while often also “mammys” to white children. They were also forced to simultaneously take up what was traditionally regarded as masculine roles, in slave labour; farming etc.⁷⁸ There are certain parallels here with life in Fatima where the general absence of the male, the subsequent enforced labour for women outside of the home, a welfare culture that limits the father’s financial strength, the limitation on fathering roles and the paucity of fathering skills are uncontested.⁷⁹ Moreover, women in the Fatima community have traditionally carried the dual burdens of reproduction and production.⁸⁰

Williams makes interesting theological connections in regard to surrogacy, which deserve brief comment here, since they raise the important question of the part religion plays in relation to surrogate roles. She argues that religion has played its part in colluding with the oppression of black social surrogacy and she is highly critical of mainstream Christian images that affirm surrogacy, writing that a “surrogate-God” who died on the cross in the place of humans has no “salvific power for black women”.⁸¹ In William’s view, this distorted image supports and reinforces unjust relationships where black women carry an unfair burden of care. The notion of an unfair burden of care resonates with the Fatima experience (chapter three). The Fatima community, insofar as possible has traditionally felt obliged to look after ‘its own’, not finding adequate support from either Church or State. Indeed, Fatima is still characterized by a profound suspicion and anger in regard to religious run child-care institutions and child-care services provided by the Eastern Health Board.⁸² To this day, it is only with great reluctance and through lack of choice that neighbours co-operate with outside services providers, fearing for the protection of the children involved.⁸³

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 60-83

⁷⁷ Ibid.: 79-80.

⁷⁸ Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*: 32-34; 36.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 34-35.

⁸⁰ Mrs Kelly’s story is a case in point; as a mother of a large family, and with an invalid husband, she had to fulfil the dual roles of homemaker and breadwinner. Interview with Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001.

⁸¹ Cited in J.H. Cone & G.S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: a Documentary History. Volume Two: 1980-1992* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.1993, Fourth Printing, 1998) 258.

⁸² Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

⁸³ Interview with Catherine, 05/02/2002.

In the context of socialization, another concept elaborated in womanist theology, which throws light on the Fatima experience, is that of *cultural codes*, by which is meant female centred codes centred on black women's activity.⁸⁴ In regard to cultural codes, Williams writes

These are words, beliefs, and behavioural patterns of a people that must be deciphered before meaningful communication can happen cross-culturally. Walker's codes are female centred and they point beyond themselves to conditions, events, meanings, and values that have crystallized in the African-American community *around women's activity* and formed traditions.⁸⁵

Williams regards these cultural codes and their traditions as valuable resources for indicating and validating the kind of data upon which womanist theologians can reflect since they bring social, religious and cultural aspects of black women's lives into the discourse of theology.⁸⁶ She points out that black mothers have historically passed on advice and wisdom for the purpose of survival in the white world, in the black community and with men, adding that female slave narratives, folk tales, and some contemporary black poetry and prose reflect this tradition.⁸⁷ There are a number of cultural codes pertaining to women's activity in Fatima, including: *respect for older women* (exhibited by not calling them by their first name), *older women keeping younger women in their place*, and *the transmission of mother-daughter advice*. An example of this latter code is recorded in my research field notes:

During an informal interview with Tessie her son, aged five, came into the room complaining that he had been urinated on by a neighbouring child in the block. The mother called on her fourteen year old daughter and instructed her to go to this boy's mother demanding that the child be chastised. The daughter went off with an air of authority and confidence. Later in the interview word was sent that the boy had been chastised. The matter was settled. I was aware of witnessing a cultural practice, namely that mothers clearly instruct daughters [*using the imperative*] how to deal with confrontational situations: "you go in next door ... bring him in with you and show her what he did and tell her that I want her child to be chastised" ...⁸⁸

A similar incident is recorded, when Deirdre's daughter was bullied in the public yard. In my presence Deirdre poked her finger insistently and repeatedly into her daughter's chest, saying to her in an authoritative manner, "you go back out to that yard and tell that bully that if he picks on you or anyone younger than him again he will have me to answer to". As an observer I at first imagined this action to be somewhat harsh, wondering why the crying child was not first

⁸⁴ 'Cultural codes', a term and concept borrowed from bell hooks, is employed by Williams, in "Womanist Theology": 265-272 at 266.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.: 266-268. Significantly the experience of poor black women is prioritised since it is deemed less individualistic and hence offers more to a theology that prioritises community.

⁸⁷ Williams, "Womanist Theology": 266.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

comforted, but noting the confidence with which the child faced the yard, and seeing the child affirmed by this interaction since she was sensing her mother's profound concern and support, it became clear that this was a demonstration of child protection as well as a lesson in self-respect.⁸⁹ In Fatima, as in Afro-American communities, the purpose of cultural (including moral) codes is survival; standing one's own ground, facing confrontation and aggression directly, knowing when to say the truth and when to lie; knowing when to be transparent or when to use deceit as a survival strategy in the context of relationships with the wider world.⁹⁰

4.4 RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILIAL AND SOCIAL

Other than the roles and gender relations assumed by women and men in "communities of struggle", an analysis of various relationships within the community and with 'outsiders' reveals much about the values system and morality in operation.⁹¹ In this section, in dialogue with *mujerista* and womanist theologies, I provide an examination of *two* selected relationships, namely relationships *within the family*, and *with the local churches* with a view to the identification of dominant values.

Family relationships are central to the life of the Fatima community and the associated values of *loyalty, fidelity, tolerance, interdependence, and support*, have been identified in my earlier analysis as significant (chapter three). By 'family' is not understood the nuclear family but the close network of extended kin; including grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and in-laws. Indeed, given the high incidence of familial connections within the community, the concept of family extends quite naturally to encompass the local community.⁹² Positive familial relationships, inter-generational familial support networks and familial loyalties play significant roles in the overall cohesion of the community and the determination of its value system and moral practice, as testified to in many of the interviews conducted with residents.⁹³

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Interview with Donna, 12/11/2001.

⁹¹ This term is used by Isasi-Díaz., *En La Lucha*: 159.

⁹² Research by Tony Mac Cárthaigh confirms the intricate and dense web of inter-relationships in Fatima. See *Community & Drugs ~A Christian Response* a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy, Irish School of Ecumenics, University of Dublin, Trinity College, 1994.

⁹³ Interviews with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001, Marie, 23/05/2001, Sheila, 15/03/2001, Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001, Donna, 12/11/2001, Fluffy, 27/04/2001, Liselle, 28/08/2001 and Niamh, 04/03/2001.

The centrality of family (*la familia*) is also characteristic of *mujerista* theology. Isasi-Díaz writes that it is in *la familia* that Hispanics are agents of their own history.⁹⁴ Exploring elements of a *mujerista* anthropology, Isasi-Díaz provides an account of the Hispanic understanding of *la familia/la comunidad* and states that Latinas are in agreement that *la familia* “is the central and most important institution in life”.⁹⁵ The ideology of family, she insists, is central to Hispanic life and identity; it is considered “primary”.⁹⁶ *La familia* has traditionally provided Hispanic women with the space wherein they were able to be agents of their own history.⁹⁷ Maintaining the family is an intrinsic part of the Hispanic women’s struggle and that Hispanic women are not willing to uncritically accept the Anglo feminist understanding of the family as the centre of women’s oppression.⁹⁸

In the Hispanic consciousness *la familia*, as in Fatima, indicates a wider kinship than that of the nuclear family. It includes nuclear family members, grandparents, cousins two and three times removed, aunts and uncles, in laws, as well as *comrades and compadres* (godparents). Furthermore *la familia* is inseparable from *la comunidad*. The middle point between family and community is *compadrazgo and comadrazgo*, which refers to the system of relationships that are established between godparents and godchildren and the parents of godchildren and also extends beyond religious occasions such as baptism and confirmation to secular activities and enterprises; dances, businesses, sports teams and religious processions have *madrinas* (godmothers) and *padrinos* (godfathers).⁹⁹ Isasi-Díaz suggests that it is a system that works because of the significance of ‘personalism’ in the Hispanic culture.¹⁰⁰ It is, moreover, a system that “creates an effective infrastructure of interdependence, with Latinas most of the time being at its centre.”¹⁰¹ Family values, including “unity, welfare, and honor” extend from the family into the community by means of this system and community members receive support and protection in return for fidelity/loyalty, which is a value also central to Fatima

⁹⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 139.

⁹⁵ This is a phrase borrowed by Isasi-Díaz from Roberto R. Alvarez, Jr., “The Family” in Nicolás Kanellss (ed.) *The Hispanic American Almanac* (Washington, D.C.: Gale Research, 1993) 155.

⁹⁶ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 137.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: 139.

⁹⁸ Isasi-Díaz: *En La Lucha*: 19.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ By personalism here is meant “an orientation toward people and persons over concepts and ideas”, a definition Isasi-Díaz borrows from Guillermo Bernal, “Cuban Families” in Monica McGoldrick, John K Pearce, and Joseph Giordano (eds.) *Ethnicity and Family Therapy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1982) 192. See Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 140.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 141.

family life.¹⁰² In the Hispanic mother Marta's story we see *loyalty* being explicitly identified a significant value:

The worst is disloyalty - that for me is hard to deal with. I cannot conceive of being disloyal because that for me is the worst. To be loyal is to be true to you, not ever giving up on you. To be disloyal is to give up on you, or letting you down. If you need me I am going to be there. Loyalty is when I have to choose between you and another person or between you and a wish of mine and you come out first. That's being loyal. Loyalty to me is very important.¹⁰³

Isasi-Díaz also examines recent changes in the Hispanic family, including the increase in numbers of Hispanic women working outside of the home and the increasing numbers of female-headed families, both of which closely reflect the changing demographic profile of Fatima.¹⁰⁴ She affirms these changes and responds to accusations that the Hispanic family is disintegrating, commenting that what "is really behind such cries is fear of the demise of the patriarchal family not the destruction of Hispanic families as such".¹⁰⁵ The changes in question are mainly to do with the way Latinas look upon *machismo* (male chauvinism) and *hembrismo* (female inferiority).¹⁰⁶ In my view this insight has direct relevance for Fatima, in that, while some interviewees, such as Sheila, expressed concern about the overall demise in family networks, others, such as Mary, Mel, Anita and Deirdre, highlighted the freedom they had personally experienced when they consciously chosen to separate from destructive partners and/or family members for the sake of their own and their children's welfare.¹⁰⁷ Rather than the demise of family, this action was viewed as the reorientation of and redefinition of family resulting in a healthier and happier lifestyle for the women and children concerned. My interview with Mel illustrates this point:

I What is it like being a single mother?

M I love it! Because you are free to do what you want and are not confined to coming home to cook dinners... to be there... you can come and go as you please, and have all the time in the world for your child... no body else expecting your time... I think it's great, cos I didn't have that... I was always tensed up...

¹⁰² Ibid.; also interviews with Niamh, 04/03/2001, Mrs. Kelly, 06/03/2001, Donna, 12/11/2001, and *Training for Transformation*, 03/12/2001.

¹⁰³ Isasi-Díaz & Tarango: 84-85

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.: 84-85, also Corcoran: 13.

¹⁰⁵ Isasi-Díaz: *Mujerista Theology*: 138.

¹⁰⁶ Isasi-Díaz writes that the term *hembrismo* was coined by M.E. Bermúdez and adds: "Though the word *hembrismo* is not used, what it depicts, namely, traditional female roles characterized by weakness, passivity, and inertia, is considered by the dominant culture to be exemplified by Hispanic women. In other words, Latinas are the best examples of such female characteristics". See *Mujerista Theology*: 146, footnote 20.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Sheila, 03/03/2001; Mel, 12/12/2001; Mary, 15/15/2001, Anita, 30/05/2001 and Debbie, 26/04/2001.

- I So what is the difference between the woman you were and the woman you are today?
 M The difference? I have more confidence and am a much stronger person... I'm more determined now...I won't just sit back and take it any more.¹⁰⁸

In womanist accounts analyses of the *family* paint a very different picture to that of Fatima and *mujerista* theology. The systemic denial of familial and social bonds for the black woman historically, under slavery, is highlighted.¹⁰⁹ Despite numerous obstacles black families survived. In Toinette M. Eugene's words, they overcame slave owners attempts to "reduce them so many subhuman labour units, managing to create an ongoing system of family arrangements and kin networks".¹¹⁰ In light of this, it is to be expected that womanists express a concern about anti-family stances found in some strands of mainstream feminism.¹¹¹ Indeed, Williams writes that black women liberators prioritise the spiritual survival and spiritual salvation of the black family, with equality between men and women as well as the redistribution of society's goods for the benefit of black families, as well as white. Black women's liberation and family liberation are regarded as "*inseparable goals*".¹¹² Historically, therefore, Black women have not necessarily seen the domestic sphere as entirely oppressive, "but rather as a vehicle for building family life under slavery".¹¹³ Interestingly, these black family arrangements are described by a number of womanists as sites of egalitarianism. Eugene, for example, maintains that, in the domestic sphere, slaves experienced equality and autonomy as human beings; citing Davis she suggests that the salient theme emerging from domestic life in slave quarters is one of sexual equality.¹¹⁴ Williams, however, takes a more cautionary view, acknowledging that black women have been exploited in family contexts as a result of sexism; she challenges androcentric cultural forms and hierarchical relational patterns in the black community.¹¹⁵ She is particularly critical of black male liberation theology in this regard and suggests that, from a theological perspective, reflections on the woman Hagar in the wilderness (as opposed to the Exodus text, central to black male liberation theology) offers an alternative and more hopeful model for black women. She insists that black women understand these resources to be for the sustenance of a family centred, rather than an androcentric or fema-centric, black culture. This analysis marks a sharp point of contrast with Fatima perceptions of family life. In my research, even while many women experienced positive

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Mel, 13/12/01.

¹⁰⁹ Cannon: *Black Womanist Ethics*: 39.

¹¹⁰ Toinette M. Eugene, "Moral Values and Black Womanists": 311.

¹¹¹ See Williams, "The Color of Feminism: Or Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue" in *The Journal of Religious Thought*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Spring-Summer, 1986:42-58.

¹¹² Williams, "The Color of Feminism": 54.

¹¹³ Toinette M. Eugene, "Moral Values and Black Womanists": 312.

¹¹⁴ Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981)18.

¹¹⁵ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 159.

familial relationships, *none* of the women interviewed described their family relationships as a site of sexual equality and egalitarianism. Indeed, for a large number of interviewees, ‘family’ was experienced as a site of oppression, and often violence.¹¹⁶

In regard to social relationships beyond the family, many are experienced as significant sites of oppression. The *relationship with the churches*, one of many relationships highlighted in Fatima research (chapter one), *mujerista* theology and womanist theology, will be taken as an example to illustrate this point. In all three analyses faith and survival are fundamentally linked but faith and church are ambiguously connected. Within the Hispanic community, for example, maintaining the faith (*tener fe*) is stated as necessary for the struggle of everyday life (*la lucha*). In this context, *mujerista* theology highlights the positive role of popular religion in the life of Hispanics. The context is *La Raza* (the race), namely the *mestizaje* (difference) that has resulted from the mixture of Amerindian, African and Spanish cultures and histories, from which the Hispanic understandings of the divine, humanity and the meaning of life emerge.¹¹⁷

The role that the “Virgin” plays in the faith life of the Hispanic community is notable. Inez, a Puerto Rican woman, born in the United States but raised by her grandparents in a rural setting in Puerto Rico, speaks of prayers to the Virgin (the Hail Mary) and to guardian angels, as part of the faith passed on by her grandmother.¹¹⁸ Her grandfather had a particular devotion to the Virgin of Mount Carmel, to whom he prayed for petitions and for protection from storms, and to whom he lit five candles nightly. As a family they participated in “Visits of the Virgin” (where a statue of the Virgin is brought to the home, kept for a few days and then goes to another home) and “Sung Rosaries”.¹¹⁹ Lupe talks about her devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, with whom she identifies because of her faithfulness.¹²⁰ Though invocations to the Virgin were a formative part of her childhood, her devotion to the Virgin has increased since she has become involved in the community:

The Virgin of Guadalupe, I think, comes the closest to giving my Christian womanhood the dignity that it needs. I pray to her because the Virgin of Guadalupe is *morena* [brown skinned], the Virgin of Guadalupe is a mother, she is a pregnant women, and she spoke to Juan Diego – she understood the Indians and their needs.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Interviews with Sarah, 03/03/2001; Anita, 30/05/2001; Mel, 13/12/2001; Debbie, 26/04/2001; Mrs. Ryan, 22/03/2001; Marie 23/05/2001 and Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001.

¹¹⁷ Isasi-Díaz & Tarango:5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 15-19.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 15

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*:31-32.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*: 32.

The role that the “Virgin” plays in the faith life of the Hispanic community is significant and is reminiscent of the affection of members of the Fatima community, particularly its older members, for “Our Lady of Fatima” or “Our Mary” (as indicated in chapter one).¹²² Natasha, one community resident, claims a special relationship with the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. For Natasha ‘Our Lady’ represents a comforting memory of earlier times; a protecting guide;

- N Knocking all the flats down and no mention of the statue!
 I What do you think should happen the statue?
 N To be left the way it is and cleaned up a little... and the lights... the lights used to be lovely around her head... it used to be lighting at night.
 I Would you like her where she is or anywhere in particular in the new Fatima?
 N I want her with me... beside where I am... I don't know where I am going to be... cos, it's just me.. a part of my growing up
 I So, do you feel it is the Mary (up in Heaven) or the memory is with you?
 N The memory...it was with you all your life.¹²³

In Hispanic culture faith, as in Fatima, is not church-based, but is celebrated within popular religiosity. Lupe, for example, says: “Very early on I separated the religion of my home from what the church taught me. The priests in my church were Spaniards, but what they said was not the real thing for me. The world of prayer in this house was separated from the church.”¹²⁴

Marta makes a similar comment:

I live my religion by being the most Christian I can be, starting with how I am at home and my behaviour towards others, and with my children... I am religious in other ways: I need the time to see somebody, or I have to take care of my house, or go out in the boat on a family outing. The time I use that way is more important to me as an individual, as a spiritual person, and to me as a member of my own family and for the rest of my family than if I go to church.¹²⁵

Negative feelings towards clergy are a part of Adela's story which strongly echoes the Fatima experience.¹²⁶ She practices her religion privately, in her house, but does not attend mass. Neither does she send her children to mass, though they go to catechism:

It is because the priests have hurt me so much that I do not believe them when they speak from the pulpit. They have hurt me so much, so much, that I do not accept them as teachers; they are lying; they are being hypocrites; no I don't believe them....I feel less

¹²² *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001. During my period of research, in 2004, the statue was temporarily relocated to the side of K block as part of the regeneration building process.

¹²³ Interview with Natasha, 30/05/02.

¹²⁴ Isasi-Díaz & Tarango: 29.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*: 27

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*: 19-24. Interviews with Debbie, 26/04/2001, Sheila 15/03/2001, Sarah, 03/03/2001, Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001, Natasha, 30/05/2002, Gemma, 17/05/2001, Anita, 30/05/2001 and Nicole, 8/10/2001.

religious than my parents because they did go to mass on Sunday, would go to communion and confession...I will not go to confession to a priest.¹²⁷

Indeed, in Fatima, in general, we saw that faith and religion tends to be a private affair; while there is widespread alienation from the local church in Fatima, there is a lively private and devotional faith, particular among older women in the estate.¹²⁸ Other than prayer to “Our Lady”, practices such as candle-lighting in local churches, saying prayers for and to the dead, and to the saints are commonplace, but significantly private.¹²⁹ Community rituals, though not explicitly religious, nor organized through the support of the official churches, are also spiritually sustaining for the community at large (chapter one). The relationship with the local church is not generally as positive as that described in *mujerista* and womanist accounts. It is noted that in Fatima, at the time of research, there was widespread anger and resentment towards the present local clergy because of their refusal to be actively involved in ministry in Fatima, despite numerous invitations by local residents made to clergy to visit and become involved in community life.¹³⁰ Also evident was a deeply emotional disrespect for clergy (which resonates with Adela’s experience, described above) because of widespread scandals and public allegations of sexual abuse in the Irish media at the time of research.¹³¹

In summary, in both the Fatima and Hispanic experience, while affiliation with the official Roman Catholic Church is generally loose, and while some interviewees such as Debbie and Sheila speak of their rejection of the sacramental life of the Church since they were personally disappointed by clergy, the community is nourished by a spirituality centred around the Virgin, saints, prayers for the dead and prayers of intercession.¹³² There are also points of contrast between Fatima and *mujerista* accounts of faith. Unlike Fatima, church related activities plays a role in maintaining *la comunidad* in the Hispanic experience. For example, some aspects of the *iglesia* (church) enable the development and maintenance of a sense of community among Hispanics, for instance, social functions, such as fairs and other fundraising activities, as well as processions, novenas, and other religious functions that are a part of popular religiosity.¹³³ Popular religion plays a significantly lesser role, in Fatima, in relation to community solidarity (chapter one).

¹²⁷ Ibid.: 21.

¹²⁸ Interview with Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001, Mrs. Ryan, 22/03/2001 and Gemma, 17/05/2001.

¹²⁹ On inner-city Dublin expressions of spirituality and faith see Bernadette O Flanagan, *The Spirit of the City: Voices from Dublin's Liberties*, (Dublin: Veritas, 1999).

¹³⁰ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001, Gemma, 22/05/2001, Sheila, 15/03/2001 and Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001.

¹³¹ Interview with Debbie, 26/04/2001.

¹³² Interview with Debbie, 26/04/2001 and Sheila 15/03/2001.

¹³³ Isasi-Díaz & Tarango: 6-7.

This differs somewhat from the womanist analysis of black women's relationships with the Churches, which tend to be presented in a more positive light overall.¹³⁴ Williams' analysis does however provide a necessary critique and one that is helpful in seeking to understand the faith experience of Fatima. Importantly, Williams distinguishes between 'the black church' and 'the denominational African-American Churches', suggesting that the former does not exist as an institution; it is 'invisible', escapes precise definition, is the 'heart of hope' in the black community's history of survival.¹³⁵ Unlike other womanists, she does *not* include the African-American denominational churches in her definition of black church. She says that to do so conceals the sexism of the denominational churches.¹³⁶ Interestingly, the critique of the local church in Fatima-based interviews did not uncover any explicit awareness of sexism, but did uncover an awareness of a fundamental rejection based upon classism. 'Church' was generally depicted as a middle class institution serving middle class agendas. An example is recorded in fieldnotes, one which has particular relevance for my later analysis of official church teaching (chapter five):

Anto, a community resident, was giving out about all the fuss over the divorce referendum... on TV and in the papers morning noon and night... the Church pushing for a NO vote... "That has nothing to do with us... divorce is for the other ones... the ones with the money... in Rialto or wherever... we're here and we can't even afford to get married..."¹³⁷

The above analysis, overall, highlights the uneasy relationships between socially excluded communities and the dominant group in society; in our case, Fatima residents and 'outsiders'. Oppressive relationships with 'outsiders' has been shown to have the direct effect of reinforcing communal bonding and communal goals within the Fatima community. One problematic effect of this experience of community solidarity is the palpable tension between the needs of the individual in Fatima and those of the wider community, as we shall now see.

¹³⁴ For womanist discussions on the relationship between Black women and the Black churches see Williams, "Womanist Reflections on 'The Black Church', the African-American Denominational Churches and the Universal Hagar's Spiritual Church" in *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 204-234; also Theresa Hoover, "Black Women and the Churches: Triple Jeopardy" and Jacqueline Grant, "Black Theology and The Black Woman", in J.H. Cone & G.S. Wilmore (eds.) *Black Theology: a Documentary History. Volume One: 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993, Second Edition, 1999) 293-303 and 323-338, respectively.

¹³⁵ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 205.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*: 206.

¹³⁷ Fieldnotes, 20/06/1995.

4.5 THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY: INSEPARABLE REALITIES

No relationship is private, for all relationships contribute
to the building up of the community.¹³⁸

While there was clear evidence of a *communitarian ethics* in the life of Fatima, given its defining values of *solidarity, inter-dependence, tolerance, and care of the most vulnerable in the community*, the tension that often exists between the individual and the community was identified as a significant cultural theme in Fatima (chapter three). This same theme is also explored in *mujerista* and womanist theologies, and the analyses which they provide are helpful in that they both refuse the dualism of an either/or choice between personal and communal development.

In line with feminist methodology, *mujerista* theologians make distinction between what is 'personal' and what is 'individual', suggesting that, "the personal is political."¹³⁹ Isasi-Díaz insists that personhood is always understood in relation to community and that fullness of personhood requires membership of a community.¹⁴⁰ She makes the following helpful distinction between the 'person' and the 'individual':

The individual cannot think politically - she cannot see the link between herself and the community. The person, on the other hand, knows that her history and the history of the community are intrinsically linked. The person knows that she has to take responsibility for her own liberation but she knows she cannot be liberated unless the whole community is liberated... there has to be a dialogical tension between personal conscience and communal conscience.¹⁴¹

The reason why the sense of community is so important for Hispanics is because of their need to be a distinct group, since they do not belong to the dominant culture. This, I suggest, gives some insight into the Fatima experience. Isasi-Díaz suggests that, as a culture within another culture, Hispanics need to establish a clear sense of "us" distinguishable from Anglos, blacks, and all other ethnic/cultural groups in the United States. In this context liberation is seen as a "personal process that takes place in a community and through a community."¹⁴² Interestingly, *mujerista* theology itself is described as a *communal process* since women's experience, so central to this theology, includes both personal and communal elements. The authors suggest

¹³⁸ Isasi-Díaz & Tarango: 5

¹³⁹ Ibid.: 5 For a fuller discussion see Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*: 11-44.

¹⁴⁰ Isasi-Díaz, "To Dissent is to Love". Paper delivered to the Sisters of St. Francis. June 9th, 1987: 3. Quotation made available by courtesy of the Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.: 3

¹⁴² Ibid.: 6

that personal experience “borders on solipsism if it is not mediated by community experience. Likewise the community’s experience tends towards abstraction if it is not mediated by individual experiences”.¹⁴³ As seen earlier, one of the most distinctive themes in Hispanic culture is *la comunidad* (the community), which revolves around the *familia* (family), and also the *barrio/barriada* (neighbourhood). *Familia/comunidad* relies on an interdependence which provides a space for Hispanic women to be valued and respected as persons.¹⁴⁴ Elaborating on this, Isasi-Díaz writes:

Familia/comunidad for Latinas/os does not subsume the person but rather emphasizes that the person is constituted by this entity and that the individual person and the community have a dialogical relationship through which the person reflects the *familia/comunidad* ‘out of which it was born, yet, as in a prism, that reflection is also a refraction...In an authentic [family]/community, the identity of the ‘we’ does not distinguish the ‘I’; the Spanish word for ‘we’ is ‘*nosotros*’, which literally means ‘we others’\a community of *otros*, or others. In *familia/comunidad* the “I” of Hispanic women is heard and embraced without fear for it does not in any way threaten the “we”.¹⁴⁵

Womanist theology also provides insight into the relationship between the person and the community. The context here is also personal and communal liberation. The womanist analysis builds upon earlier black theology, particularly that of James Cone, which regards the individual and the communal as inseparable.¹⁴⁶ For Cone, the communitarian aspect of personal human freedom is unquestionable and furthermore, to be free, the human person must throw in their lot with the oppressed community and fight for liberation.¹⁴⁷ This involves a commitment of one’s whole being for the cause of the oppressed, hence the inevitability of suffering, including economic oppression and social ostracism.¹⁴⁸ Womanist theologians critically explore similar themes. Diana L. Hayes, for example, suggests that a womanist sees herself as individual within the community: “Her goal of liberation is not simply for herself but for all of her people and, beyond that, for all who are also oppressed by reason of race, sex and/or class.”¹⁴⁹ bell hooks nostalgically refers to the former “chitlin-circuit”, the network of black people who knew and aided each other and expresses a profound sadness over contemporary threats to the life the black community:

¹⁴³ Mary Elizabeth Hunt, cited in Isasi-Díaz & Tarango: 6

¹⁴⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 143.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 143-144.

¹⁴⁶ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, Ninth Printing, 1998)94.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 94.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 97-98.

¹⁴⁹ Diana L. Hayes, “Feminist theology, Womanist Theology: A Black Catholic Perspective” in J.H. Cone and G.S. Wilmore (eds.) *Black Theology: a Documentary History. Volume Two: 1980-1992*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.1993, Fourth Printing, 1998)325-335 at 329.

At this historical moment, black people are experiencing a deep collective sense of “loss”. Nostalgia for times past is intense, evoked by awareness that feelings of bonding and connection that seemed to hold black people together are swiftly eroding. We are divided. Assimilation rooted in internalised racism further separates us. Neonationalist responses do not provide an answer, as they return us to an unproductive “us against them” dichotomy that no longer realistically addresses how we live as black people in a postmodern world.¹⁵⁰

In many ways the above descriptions provide insight into the Fatima experience. A number of Fatima interviewees correlated their personal development with community development processes in which they were personally involved. Anita, for example, described an increased self-confidence as she became more actively involved in community development.¹⁵¹ Many others pondered over the internal conflicts accompanying choices for self and family over and above the community, as indicated earlier. Both Anita and Debbie, for example, though hugely committed to community development in Fatima elected to apply for transfers out of the estate in an attempt to safeguard their children’s health, but this choice was accompanied by enormous confusion and shame born of a sense of having betrayed the community.¹⁵² In sum, research from the perspective of Fatima, *mujerista* theology and womanist theology, is consistently critical of any advancement of *either* the individual *or* the community, over and above the other, viewing this as an unacceptable dualism (indicating a communitarian ethics at work in all three perspectives). The concern in each case is the survival of the individual person within the context of the overall survival of the community. In this next section we examine *survival*, at both individual and communal levels.

4.6 SURVIVAL: PERSISTENCE AND RESISTANCE

Survival has to do with more than barely living.
Survival has to do with the struggle *to be* fully.¹⁵³

Our earlier research indicated that Fatima is a *survival* community; one which both endures and is enduring.¹⁵⁴ We explored various survival and resistance strategies employed by the community and the relationship between these survival strategies and values/morality in the life of the community (chapter three). For example, the strategy of deceit and the cultural more not to ‘rat’ on community members, is used to protect the community from the threat of outsiders.

¹⁵⁰ bell hooks, “The Chitlin Circuit: on black community” in *Yearning: race, gender, and politics*. (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press/London: Turnaround, 1991) 33-49 at 36.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Anita, 30/05/2001.

¹⁵² Interviews with Anita, 30/05/2001 and Debbie, 26/04/2001.

¹⁵³ Isasi-Díaz & Tarango: 1.

¹⁵⁴ Corcoran: 18-41.

Mujerista and womanist theologies similarly examine individual and communal survival strategies in the context of ethics. In this section I will focus on the two sub-themes: *survival as struggle*, and *survival strategies*.

Mujerista theology points out that the struggle of Hispanic Women for survival is always a struggle against sexism, classism and racial/ethnic prejudice; the struggle (*la lucha*) for life (*la vida*). *Mujerista* theologians point out that the particular context of Hispanic Women's lives raises questions of ultimate meaning, which are questions of survival: "To survive, one has to have 'the power to decide about one's history and one's vocation or historical mission'. This translates into two sets of questions; questions about physical survival and questions about cultural-historical survival".¹⁵⁵

Analysing Hispanic Women's experience from an existential perspective, survival is identified as the main preoccupation of Hispanic women and, as indicated in the previous section, individual survival is intrinsically linked with communal survival.¹⁵⁶ Survival means more than a struggle against material poverty, but also a constant struggle against an "anthropological poverty," which threatens to despoil Hispanic Women of their very being. Echoing a Freirian, perspective, *mujerista* theologians insist that *being or not being* is what survival is all about:

For Hispanic Women "being" designates existence in time and space; it means physical survival, and it means cultural survival, which depends to a large extent on self-determination and self-identity. Survival starts with sustaining the physical life but does not end there; being or not being also has to do with the social dimension of life. Hispanic Women need bread but they also need to celebrate. Today they need a roof over their heads but they also need to have possibilities of a better future for themselves and their children.¹⁵⁷

Isasi-Díaz and Tarango further suggest that, though the struggle for physical survival is not a daily factor in the lives of middle strata Hispanic Women, survival is still their main preoccupation; survival that is both cultural and psychological.¹⁵⁸ It has to do with questions of self-definition and self-determination and is related to the difficult task of living in a culture that is not her own: "it comes down to repeatedly choosing between faithfulness to self or, at

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.: 4.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid: 60.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Hispanic women's liberation theology prefers the use of the term *strata* as opposed to *class* because some factors not usually included in the Anglo concept of class are important in determining which *strata* a person belongs to, such as the length of time a family has been in a community, if family members had a founding role in the town, parish or organization, whether the family has advocates in the form of god-parents (*comadres* and *compadres*).

the risk of losing cultural values and identity, buying into the dominant culture in order to maintain her status".¹⁵⁹

Survival is also a recurring theme in black and womanist writings. Brown Douglas asks:

What is it that has allowed Black women to transcend the negative, dehumanising images that society has maintained of them? What has undergirded their fight, against numerous odds, to save their children? What has fostered Black women's relentless struggle to survive and sustain their families?¹⁶⁰

Reflection on black women's acts of resistance led Williams to name the survival strategies that sustained hope as various *arts*: of cunning, implying "knowledge combined with manual skill and dexterity", of encounter, of care and of connecting.¹⁶¹ It entails a wise balance between resistance and endurance; but this is not an endurance without promise. She uses the term "black common sense" to mean "the collective knowledge, wisdom and action Black people used as they tried to survive, to develop a productive quality of life and to be liberated from oppressive social, political, economic and legal systems."¹⁶² Cannon expresses a similar notion when she speaks of the necessary attitude of suspicion of Black women:

It means that you know danger without having to be taught.. It is what June Jordan calls 'jungle posture'... what Ntozake Shange calls 'the combat stance'... You know where the minefields are...there is wisdom... You are in touch with your ancestors and it is from the gut, not rationally worked out... Black women have had to use this all the time, of course, the creativity is still there, but we are not fools... we call it the 'epistemological privileges of the oppressed.' How do you tap that wisdom - name it, mine it, pass it on to the next generation?¹⁶³

My research has indicated that, in Fatima, a survival strength is forged largely through strong mother-daughter bonds and modelling, close women-friendship bonds and women's inner strength born of long term suffering (chapter three). Williams suggests further that survival depends on a survival intelligence and a visionary capacity, which at its root has a spiritual source, and which guides women's way of being and acting "in the wide, wide world".¹⁶⁴ One illustration of this is her analysis of novelist Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*, where the character

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.: 62-63.

¹⁶⁰ Kelly Delaine Brown Douglas, "Womanist Theology: What Is Its Relationship to Black Theology?" in Cone and Wilmore, *Black Theology*, Vol. 2: 290- 299 at 297.

¹⁶¹ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 236.

¹⁶² Williams, "Straight Talk, Plain Talk: Womanist Words about Salvation in a Social Context" in Emilie M. Townes (ed.) *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation and Transformation*. (ed.) The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner/Sojourner Truth Series in Black Religion, Vol. XIII (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. 1997) 97-121 at 105.

¹⁶³ Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Cannon*: 11.

¹⁶⁴ Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*; 159.

Vyry, having been mentored by Mammy Sukey and Aunt Sally, has imbibed the art of survival in relation to plantation politics, natural herbs and a strong spirituality.¹⁶⁵ Walker sums up her understanding of the black mother as mother of children and a race, despite all the odds, in a description of the character Vyry, a woman who “stood... much outrage... Had a wisdom and a touching humility... It was more than her practical intelligence, or her moral fortitude; more than the fundamental decency and innate dignity... she was touched with a spiritual wholeness...”¹⁶⁶ This description by Williams resonates with my own participant observations of what I describe as the ‘moral wisdom’ of Fatima women. Fatima research indicated a relationship between *survival* and the community’s moral wisdom which is reflected in: 1) community sayings or proverbs as well 2) the modelling behaviours of Fatima mothers.¹⁶⁷

Indeed the wisdom of the inner-city flat complex has its own tenor, since it is concerned with immediate matters of life and death (literally). It is a highly practical wisdom reflected in its numerous survival strategies, such as throwing buckets of soapy water down the stairwells to discourage drug use, anti-drug graffiti slogans, blocking Dublin Corporation cleaning operations when VIP’s are visiting the estate, adopting spontaneous policing roles in the blocks, challenging and questioning strangers, censoring media personnel and strategy training for community development workers.¹⁶⁸ Participant observation in Fatima indicated clearly that the women in the community are the primary agents and transmitters of practical wisdom. Wisdom is a word rarely used in local conversation, but it appears to be caught or imbibed; transmitted across the generations from grandmother to mother to child. This pattern is traceable to former inner-city slum tenement tenants from which the first Fatima dwellers came. Oral historian Kearns quotes Father Michael Reidy as saying:

The mothers, they were the heroines because there was a lot of problem with the men... They just struggled on day after day... It was the mother that would keep the family together. They had tremendous resilience and spirit, strength of character. And grannies were tremendous people because of the maturity and wisdom, which was beyond what the others had, and they had a very steady influence on the family.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.: 49-51.

¹⁶⁶ Cited in Williams. Ibid.: 51.

¹⁶⁷ Commonplace Fatima’s proverbs include: ‘what comes around goes around’, ‘never throw water on a drowned rat’, ‘them that are rearing should be sparing’, ‘blood is thicker than water’, ‘liars need a good memory’, and ‘you have to rob Peter to pay Paul’, etc. Interview with Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001; also *The Spirit of Fatima* (Appendix E)

¹⁶⁸ FGU is a case in point. During the time of research intensive negotiations training by organizations such as the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) and Services Industrial Professional Trade Union (SIPTU), as well as media training by *Carr Communications* (Dublin), were availed of by group members as an overall resistance strategy in relation to Dublin Corporation and outside agencies.

¹⁶⁹ Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994, rep. Dublin: Colorbooks Ltd., 1996) 49.

Observation clearly indicates that there is a collective women's wisdom in Fatima, operating at both intuitional and instinctual levels. The manner of absorption of the 'Fatima wisdom' is difficult to articulate since it may be said to exist and undergo transmission at a pre-linguistic and instinctual level. Certainly it is not explicitly spoken of. Only by living or working extensively in the flats do you learn to tune into this wisdom, through the use of your more primitive instincts. For example you quickly learn to instinctually and intuitively read the levels of tension and violence present in the community at any time. As one resident put it: "I can smell it in the air..."¹⁷⁰ You learn to watch closely and constantly, with a 'third sense'; to 'live on the edge' and 'read the signs'. You learn to walk a certain way, speak a certain way, act a certain way. This primitive power of women's wisdom become crystal clear at times of threat; women leaders in the community assume leadership and directive roles in such cases and a collective intuition is trusted and acted upon without rational debate or lengthy consideration; only raw generational experience.

Interviewees, when pressed to describe the nature of Fatima's wisdom, highlighted, among other attributes, the trustworthiness of the wise woman and her problem solving capacity.¹⁷¹ One respondent commented: "I'd say Tessie is a wise women... you can draw on her and tell her your business or your problems. The person next door can do the same and it does not go past her. If she can at all she will help you out."¹⁷² Another similarly highlighted practical skills and generosity: "I'd say a wise person in Fatima Mansions is someone with practical skills; has an ability to cope with life and helps others to do the same."¹⁷³ A long memory of Fatima is a further indicator of wisdom: "Joan came with the bricks and mortar. She can tell you everything from the heart out... and Eileen can go back. She remembers everything, even the old cures... knows the old ways and stories".¹⁷⁴ Another interviewee identified a network of reliable support as an aspect of wisdom: "They get the knowledge through the proper sources - through a solid and reliable network of friends so you do not feel watched or under threat."¹⁷⁵ In further impromptu conversations in the Fatima community the following characteristics of the wise woman were specifically identified: strength, a good sense of self, fairness generosity, the capacity to think has earned the respect of the community, non-judgemental, instinctual, has the capacity to get angry *for the right reasons*, and is hopeful - always sees a way out.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Informal conversation with a Fatima resident. Field notes, 25/06/1995.

¹⁷¹ Significantly, when the question was posed "who do you consider to be a wise person in the flats?" (gender not being specified) the reply in all cases was a female.

¹⁷² Interview with Kathy, 05/05/2000.

¹⁷³ Informal conversation with a local community worker, field notes, 16/05/2000.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Angela. 04/6/2000.

¹⁷⁵ Informal conversation with a resident, field notes, 16/05/2000.

¹⁷⁶ Field notes, 01/06/2000.

Womanist theologies similarly emphasise the modelling role of black women. Williams, for example, points out that black mothers have historically passed on advice and wisdom for the purpose of survival in the white world, in the black community and with men, adding that female slave narratives, folk tales, and some contemporary black poetry and prose reflect this tradition.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, in *Fatima*, the purpose is survival; standing one's own ground, facing confrontation and aggression directly, knowing when to say the truth and when to lie; knowing when to be transparent and when to use deceit as tactics/strategy, etc. Womanist theologian, Cannon, is similarly concerned with how Black women live out their moral wisdom in their context of survival; how they analyse or appraise right and wrong, good and bad. She writes that black women "have justly regarded survival against tyrannical systems of triple oppression as a true sphere of moral life".¹⁷⁸ As with the research findings in *Fatima*, Cannon points out that the moral wisdom of the Black community is passed down from mother to daughter:

The Black women's collection of moral counsel is implicitly passed on and received from one generation of Black women to the next. Black females are taught what is to be endured and how to endure the harsh, cruel, inhumane exigencies of life. The moral wisdom does not rescue Black women from the bewildering pressures and perplexities of institutionalised social evils but rather exposes those ethical assumptions which are inimical to the ongoing survival of Black womanhood. The moral counsel of Black women captures the ethical qualities of what is real and what is of value to women in the black world.¹⁷⁹

Perhaps nothing makes the survival strategies and wisdom of *Fatima* women more necessary than the life threatening drug culture that envelops the community. The negative impact of drugs of the life of the community is a preoccupation in *Fatima* research as well as *mujerista* and womanist theologies. In the following section I will focus on two related aspects, namely, *drugs and child protection* and *drugs and cultural genocide*.

4.7 DRUGS: A SIGNIFICANT CULTURE SHAPER

... you make available in their community, in cheap and plentiful supply, what it takes to destroy them - drugs.¹⁸⁰

Earlier, in our *Fatima* research, the impact of the drugs culture on the lives of individuals and the community at large was examined in some depth. Historically, it suited the dominant group

¹⁷⁷ Williams, "Womanist Theology": 266.

¹⁷⁸ Cannon: *Black Womanist Ethics*: 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 4-5.

¹⁸⁰ A Harlem woman (unnamed), cited in Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 131.

to have Dublin's heroin problems contained in ghetto-like estates, such as Fatima. It was only in those instances where Fatima residents grouped together to move drug addicts and dealers from the estate, with the result that they migrated to more exposed and public spaces in the wider local area, that there was a public outcry.¹⁸¹ My own research highlighted such negative aspects as: 1) a general sense of powerlessness among Fatima residents regarding the difficulty of protecting children from involvement with drugs, 2) the personal shame of former drug addicts, now mothers with children, and 3) anger at the failure of the wider community and power blocs in Irish society to protect communities like Fatima from becoming drug ghettos (chapter three). However, a most positive and challenging aspect of the Fatima drug culture is that the community fully supported the foundation of a drugs clinic within the estate, arguing that as a community it had the responsibility to care for its own addicts. The Fatima Drugs Treatment Centre, a drugs clinic providing support services for up to twenty drug addicts was set up in my block (block M) during my time of residence in Fatima with the full knowledge and support of local residents.

Hispanic and Black communities, particularly the urban poor communities, are similarly afflicted. Beginning with *mujerista* research, Isasi-Díaz poses the question to one Hispanic woman, Inez, namely, what she would do if she were "Queen for a Day"? Inez' response was related to the good of the community and to the particular values of love in the community, sharing, consideration of others, and sensitivity. Her response, more specifically, centred around the Hispanic drugs culture:

Then I would like to see this world free of drugs because I believe that if we got rid of drugs we would get rid of many other things... These kids need role models... The drug situation is totally out of control. In the beginning, when all of this started, Puerto Ricans and blacks were the ones who were taking drugs, the ones who were dying and killing, and the government did not pay much attention. But when the people from the suburbs and the whites began to come to Harlem looking for drugs, the government tried to do something, but it was too late to try to control the situation. When one building is burning, the firefighters can get control of the flames, but when it is a whole block of buildings, it is impossible for anyone to control it.¹⁸²

What Inez highlights is the lack of will on the part of the dominant society to alleviate suffering that is contained in oppressed and controlled sub-cultures in society; only when the dominant group in society is impacted upon are combative strategies employed and governmental monies released (often too late).

¹⁸¹ Such was the case when I first moved to Fatima (in the mid 1990's) when the addicts and dealers were moved on by the collective resistance of the local Fatima community.

¹⁸² Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha*: 130.

Black/womanist theologies paint a similar picture. The analysis of inter-black violence and the black drugs culture has long been an aspect of black theology.¹⁸³ James Cone writes that Blacks can destroy each other mentally and physically, because they are afraid to deal with the real oppressive forces in the community: “When we kill each other with drugs and guns, that means that we are doing the oppressor’s job. The phenomenon is the result of mental enslavement to the values that are meant to destroy us”.¹⁸⁴ He suggests that ethical structures are required that will help the Black community fight white oppressors, and also to help Blacks to find ways to create a black society that makes pimps and drug pushers a thing of the past.¹⁸⁵ Williams similarly presents a commentary on the systematic *genocide* of black Americans by the State and its white supporters. She cites one grass-roots Harlem black woman who describes “genocide American Style”. Because of its close similarity in many respects with the experience of the Fatima community analyzed in the previous chapter, I quote in full:

You close off opportunities for people through inadequate and inappropriate education, which therefore renders them unemployed and unemployable. You take away their housing so they become beggars on the street. You give them a historical memory of organized white violence... you constantly harass them through police brutality... You make sure the people in the community cannot accumulate wealth because you shut off their access to financing and to borrowing power from banks. You introduce a system of welfare that breaks up the home and devalues black fatherhood. You control the media so that black people are depicted as criminals and the general public gets the idea that black people are morally depraved. You make sure their communities look poor, rundown and dirty... the dilapidated property in the area is owned by slum landlords (usually wealthy white people). In other words you render black people hopeless. Then you make available in their community, in cheap and plentiful supply, what it takes to destroy them -drugs. Black people do not have the money to bring drugs into this country and control the distribution of them - that has to be done by wealthy white people. Hopeless black people in poverty-stricken communities take the drugs and gradually destroy themselves.¹⁸⁶

Clearly my Fatima-based research, *mujerista* theology and black/womanist theology have one unambiguous voice when they condemn their respective death-dealing drug cultures and equally condemn the dominant society in failing to act on their behalf.

4.8 COMMUNITY CELEBRATION: LIVING LIFE IN THE MOMENT

The capacity to celebrate life, to live in the moment, and to retain hope in the face of systemic and relentless oppression was highlighted in my earlier analysis of the Fatima community (chapter three). Indeed it was identified as an overarching cultural theme. The analysis

¹⁸³See James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, New Revised Edition, Third Printing, 1999) 198.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Cited in Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*: 131.

presented the capacity to celebrate life as a notable coping or survival strategy as well as a means of subversion and of escape. As previously indicated, commonplace Fatima celebrations were seen to include regular nights out in local pubs and city clubs, beer parties in the block, strip-o-grams in public gatherings to mark significant birthdays or achievements and uncontained spending sprees for important events such as First Communion, Confirmation, Christmas, funerals and ‘Debs’ events (often to the point of substantial debt). Moreover, spectacular community festivals were identified as significant moments of celebration and community pride.¹⁸⁷ The ability to celebrate extravagantly reflects an important value at work in the community, namely *the capacity to live life in the present moment*, leaving tomorrow to take care of itself.¹⁸⁸ Integral to this cultural value is a fundamental stance of hope, solidarity and resistance.

Celebration is also undoubtedly integral to Hispanic life. A most notable example is the vibrant communal *fiestas*, regularly celebrated among Hispanics. Like the Fatima community, the Hispanic community’s capacity to celebrate life in the face of immense suffering is in itself a refusal to be defined by suffering; “the good life does not ignore suffering. It struggles to go beyond it, to evade it.”¹⁸⁹ The distinction between *la lucha* and suffering, in Isasi-Díaz’s contribution, is one which is particularly helpful in further elaborating my Fatima analysis. She points out that she has received the best clues for understanding how Latinas understand and deal with suffering by looking at their capacity to celebrate; “at our ability to organize a *fiesta* in the midst of the most difficult circumstances and in spite of deep pain.”¹⁹⁰ Significantly the *fiestas* are not a celebration of suffering but of the struggle against suffering and are characterized by mutual encouragement:

The *fiestas* are, very often, a way of encouraging each other not to let the difficulties that are part of Hispanic women’s daily life overcome us. They are opportunities to distance ourselves from the rough and arduous reality of everyday life, at times mere escapism, but often a way of getting different perspectives on how to carry on *la lucha*...often it is a matter of sharing with others in order to convince oneself; of what one knows: that one’s not alone; that what each Hispanic woman is going through is not necessarily, or at least mainly, her fault but is due to oppressive structures.¹⁹¹

This analysis fits the Fatima experience well, in my estimation. As in Fatima, these communal celebrations are also an effective signs of *resistance* and *hope*; they are an important way of

¹⁸⁷ Corcoran: 41.

¹⁸⁸ As previously indicated, other than life insurance policies, which guarantee a proper funeral, and which most community members avail of, long-term planning (such as forward budgeting) is non-normative.

¹⁸⁹ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 131.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: 130.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

ensuring that Hispanic women's lives are not determined by suffering alone. Isasi-Díaz refers to an old Latina song which says *la vida buena, es la que se goza* (the good life is one that one enjoys), in other words, the struggle is a struggle to live fully.¹⁹² It is a search for "lasting joy, deep delight, gratuitous enjoyment, contagious good fortune".¹⁹³ It is a creative way of coping with suffering and a powerful sign of "solidarity and tenderness".¹⁹⁴ The same can be said of Fatima's communal festivals, which are, similarly, an overwhelming public display of solidarity and delight and a marker of the strong community spirit that characterizes Fatima life. Sarah remembers one Christmas tree procession

...that's one of the things that makes me really happy to be here...the community spirit is just unbelievable... I've been to a lot of places over the years and I've *never* experienced the community spirit that is in this place, like, it's just brilliant, like... do you remember the Christmas tree? (*energy in her voice*) that was brilliant... I got shivers down my back and all, you know walking down that night... just all the kids, everything... the little drummer boy (*laughs*)... it was brilliant.¹⁹⁵

Being a display of solidarity these celebratory events are more than mere occasion for celebration; they also have political importance. Isasi-Díaz writes that solidarity has to do with understanding the interconnections that exist between oppression and privilege, between the rich and the poor, the oppressed and the oppressors, as well as the cohesiveness that needs to exist among communities of struggle.¹⁹⁶ Since the renowned Fatima festivals intentionally spill over into the wider community, beyond its rigid geographical boundaries, and process through, and around, the boundary village of Rialto, it is also a defiant statement, insisting that 'outsiders' take note of Fatima's existence. In other words, it is the employment of symbol and ritual in an effective act of public *self-valuing*. Isasi-Díaz makes the insightful comment that a culture that is not valued is in danger of losing little by little its will to live, hence the importance of these celebratory moments.¹⁹⁷

Finally, celebration, explored in the context of womanist theology, is primarily the celebration and self-affirmation of black women and black women's movements towards liberation. The concept of 'womanist' according to Hogan, "clearly enables black women to affirm and

¹⁹² Ibid.: 130-131.

¹⁹³ Maduro, cited in Isasi-Díaz: 131.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

¹⁹⁶ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*: 89.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.:15

celebrate their colour and their Afro-American heritage".¹⁹⁸ This term, attributed to Alice Walker, refers to:

A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility... and women's strength... Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people...not a separatist... traditionally universalist... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the folk. Loves herself. *Regardless...*¹⁹⁹

In "Womanist theology: Black Women's Voices", Williams, relates the term 'womanist' to the concept of cultural codes (discussed earlier); a concept of significance to Fatima (chapter three).²⁰⁰ The moral and religious system of the black church is a source of celebration in the literature. Toinette suggests that it "served as a sustaining force and as an interpretive principle that guided migrant black women in facing life squarely".²⁰¹ As indicated above here we find a notable point of contrast to the faith experience of Fatima (chapters one and three). This point will be taken up later when Fatima's alienation from the official churches is further examined. (chapter seven).

4.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I sought to elaborate further on the value system and moral practice of Fatima Mansions.²⁰² I do this by means of a dialogue with *mujerista* and womanist theologies, since, these theological movements offer critical tools for generating and articulating *values* from marginalized/socio-excluded groups. Intentionally, there is no attempt to engage with these sources for the purposes of, either applying a similar methodology to the context of Fatima, or developing a Fatima theology. Instead this dialogue, which incorporates a comparative analysis between my research findings and key insights from both of these feminist ethical sources, is considered fruitful in that it further illuminates and clarifies the independent ethnographic research analysis presented in the previous chapter. While acknowledging racial, cultural and

¹⁹⁸Linda Hogan, *From Women's Experience to Feminist Theology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academy Press, 1995) p.122.

¹⁹⁹ For a fuller account see Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: Women's Press, 1984) p. xi.

²⁰⁰ Delores "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices" in Mar Peter-Raoul, *et al*, (eds.), *Yearning to Breathe Free: Liberation Theologies in the U.S.* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990) 62-69; also bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre* (Boston: South End Press, 1983).

²⁰¹ E. Toinette, "Moral values and Black Womanists" in in Cone, J.H. & G.S. Wilmore, (eds.) *Black Theology: a Documentary History. Volume Two: 1980-1992*: 309-320.

²⁰² I suggest that the analysis provided in my work could also potentially provide the groundwork for further elaborations of feminist theologies of survival or suffering, however that is not the intention here.

religious differences between these theological communities (Hispanic and African -American) and the Fatima community, this analysis uncovers numerous points of commonality between these “communities of struggle” and my Fatima-based research, which are illuminative of my particular research findings (chapter three). Among them were: *good and responsible mothering, the lack of paternal responsibility, self betterment for the sake of the children, discrimination and stigmatization, sexism, classism, the myth of success, loss of innocence, lack of choices, threat to survival, woman-strength and woman-bonding, tensions between a communitarian and an individual ethics and celebration.*

Aspects of my research (among others) which were further clarified or confirmed by means of this wider analysis were: 1) the inaccuracy of the use of the term ‘matriarchal’ to describe Fatima women, the term ‘woman-identified’ being preferred, 2) the identification of Fatima-based ‘moral codes’ in light of womanist accounts of the same, 3) a critical understanding of *suffering* which includes a critique of systemic and structural injustice and 4) the requirement of an in-depth socio-cultural analysis in interpreting a community’s morality. Points of difference were also identified, as, for example, the experience of *surrogacy*, which is positively evaluated in Fatima research and *mujerista* theology but negatively critiqued in womanist theology, given the historical experience of the enforced surrogacy of black women in slavery. Explorations of religious affiliation highlighted the extent of the *Fatima’s experience of alienation from the official churches.*

Having completed my analysis of Fatima values and moral practice I am now in a position to present a critical exploration of *two* significant sources of moral theology in the Irish context. These are: 1) publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference (Vatican II to June 2005), and 2) publications in selected Irish pastoral and academic theological journals (June 1995 – June 2005) respectively. The purpose of this exploration is to critically examine my earlier hypothesis of the overall invisibility of the inner city moral experience and voice within formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context. I hope to precisely establish to what extent, and in what manner, inner city morality is included in these theological sources. I begin, in the following chapter, with an analysis of publications of the Irish Episcopal Conference.

CHAPTER FIVE

VALUES AND MORAL PRACTICE IN KEY PUBLICATIONS BY THE IRISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FATIMA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

At the outset of this research I was interested in exploring to what extent formal theological sources in Irish society represented the moral worldview of the Irish inner city. My initial literature review strongly suggested the overall infrequency of explicit treatments of inner city morality within dominant and formal sources of moral theology and ethics. In order to verify and critically address this under-representation, and in order to establish a solid basis for a critique of formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context, it was first necessary to establish the precise nature of inner city morality. This investigation took the form of an ethnographic case analysis of Fatima's moral worldview and practice which highlighted its distinctively communitarian, survivalist nature (chapters three). Such a moral perspective and moral practice contrasts sharply with the more liberal and individualist ethics of the dominant group in Irish society (chapter one). Values such as *interdependence, solidarity, protection of the most vulnerable in the community, tolerance, justice and compassion* (among others) were repeatedly uncovered as defining community values in Fatima. Problematic areas were also uncovered, such as *mistrust of outsiders, use of lies and deceit, and theft*, including illegal sale of goods, door-to-door, etc. In this investigation the extent to which the moral life of Fatima was defined and shaped by its position with regard to dominant groups in society was highlighted. The inherent logic of a Fatima survivalist morality, in the context of Fatima's specific socio-economic and cultural location within Irish society, as well as the structural and generational nature of its distinctive communal morality, was demonstrated (chapters three and four).

The focal question, which I now wish to address, is to what extent the preoccupations and priorities of inner city morality are represented, or indeed critically assessed, in selected theological sources within the Irish context. This chapter sets out in particular to investigate the perceived mismatch between Fatima's cultural values, as identified in this research, and the preoccupations of more formal debates in the Irish context. As was stressed in the introduction to this work, when discussing the structure of this thesis, the logic of my research dictates that the investigation of formal sources of moral theology is located subsequent to my analysis of Fatima morality. This is because hermeneutical authority is given to the Fatima moral

worldview in the critical examination of the literature (an approach which differs from the standard literature review). While the issue of the overall frequency of inner city representations and interpretations in the area of morality is analysed here, the more pertinent question of the manner in which these same issues are addressed in the literature is prioritised. In other words, the content analysis is given a priority over the frequency analysis, though both are considered necessary (as shall be discussed).

With respect to selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context, this chapter specifically sets out to provide a critical analysis of *one* such source, namely, publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference, from 1969 until 2005 (appendix H).¹ My analysis in this chapter focuses on Fatima-related themes examined in the Bishops' publications. In light of my earlier investigations (chapters three and four) certain explorations are considered important if the moral voice and experience of Fatima are to be adequately represented in the Bishops' publications. Themes one might hope to see discussed include: 1) explicit inclusions of defining aspects of Irish inner city morality, which incorporate a theological discussion on the relationship between culture and morality, and 2) an ethical analysis which highlights positive elements of an inner city communitarian ethics while also presenting a critique of the same from the basis of Christian ethics. In this latter context, there is a clear correlation between the tradition of Christian social ethics and a Fatima inner city morality, especially in relation to certain dominant themes, such as, solidarity, the common good, human dignity, tolerance, and care of the most vulnerable members of the community. It is therefore reasonable to expect that such connections would be explicitly examined in the literature.² With respect to *methodology*, I wish to explore to what extent (if any) the Bishops engage with the tools of the social sciences and include inductive approaches (as well as deductive) in their theological reasoning. Finally, evidence of an interdisciplinary approach is sought.³

With these considerations in mind, the primary objectives of this present critical analysis are:

¹ The publications under examination are by the Irish Episcopal Conference and commissions of the Irish Bishops. In the latter case only selected publications of direct relevance to my research are examined.

² Other considerations might include: 1) a nuanced discussion of human relationships, both personal and social, which addresses the complexities of cultural and ethnic difference and the realities of social exclusion and poverty in relation to morality; 2) an acknowledgement of and commentary upon the category of "survival ethics" as proposed by certain liberationist/feminist theologies, and 3) a critical dialogue with representative theologies emerging from communities which are excluded from the dominant culture in society.

³ An interdisciplinary approach is demonstrated in *mujerista* and womanist theologies, (chapter four) where theology dialogues creatively and critically with many fields of study, such as: cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, economics, history, politics, feminist studies, etc.

- 1) to establish to what extent the moral voice of the inner city is given explicit expression in the Bishops' publications, whether by means of illustrative examples or in the form of dialogue or critical assessment;
- 2) to positively highlight and critically examine those contributions that are inclusive of the inner-city moral experience and insight (if any), and
- 3) to identify gaps and omissions in relation to representations of inner city values and moral practice.

To a lesser extent I wish to establish to what extent historical, cultural and social analyses are methodologically employed in examining value systems and morality in society, and I also seek to identify to what extent (if any) these sources engage in a critical dialogue with liberation/feminist theologies emerging from marginalized communities worldwide. I repeat that the concern throughout this discussion is to investigate the validity of, and, where possible, provide illustrations of, the mismatch between Fatima's cultural values and the preoccupations of dominant debates, if in evidence.

5.2 FATIMA-RELATED THEMES IN THE IRISH BISHOPS' PUBLICATIONS: A FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

Preliminary investigations revealed that of the forty three pastoral letters and documents published during the period 1969-2005 *none* were shown to explicitly address the value systems and moral practice of the Irish inner city (appendix G).⁴ Moreover, explorations of the value systems and morality of other significant minority communities in Ireland were also absent (including the Traveller community and communities of immigrants - refugees, asylum seekers and immigrant workers).

In the absence of explicit explorations of inner city morality an in-depth frequency analysis of Fatima's cultural themes proved unfeasible. I chose instead to conduct a basic frequency analysis and an in-depth content analysis of 'Fatima-related themes' located in the Bishops' publications. By this is meant more general points of interface between Fatima research findings and the Irish Bishops' publications. With respect to these points of intersection, my analysis is structured according to the organizing categories employed by the Irish Bishops which are outlined in their publication *Justice, Love and Peace: Pastoral Letters of the Irish*

⁴ While the inner city drugs culture is specifically examined by the Bishops, it is explicitly in relation to 'spirituality' as opposed to value systems and morality. See Eoin Cassidy (ed.) *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture. A Report Commissioned by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Drugs Initiative.* (Maynooth: Irish Centre for Faith and Culture, 2000).

Bishops 1969-1979, namely: 1) the basic Christian and human values of love and marriage; 2) the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person; 3) the ecclesial and catechetical importance of the family; 4) the evil of violence, and 5) the grave obligations of justice in personal life and in society.⁵ Issues examined by the Bishops which are not directly relevant to my research are termed “Other” in this analysis.⁶ In order to set the context for a content analysis of the Bishops’ publications, a brief frequency analysis of Fatima-related themes identified in their publications is helpful. Focusing simply on the number of articles out of the total which explicitly address Fatima-related themes, my investigations revealed that the above themes were distributed as follows (Fig. 1):

- four articles (9.3%) address the question of love and marriage (M);
- eleven articles (25.6%) address the question of the sacredness of human life (S);
- three articles (6.9%) address the question of family (F),
- seven articles (16.3%) address the question of violence (V)
- three articles (6.9%) address the question of justice (J), and
- fifteen articles (34.8%) address other issues of concern to the Bishops (O).⁷

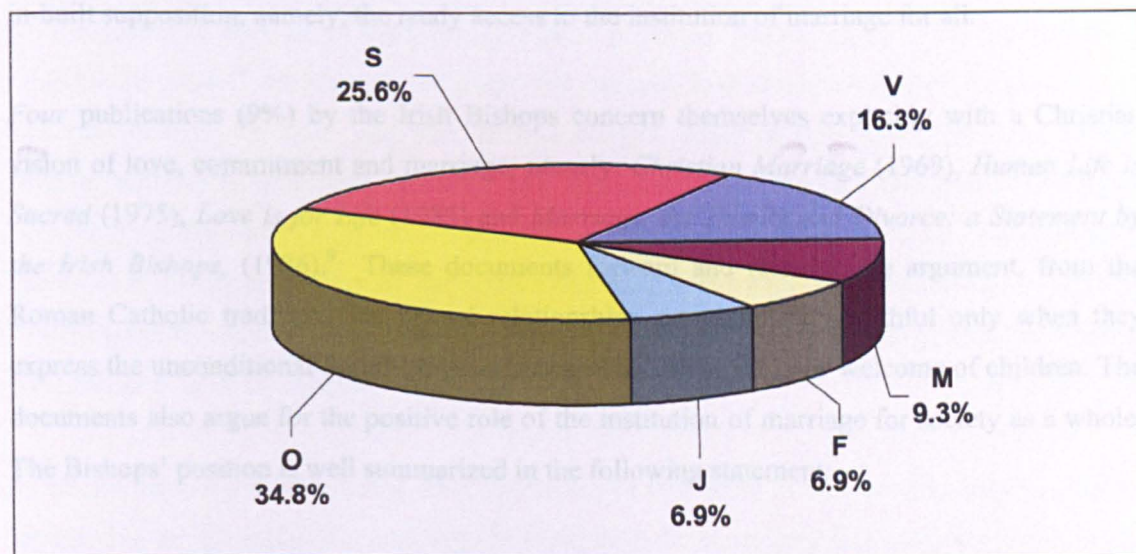


Fig. 1 Frequency (%) of Fatima-Related Themes in Publications of the Irish Bishops

⁵ See The Irish Bishops, *Justice, Love and Peace: Pastoral Letters of the Irish Bishops 1969-1979* (Dublin: Veritas, 1979) 7.

⁶ They include such areas as: Northern Ireland, peace, development, change in the Church, the Eucharist, faith in the home, conscience and the teaching of moral theology etc. (appendix F).

⁷ The percentage numbers are rounded off to the nearest first decimal place.

The question of the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person (S) is given clear priority at 25.6%. This is followed (in order of frequency) by a concern for the evil of violence (V) at 16.3%. Other Fatima-related themes, however, occur at levels below 10%, namely: love and marriage (M) at 9.3%, the family (F) at 6.9% and justice (J) at 6.9%. Taking a simple mean of the Bishops' publications as 22 articles (51.2%), based on the potential number of articles out of a total of forty three, only one Fatima-related theme is represented as being above the level of the simple mean with respect to frequency, namely the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person (S).⁸ While this analysis gives a helpful indication of priority on the part of the Irish Bishops, of even greater importance to this research is the manner in which these same themes are examined, hence the following in-depth content analysis of the Irish Bishops' publications.

5.3 THE BASIC CHRISTIAN AND HUMAN VALUES OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

My earlier research highlighted the extent to which Fatima's experience of marriage deviates from the norm of wider Irish society (chapter three). The general lack of access to the institution of marriage, Church and State, both on cultural and economic grounds, was identified as a distinctive feature of the life of the community. As we shall see, this experience is radically different from the Irish Bishops' discussion on marital commitment, which has an in-built supposition, namely, the ready access to the institution of marriage for all.

Four publications (9%) by the Irish Bishops concern themselves explicitly with a Christian vision of love, commitment and marriage, namely: *Christian Marriage* (1969), *Human Life is Sacred* (1975), *Love is for Life* (1985) and *Marriage, the Family and Divorce: a Statement by the Irish Bishops*, (1986).⁹ These documents forward and reiterate the argument, from the Roman Catholic tradition, that sexual relationships are completely truthful only when they express the unconditional faithful love of husband and wife and their welcome of children. The documents also argue for the positive role of the institution of marriage for society as a whole. The Bishops' position is well summarized in the following statement:

Partnership and parenthood are the two terms, which give the key to the meaning of human sexuality. These are so linked with one another that sexual intercourse can be seen to be fully human and to have true fulfilment only within marriage. Sexual intercourse is the symbol of total mutual surrender and union between a man and a woman. The symbol states an untruth unless that man and woman are committed to one another and united to

⁸ $(1+43) / 2 = 22$

⁹ While these documents date from 1969 to 1986, their theology remains representative of current Roman Catholic teaching on sexuality and relationships, therefore they remain significant sources of moral theology in the Irish context.

one another within the security of a life-long partnership. This surrender and this union imply openness to the new life, which would express the shared love and the united lives of man and wife. It is only within marriage that new life can be fully wanted and welcomed and offered the best conditions for growth to maturity. The first condition for a future society of loved children and loving persons is a renewed respect for the holiness of marriage. Whatever weakens marriage weakens society and endangers the future of civilisation.¹⁰

The pastoral letter *Christian Marriage*, which was written as a response to, and in support of, the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, concerning human sexuality and contraception, may be taken to illustrate the Bishops' approach.¹¹ In brief summary, in this letter the Irish bishops affirm the Roman Catholic tradition of marriage, between a man and a woman, as a sacrament of Christ and the Church.¹² The letter provides a concise yet comprehensive theology of the sacrament of marriage, which is rooted in the foundational sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist (n.2-5).¹³ Arguing from Scripture, the letter affirms the indissolubility of marriage and the "impossibility of divorce" within the context of the Christian family (n.6). The letter also argues from the base of experience, human and social, that divorce causes "widespread injury to the common good" and represents a permanent threat to the peace and harmony of married lives and to the stability of families (n.6). It insists that divorce inflicts a great wrong on children, who need love and security, as well as confidence in the love of their parents (n.6). While the Bishops' letter expresses a genuine concern about the abnormally high percentage of people in Ireland who avoid marriage, it refers in this context exclusively to "rural areas" (n.8). No discussion or analysis of the urban context is provided. Regarding children, the document reasserts the official teaching that marriage and conjugal love are ordained for "the procreation and education of children" and that, in this context, contraception (apart from the natural rhythm method) is unacceptable (n.9). The letter highlights the fact that *moral principles* derived from the tradition of the Church can guide sexual behaviour and, in this context, it insists upon the inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of human sexuality (n.9). Furthermore, it outlines a theology of conscience which aligns itself closely with the binding force of the official teaching of the Church (n.10).

From the perspective of Fatima, what is lacking in this letter is reference to sub cultures in Ireland that do not experience marriage as normative. Of the twenty women interviewed in my own research, five were married and, of the remainder, twelve were in intimate relationships

¹⁰ The Irish Episcopal Conference, *Human Life is Sacred*, n.94

¹¹ Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 1968. (This is an encyclical letter, meaning that it is an authoritative teaching by a Pope).

¹² The Irish Episcopal Conference, *Christian Marriage*, February 16, 1969.

¹³ Official Roman Catholic documents are sub-divided into numbered 'articles' which are here designated by the symbol 'n'.

with a boyfriend, or partner, and with children.¹⁴ One of the striking aspects of parenting in Fatima, which emerged in my research, is a predominant delight in, and generous welcome of, newborns in the community, regardless of the circumstances of birth.¹⁵ Comments by non-resident interviewees include: “new babies of younger girls are welcomed... mothers and grannies help out... they are not as welcome ‘outside’ if the mother is young”; “there is a concern in the wider community if the parent is young; not so in Fatima”; “lone parenting is much more acceptable here... it is becoming more accepted ‘outside’ though you still hear the old fashioned comment- ‘it’s a disgrace’ ”.¹⁶ This view was further confirmed by my research interview processes.¹⁷ Moreover, there is a climate of acceptance, where young parents are supported and mentored, and the option of abortion would appear to be rarely considered or spoken of. Non-resident research interviewees commented that:

- “abortion is a taboo subject...not spoken about”;
- “generally not spoken about... not as absolute in their view as elsewhere”;
- “it would not be discussed here... the community prizes its children above all else... there is a certain cruelty towards women who have had abortions...”;
- “it is kept secret in Fatima....lone parenthood is acceptable here so there is not as much a need for abortion...”;
- “not a subject raised as an issue here... not uncommon for a young girl to have a baby... it would not be seen to interrupt a career or education opportunities, as elsewhere, since young people seem to disengage from school earlier”;
- “older people here have more of an understanding of abortion than older women elsewhere...abortion is directly related to poverty and domestic violence here. They don’t talk about it, except among themselves. I was present at a once-off discussion where women spoke of inducing miscarriages in cases of enforced pregnancy.”¹⁸

When examining the Bishops’ account of intimate unions and parenting with a concern for the inclusion of Fatima’s experience of values and morality, two observations appear to be significant. These are: 1) the moral treatment of intimate unions and parenting is confined in the Bishops’ letters to the realm of personal and sexual morality and is disconnected from a morality of justice, and 2) the deductive methodology employed in the Bishops’ letter, involves the application of classic principles of morality to a non-specific Irish context and fails to incorporate any social analysis in its treatment of morality. With reference to the former, it

¹⁴ In my research those who were married belonged to the older generation of Fatima women, indicating a cultural trend away from marriage in the under-fifty age group.

¹⁵ RQF, Q.17, respondents A and C.

¹⁶ RQF, Q.13, respondents A, E and K.

¹⁷ Interview with Donna, 12/11/2001.

¹⁸ RQF, Q.13 r., respondents B, C, D, E, K, L, and O.

must be noted that, this dualism is a distinctive feature of traditional and official Roman Catholic theology, whereby a distinction is made between the 'order of nature' and the 'order of reason' approach to morality. Historically, matters of personal and sexual morality, as well as bio-ethics, have been examined under the category of the 'order of nature', which adopts a predominantly biological approach to natural law theory. Matters of justice, in contrast, are examined under the category of the 'order of reason'; hence the systematized separation of accounts of the moralities of sexuality and justice.¹⁹

The question of the normative nature of marriage, assumed in the Bishops' publications is also significant, not merely since the Bishops argue that certain benefits of marriage are associated with its normative nature. Desmond Connell, former Archbishop of Dublin, for example, in a public letter on the occasion of the second divorce referendum, wrote that marriage "bestows on husband and wife a dignified place in society; it confers a social standing that merits the respect of every other member of society".²⁰ The corollary to such a statement is that members of society who cannot for socio-economic and cultural reasons easily access marriage (such as Fatima residents) are denied a "dignified place in society" as well as "social standing". A theology of justice, in conjunction with a personalist theology of sexuality/marriage, is required to address this inequality.

The document, *Christian Marriage*, does, however, offer the possibility of a beginning point for dialogue with the urban context of Fatima when it says the following:

As a Christian community, we in Ireland must be concerned also about the abnormally high percentage of people who avoid marriage... The attitudes and the conditions and the customs which contribute to this situation must be radically reviewed. All those who are working to create economic and social conditions more favourable to marriage... are performing a Christian and patriotic service of the first importance. (n.8)

Significantly, there is no development of these more inclusive aspirations in subsequent letters and/or pastoral directives.

The pastoral letter *Love is for Life* (1985) provides a significantly more extensive examination of marriage, including its theological foundations in the love of the biblical covenant relationship between God and humanity, as well as a detailed description of marriage in Irish society at the time of publication. This letter addresses the issues of human love, the stresses

¹⁹ For an analysis of this distinction between the order of nature and the order of justice in the Roman Catholic tradition, see Richard Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1989) 238-241.

²⁰ Desmond Connell (former Archbishop of Dublin) *Letter to be Read at all Masses on Saturday*, Archbishop's House, Sunday 11th /12th November, 1995.

and graces of marriage, and marriage and the family in society and the Church. Highlighted are challenges posed to marriage at the time of its writing, such as: the incidence of marital breakdown in Ireland, the divorce debate, the State and the family, and marriage in the Christian community. Once more, an explicit analysis of marriage in the context of sub cultures within the state is absent. That said, this letter is more inclusive of the broader Fatima experience in that it acknowledges, albeit indirectly, the economic impediment to marriage for some. Addressing the rights of the family, it refers explicitly to the fact that those who wish to marry and establish a family have the right to expect from society all the “moral, educational, social and economic conditions which enable them to exercise their right to marry in all maturity and responsibility”.²¹ Developing this point they call on the government to elaborate policies “in the legal, economic and social fields” which will support and strengthen marriage and the family (n. 213). The letter then refers to the Irish constitution on the family (article 41) including the expressed commitments of the State “to the protection of marriage and the family” (n.214). It makes the point that the overall interests of marriage and the family cannot be properly safeguarded without a unified department or interdepartmental group at government level which would monitor all programmes and policies, existing or proposed, in light of their impact on marital stability and family welfare (n.215). Referring to the Holy See’s *Charter of the Rights of the Family* (1983) the letter states:

Society, and in a particular manner the State and International Organisations, must protect the family through measures of a political, economic, social and juridical character, which aim at consolidating the unity and stability of the family, so that it can exercise its specific function.

The rights, the fundamental needs, the well-being and the values of the family, even though they are progressively safeguarded in some cases, are often ignored and not rarely undermined by laws, institutions, and socio-economic programmes. (Preamble, I and J)²²

Elaborating on this, the letter then presents two paragraphs on the difficulties caused to families by intolerable economic and social deprivation, including living conditions, which “are inadequate for elementary human well-being and minimum human dignity” (n.216-217). They specify the unacceptable degree of poverty in the Ireland at that time (1980’s); malnutrition, inadequate hygiene, sub-standard accommodation, squalid environmental conditions, inadequate education, inequality in society, unemployment, unacceptable societal attitudes towards the poor, etc. A careful scrutiny of State housing policies and their impact upon families is called for (n.217). These particular paragraphs, while not referring explicitly to

²¹ Cited in The Irish Bishops, *Love is for Life: Irish Bishops’ Pastoral*, n. 213, (Republic of Ireland: Mount Salus Press Ltd., 1985) 68.

²² The Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 1983.

Fatima, nor to inner city communities directly, reflect the experience of Fatima (chapter three), hence have relevance for my research interests.

This letter also examines, from a theological perspective, various sexual practices, outside of the context of marriage. Situating an authentic expression of sexuality in the context of marriage it critiques extra-marital sex, pre-marital sex, co-habitation without marriage and unmarried pregnancy (n.68-87), the latter of which have been shown to be defining features of Fatima life (chapter three). What the letter fails to do, however, is to contextualize this discussion. In stark contrast to the above analysis of poverty and injustices in the State, and their impact on marriage and the family, there is *no* grounding of the moral discussion of sexual practices in the lived experience of Irish sub-groupings. Once more, a socio-cultural analysis is absent; hence its limitation. The same may be said also of the letter's discussion on "responsible parenthood" which contrasts sharply with Fatima interpretations. We saw earlier (chapter three) that, from a Fatima perspective, responsible parenthood meant above all "being there for the children".²³ Teasing this out, it was noted that "being there" was uniquely interpreted by the community and the context was identified as that of 'survival', as, for example, in the following examples:

- children were taught to tell lies to outsiders in order to protect themselves and the community;²⁴
- the community pro-actively challenged the culture of drugs and violence in the estate;²⁵
- the flat of a suspected child abuser was burned out and he was excommunicated from the local community;²⁶
- several mothers returned to basic education in order to help children with homework, and²⁷
- barring orders against violent partners where sought, where necessary.²⁸

Each of these expressions of responsible parenthood in Fatima is directly linked to the community's exclusion from mainstream society; hence they centre primarily around questions of *injustice*. The Fatima expression of parental responsibility is very far removed from the

²³ Interviews with Mel, 13/12/2001, Mary, 15/05/2001, Debbie, 26/04/2001 and Anita 20/05/2001.

²⁴ Interview with Donna, 12/11/2001

²⁵ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

²⁶ Field notes. June 1996.

²⁷ Interview with Mel, 13/12/2001.

²⁸ Interview with Sarah, 03/03/2001.

pastoral letter's analysis of responsible parenthood, which focuses, extensively and exclusively, on biological aspects of parenthood, such as family size and the morality of family planning (n. 88-104). Here we see once more a tension between the Roman Catholic traditions of the 'order of nature' approach to morality (with its biological/physical emphasis) and the alternative 'order of reason' approach to morality (which incorporates a vision of justice). This investigation indicates that, in the case of the Bishops' letter, the failure to situate their discussion of sexuality, marriage and the family, in the context of justice, serves to systematically exclude the Fatima experience.

5.4 THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE AND THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN PERSONS

Nine of the *forty three* documents investigated dealt with the themes of the sacredness of human life and the dignity of human persons (21%).²⁹ In these documents both of the themes of 1) the sanctity of human life, and 2) the dignity of the human person are elaborated upon with particular reference to the encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995).³⁰ Here I will focus on two of the above mentioned documents, which include and expand upon the vision of *Evangelium Vitae*, namely: *Human Life is Sacred* (1975) and *Proclaiming the Gospel of Life* (2001).

Human Life is Sacred affirms the sacredness of human life from conception. It insists upon respect for human life (n.1-3), the value of all human life (n.4-8), and the equality of all persons (n.5). While the letter deals in large part with the issues of contraception and abortion and marriage (n. 9-31; 93-106; 107-124) it is its discussions of 'quality of life' which offer a beginning point for real dialogue with Fatima culture. The Bishops write:

Some will argue that not every life is of equal value. But in the eyes of God every life is of equal and priceless value... Each human being is one of whom Christ thought so much that he died for him. Here is where each human being gets his value.³¹

The letter insists that the Christian demand is that all human life should be permitted and enabled to develop to the full dignity and quality of living that befits a human person and a child of God, and the letter grounds this vision in real experience. For example, it calls "for

²⁹ These include: *Human Life is Sacred* (1975); *Civil Law and the Right to Life: the Irish Bishops' Statement* (1995); *Assisted Human Reproduction: Facts and Ethical Issues* (2000); *Proclaiming the Gospel of Life* (2001); *An Opportunity not to be Lost (Abortion Referendum) 2002*; *Living with Dying* (2002); *End of Life Care-Ethical and Pastoral Issues* (2002); *Life in all its Fullness* (2003) and *The Wonder of Life* (2003).

³⁰ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, (Encyclical Letter), 1995.

³¹ Irish Episcopal Conference, *Human Life is Sacred*, 1975: n.5.

freedom, for adequate education, for proper living conditions, for more just distribution of wealth and opportunity, for protection of the human environment, and for a more responsible use of the resources of nature..." (n.31). In this context the letter specifically takes up the issue of adequate housing which, as previously seen, is a central concern in Fatima research (n.39). The desire for a house, as opposed to 'the flats', was a constant refrain in personal interviews and focus group interviews.³² It was most striking also that, in the focus group interview, with the middle age group of Fatima women, eight out of ten of the participants, when asked to creatively express their greatest dream, or what they cared most about, painted glass pictures of a house (plate 5). In this regard, the letter argues that the Christian must press upon society its duty to provide adequate housing at prices which are not a crippling burden upon families, and to provide proper family living conditions; Christians have a duty to fight for the strict control of prices of building land and, in terms of housing development, proper recreational facilities and social amenities for families are to be insisted upon; "many of the housing developments which we have had up to now have been simply creating conditions for youth maladjustment and social unrest in the future. They are social time-bombs with slow-burning fuses." (n.37). This account is an apt, indeed prophetic, description of the deterioration of inner-city estates, such as Fatima, in the decade, which followed the publication of the letter.

Speaking to the economy of its day, a period of severe inflation, the Bishops' letter addresses the plight of families with few and/or many children. It insists that social justice requires a sharing of the burden (n.39). Budgetary planning ought to be more family-centred. The bishops call for increased family allowance, and more effective tax relief related to the number of children. Education too, they suggest, needs to be transformed in terms of access; third level education ought to be open to all levels of society. Care of the elderly is also addressed; adequate home support, medical services, effective housing programmes, etc. are advocated (n.67-69), all issues of direct relevance to Fatima life and morality.³³

Proclaiming the Gospel of Life (2001) is a further publication that affirms the sacredness of human life:

³² Mrs Ryan spoke of her dream of a "two up, two down house", *Spirit Level*, RTE, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

³³ This is a pertinent point in light of developments in Ireland. In 2004 the Attorney General advised Government to stop levying nursing home charges on the elderly on the basis of its illegality. Later, in March 2005, when the Irish Supreme Court judged that the Irish Government's attempts to retrospectively legalize nursing care fees taken from pensions belonging to the elderly in the State, since 1976, was ruled unconstitutional. In 2005 *The Travers Report* criticized the handling of the affair by the Department of Health. See RTE, News, posted 09/03/05 at www.rte.ie/news/2005/0309/charges.html, viewed 10/04/05.

The real problem, of course, is not the fact that people die. Indeed, we believe that physical death is the gateway to eternal life. The real problem is that anyone of us would place so little value on his or her own life or on the life of another person that we would destroy it, because it is inconvenient or painful for us, because we see it as an obstacle, or simply because we didn't care enough.³⁴

Read from the perspective of Fatima, certain aspects of the pastoral letter are highly relevant. Suggesting that “a new cultural climate is developing and taking hold, which gives crimes against life a new and - if possible - more sinister character” the letter points out that choosing life in every circumstance is not without difficulties; it frequently requires courage and generosity. It suggests that there is a radical contradiction between the “Gospel of life” and the pervasive “culture of death” in today’s world, which is reflected in such Irish realities as: increasing murder; the acceptance of abortion as a normal response to unwanted pregnancy; unacceptably high levels of death on the roads; increased deaths due to the abuse of drugs and alcohol; the tragic death of young people due to drug trafficking; the increase in the numbers of suicides, especially among young males; the deaths of so many in the third world due to poverty and malnourishment; hatred and intolerance reflected in ethnic cleansing and genocide in the world, and the increasing acceptance of euthanasia.

A number of the above concerns are directly related to Fatima life, especially its culture of poverty and violence, joyriding, alcohol and drug misuse and racial intolerance. But Fatima, despite its obvious culture of death, has, equally, a profound concern for *life* and survival. We saw that the concern with life in Fatima interviews revolved repeatedly around two issues: 1) the fundamental threat to life within Fatima’s culture of drug dealing and its associated violence, and 2) the limited quality of life experienced by many community members due to inadequate social and economic rights, including housing, health, nutrition and adequate standard of living. Since I deal with the impact of the Fatima drug culture in some detail later in this chapter, I will focus exclusively on the experience of social and economic rights next.

5.4.1 Social and Economic Rights and Quality of Life Argument

As indicated above, certain ‘quality of life’ issues, including housing and health, are addressed the Irish Bishops in two of the documents examined (5%). These are: *Re-Righting the Constitution. The Case for New Social and Economic Rights: Housing, Health, Nutrition, Adequate Standard of Living*, by the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (1998) and the

³⁴ The Irish Episcopal Conference, *Proclaiming the Gospel of Life*, 2001.

Pastoral Letter *Life is for Living: Reflection on Suicide* (2004) which addresses the reality of mental health, particularly depression and despair.³⁵

The document *Re-Righting the Constitution* is a synthesis of two submissions by the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace to the All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution.³⁶ The Commission took issue with positions that recommend against any expanded provision in the constitution for social and economic rights, arguing that social and economic rights are central to human flourishing and are also necessary for the enjoyment of other human rights. It sought to provide in *Re-Righting the Constitution* a reasoned critique of such a viewpoint and insisted that “the general case for expanded provision for social and economic rights in the Constitution should be put forward at some length”.³⁷ Referring to the Preamble of the Constitution, it presents the case that human rights are rooted in the concept of human dignity and freedom.³⁸ Following on this, the recognition of social and economic rights are argued for on the grounds of: 1) the common good, 2) freedom and the dignity of the individual, and 3) the attainment of social order.³⁹ Referring to the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* (1963), it adds that Catholic tradition has never treated rights as divisible; its holistic approach to the human person requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to rights.⁴⁰ Importantly, in the document there is a “convergence of several lines of argument- constitutional, political, moral, economic and social.”⁴¹

Of particular relevance to Fatima is the fact that a strong case is made for the inclusion, in the Constitution, of the rights to health, adequate housing, adequate nutrition and an adequate standard of living, all of which is rooted in the Catholic faith tradition, citizenship and common

³⁵ The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, *Re-Righting the Constitution. The Case for New Social and Economic Rights: Housing, Health, Nutrition, Adequate Standard of Living*, (Dublin: Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, 1998) and The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Life is for Living: a Reflection on Suicide*, 2004.

³⁶ The All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution addresses the issue of rights and the constitution.

³⁷ The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, *Re-Righting the Constitution*: iv

³⁸ The Preamble speaks of “we, the people ... seeking to promote the common good, with due observance of Prudence, Justice and Charity, so that the dignity of the individual may be assured ... [and] true social order attained...”, cited in The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, *Re-Righting the Constitution*: 96.

³⁹ This reasoned approach is in line with the long-standing tradition of natural law theory espoused by the Roman Catholic Church; explicit faith sources, particularly Revelation (Scriptures), are not employed when dialoguing/debating with people outside of the tradition, including the State.

⁴⁰ The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, *Re-Righting the Constitution*: vi. See also John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, n. 11.

⁴¹ The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, *Re-Righting the Constitution*: 97.

humanity.⁴² Of these fundamental social and economic human rights four, in particular, are identified; the right to adequate housing, health, nutrition and standard of living. In the foreword to the submission, Bishop Laurence Ryan (the President of the Commission) writes:

The unprecedented and prolonged period of economic growth which ... Ireland is currently enjoying has stimulated widespread concern about certain of the effects which the tiger economy has produced or intensified. While growth has produced growing prosperity for many, it has often exacerbated inequality and marginalization. As we point out in various places in this document there is no inbuilt mechanism to ensure that greater wealth and resources are equitably distributed. Without compensating and countervailing protections the opposite is more likely to happen. Such protections, in the form of constitutionally enshrined social and economic rights, are an essential complement to the civil and political rights which have predominated in the Constitution up to the present.⁴³

The concerns presented here are clearly played out in the life of Fatima. Selected examples, taken from my research interviewees, make clear that poverty characterizes Fatima life today, as in the past:

- “There is a social poverty (as opposed to economic poverty) in Fatima that is not elsewhere”;
- “In Fatima it (poverty) is a bad thing, to get out of... elsewhere the view is that if they had better ways of managing money they might not feel it as bad as they do”;
- “I see the sin of poverty is that it robs the poor of the joy of giving... would not see the community as poor materially, more spiritually”;
- “I could be very angry about it...they seem to be very passive about it”;
- “Perhaps a fatalistic attitude towards poverty? No change in sight. Long term there is the hope that the ‘new Fatima’ will bring change”;
- “They wouldn’t like to think of themselves as poor; comparatively they would be, in general but they would not want that label”;
- “Poverty is definitely a reality, but the community also have different priorities”, and
- “Some are very aware of being poor, but the children are protected... they won’t take charity...”⁴⁴

Given the real struggle for existence that characterises Fatima life, the highlighting by the Irish Bishops of the question of *fundamental human rights* is an important contribution from the perspective of Fatima. Issues of relevance, which are specifically addressed in the Bishops’

⁴² Ibid.: vi.

⁴³ Laurence Ryan, Foreword. The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, *Re-Righting the Constitution*: vi.

⁴⁴ RQF, 13, respondents C, D,E,H,I,M,N,P and Q.

contributions, are: nutrition and housing, drugs culture and poverty. My research has demonstrated that inadequacies in these fundamental areas takes its toll upon community members, not least upon their mental and physical health and upon their quality of life (chapter three).

5.4.2 Mental Health Issues and Quality of Life

A recurring theme in Fatima-based research is circumstances of despair which the Irish Bishops address in general terms: “We recognise that all generations and many individuals have wrestled with darkness, both within themselves and within society...”⁴⁵ The overriding concern of the Bishops is that such darkness is leading to steadily increasing suicide rates in the Irish context, especially among young males. The letter equates economic success and its related weakening of faith (or increased secularism) as well as the removal of the traditional stigma regarding suicide as significant factors in the increase of suicide rates in Ireland. They reiterate the Christian call to fullness of life for all people. In doing so they present a hopeful theological account of darkness and suffering that has general relevance to the pain, not only of individuals in Ireland, but of struggling communities, such as Fatima. The letter also offers consolation for those bereaved by suicide, acknowledging the inevitable reactions of denial, loss, anger, personal recrimination and deep pain. It presents the Christian assurance of life after death and the hope that the merciful and loving God of Christianity can see beyond the limited human condition. The Bishops call on all families, schools, colleges, communities, the Government, the media and health care systems to join in a common effort to make the causes of suicide more fully understood, the care of those at risk more urgent and the families of those bereaved by suicide consoled and supported. In particular, they commend the development of suicide prevention strategies.

The *general* relevance of this document to Fatima life is unquestionable since in numerous interviews with Fatima women the question of health was a preoccupation.⁴⁶ In particular, the often-overwhelming burden of depression was a recurring theme.⁴⁷ From the perspective of Fatima, this pastoral letter presents a very hopeful theology of life and death.⁴⁸ It is a compassionate letter and its message effectively transcends cultural difference. However, the treatment of such a complex and pressing problem in Irish society in this work is inadequate. While offering a word of concern and hope, it fails to offer any substantial analysis of causes

⁴⁵ The Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference, *Life is for Living: a Reflection on Suicide*, 2004.

⁴⁶ Interviews with Anita, 20/05/2001, Debbie, 26/04/01 and Sheila, 15/0/2001.

⁴⁷ Interviews with Anita, 20/05/2001 and Sheila, 15/03/2001.

⁴⁸ The Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference, *Life is for Living: a Reflection on Suicide* (2004).

and patterns of attempted suicide, or death by suicide, in various cultural contexts in Ireland. It fails to integrate a serious sociological analysis with the theological perspective. Fatima interviewees in my own research offer a more precise analysis; *they specifically link their experience of depression with such factors as ill health, poverty, isolation, inadequate housing, domestic violence, anxiety in regard to their children, hopelessness and powerlessness*, an analysis that is distinctly absent from the Bishops' letter.⁴⁹ In effect, the moral dimension, that this letter fails to acknowledge, is *the violation of quality of life as a result of systemic injustice*.

5.5 THE ECCLESIAL AND CATECHETICAL IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

It was demonstrated earlier that, within the Fatima community, a variety of relational and 'family' arrangements are identifiable, the more commonplace being the lone parent family, with or without a co-habiting partner, and/or the extended family or kinship (chapter three).⁵⁰ Indeed, research by Fahey indicated that 38% of households in the estate were single parent households (up to four times the national average) as compared to 23% of households with single people living alone and 21% of households with two parent families and children.⁵¹ The centrality of *family* to the cohesion and survival of the Fatima community was also clearly argued.

Three of the forty three documents examined in my analysis of the Irish Bishops' contribution deal explicitly with the question of 'family' (7%).⁵² Here I will examine only the more significant and representative documents. Beginning with the statement *Marriage, the Family and Divorce* (1986) published in light of the Divorce Referendum (1986), the Bishops focus on marriage and the family in the context of Irish society. They provide a detailed analysis of the role of marriage in society and the implications of divorce for society. The statement fails to address the experience of sub cultures such as Fatima, whose members have not got the financial wherewithal either to marry or divorce.⁵³ While the context of this letter is strictly that of marriage, many of its arguments might apply to other relational unions and family

⁴⁹ Interviews with Anita, 20/05/2001, Sheila, 15/03/2001, Sarah, 03/03/2001 and Marie, 23/05/2001.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mel, 13/12/2001.

⁵¹ See Fahey: *Social Housing*: 99; also Corcoran: 13, and Combat Poverty Agency, *Lone Parent Families and Poverty*. Poverty Briefing Number 5: (Dublin: CPA, June 1996).

⁵² These are *Marriage, the Family and Divorce*, 1986; *Cherishing the Family*, 1994, and *A Joint Submission by the Committee on the Family of the Irish Episcopal Conference and the Office for Public Affairs of the Archdiocese of Dublin to the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution on the Review of Constitutional Provisions Relating to the Family*, 2005.

⁵³ As one Fatima resident put it: "... sure that has nothing to do with us...you have to be rich to be able to divorce in the first place", informal conversation with Christie, field notes. June, 1995.

systems, such as co-habiting partners and their children, which is the dominant union in socio-economically disenfranchised communities such as Fatima. For example, the Bishops highlight the destructive impact of and demoralizing experiences of: 1) negative economic and social conditions; 2) unemployment; 3) the abuse of alcohol; 4) the practice of gambling; 5) absent parents, 6) quarrelling parents and 7) wife beating and child battering and 8) infidelity, *all of which were identified in my research as characterizing the Fatima culture* (chapter three). The letter calls for “supportive programmes for overburdened, ill or under-privileged couples and families” and “more generous and enlightened social welfare involvement at the level of both central and local authority” (n. 9). It also expresses concern for such issues as “housing, handicapped children, adoption, youth work, school meals, children’s nurseries and play centres” (n.9). These are priorities from the perspective of Fatima (chapter three).

In 2004 submissions on ‘family’ were invited by the Irish State All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution, with a view to the possible re-definition of family in the Irish Constitution. In February 2005, The Committee on the Family of the Irish Episcopal Conference and The Office for Public Affairs of the Archdiocese of Dublin presented a ‘Joint Submission’.⁵⁴ This document reflects the official position of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland on ‘family’; it insists that, in the Irish Constitution, 1) ‘family’ is strictly defined in terms of the institution of marriage which is contracted between a man and a woman, and 2) it is considered “a natural unit of society and a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law” (n. 41). Furthermore, marriage and the family are both considered to be “primary sources of stability, life and love in any society, they constitute a ‘primary vital cell’ from which the rest of society derives so much of its own cohesion and potential success.” (n. 41.1.2) They are “a necessary basis of social order; indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State.” (n. 41.1.2) The Submission points out that, in the present Constitution, the state pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of marriage, on which family is founded. (n. 41.3.1) The Submission also insists that non-traditional family units, especially where they include children, are offered appropriate social and financial support, provided for by statutory and regulatory measures.

The Joint Submission specifically addresses the following family-related issues: the definition of the family in the Irish Constitution; balancing the rights of the family as a unit and the rights of individual members; the possibility of constitutional protection to families other than those based on marriage; the inadvisability of marriage for same-sex couples; woman’s ‘life within the home’ as a dated concept; the rights of the natural mother and the natural father and the

⁵⁴ The document will be referred to as the *Joint Submission* for the purposes of this thesis.

rights of the child (especially in light of the United Nations Convention on ‘the rights of the child’). Significantly, it shows a certain disregard for the relevance of sociological findings in relation to contemporary experiences of family (insisting that sociological trends ought not to dictate the constitutional vision) and prioritises instead a philosophical approach.⁵⁵ In this way the socio-cultural experience of communities such as Fatima are systematically excluded from discussion. Furthermore, despite its emphasis on human dignity and freedom, the Joint Submission does not address, in its discussion of family rights and personal rights, the fact that, within ‘family’ life, there may be very real possibilities of fear, intimidation and violence, from which the citizen ought to be constitutionally protected. Though a notable omission, it would be unfair to conclude from this that the issue of domestic violence is one of little or no concern to the Irish Bishops. In the next section we will examine those limited publications by the Bishops, which address the issues of family and cultural violence.

5.6 THE EVIL OF VIOLENCE

My research has highlighted the culture of violence, which characterizes Fatima life (chapter three). This culture of violence is evidenced especially in the prevalence of inter-personal aggression and domestic violence in the community, including violence emanating from the alcohol and drugs culture prevalent in Fatima. Publications by the Irish Bishops, which address the reality of violence, include *Domestic Violence* (2000), produced by the Commission for Justice and Peace, and documents pertaining to clerical child abuse, including *Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response* (1996) and *Towards Healing- Pastoral Reflections for Lent* (2005). Documents addressing the issues of alcohol and drugs abuse, include *The Temperate Way* (1999), *Breaking the Silence* (1997), *Tackling the Drugs Problem Together* (1998), *Beyond Maintenance: Papers from a Drug Treatment Seminar* (2002) and *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture* (2000). (These documents are relatively well represented since they account for 16 % of the total). We shall examine their relevance for Fatima in what follows.

5.6.1 Domestic Violence

Our earlier analysis demonstrated the prevalence of domestic violence in the Fatima community (chapter three). This analysis highlighted the fact that domestic violence is linked to negative aspects of the Fatima environment and is tolerated within the community to a huge extent.⁵⁶ Nine out of the twenty Fatima interviewees spoke of the personal experience of domestic and

⁵⁵ The Committee on the Family of the Irish Episcopal Conference & The Office for Public Affairs of the Archdiocese of Dublin, *The Joint Submission*: 3.

⁵⁶ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001

/or sexual violence perpetrated upon themselves or on a family member.⁵⁷ Resistant behaviours were also described.⁵⁸ We saw also that, at a collective level, women exercise a role in restricting domestic violence.⁵⁹

The issue of domestic violence is explicitly addressed in *one* document out of the total of the *forty three* investigated, (2%) The document in question, entitled *Domestic Violence*, was produced by The Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, and the Pastoral Commission of the Irish Bishops' Conference (2000).⁶⁰ The document defines domestic violence in terms of the abuse of power and then outlines in brief the scale of the problem at the time of writing.⁶¹ It points out that nine out of ten barring orders are made by women against violent partners and that pregnant women are particularly vulnerable.⁶² Furthermore, it suggests that only 20-30% of women who experience violence actually report it. Different forms of violence are identified and described in brief in the document, including: physical, verbal and emotional, isolation, threats, economic abuse, social control, rape within marriage, pornography and drug related violence.⁶³ The document also identifies key characteristics of perpetrators, such as: having experienced abuse as a child; low self esteem, distorted views of one's sexuality; severe stress, (due, for example, to financial difficulties, relationship problems or unemployment) and addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.⁶⁴ Importantly, the document insists that causal factors such as these do not morally justify violent behaviour. Having outlined a summary position of church, state and voluntary responses, the document provides a brief theological reflection on the issue.

It is notable that the extensive body of literature in this field, including sociological and theological analyses of domestic violence, provided by feminist theologians worldwide, receives no mention whatsoever. A brief analysis of the underlying causes of violence against

⁵⁷ Interview with Anita, 30/05/2001, Debbie, 26/04/2001, Mrs Ryan, 22/03/01, Melanie 13/12/2001, Fluffy, 27/04/2001, Sarah, 03/03/2001, Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001, Natasha, 30/05/02 and Mary, 15/05/01.

⁵⁸ During an informal conversation with one Fatima resident, she described putting tranquillizer pills in her partner's meals when he was violent or drinking. Field notes, 23/08/2000.

⁵⁹ Deignan: "Gender and Development: A Case Study". An essay submitted as part requirement for the M.A. in Women's Studies, National University of Ireland, Dublin. (Unpublished) 2000: 8.

⁶⁰ The Irish Commission of Justice and Peace and the Pastoral Commission of the Irish Bishops' Conference, *Domestic Violence*, August 2000.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 1-3.

⁶² Here the document acknowledges a national survey conducted by Women's Aid (Dublin) namely, *Making the Links* (1995), where it was reported that 34% of women who had experienced physical violence had suffered assaults while pregnant.

⁶³ The Irish Commission of Justice and Peace and the Pastoral Commission of the Irish Bishops' Conference, *Domestic Violence*: 3-4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 6.

women is provided.⁶⁵ The document ends with some limited and under-developed follow-up recommendations and suggestions.⁶⁶ While one brief reference is made to causal links between financial hardship and domestic violence, *the explicit links between poverty, socio-economic exclusion and domestic violence, highlighted in my research, are not made* (chapter three). Neither does the document elaborate upon the direct link between domestic violence and the misuse of alcohol and drugs, a finding that is significant in Fatima-based research. Its analysis is therefore inadequate from the perspective of Fatima.

5.6.2 Abuse of Children

The Bishops' pastoral letters also address the reality of child sexual abuse specifically.⁶⁷ However, the emphasis is almost exclusively *ecclesial*. The focus is on the specific experience of the sexual abuse of vulnerable children by clerics and religious. Two representative publications by the Irish Bishops include *Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response* (1996) and *Towards Healing: Pastoral Reflections for Lent 2005*. The former is a report of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Advisory Committee on Child Sexual Abuse by Priests and Religious.⁶⁸ It addresses such issues as: defining sexual abuse, reporting policy, procedures for complaints, exchange of information between Religious congregations and between dioceses, parish and community issues, the assessment and treatment of offenders and the selection of candidates for priesthood and religious life. Most striking about this report, from the perspective of abused children in communities such as Fatima, is its narrow terms of reference:

to consider and advise on an appropriate response by the Catholic Church in Ireland where there is an accusation, suspicion or knowledge of a priest or religious having sexually abused a child;

to identify guidelines for Church policy in this area and suggest a set of procedures to be followed in these circumstances.⁶⁹

Towards Healing (2005) is seen by the Bishops as a reflection on the Church's journey of becoming more faithful to the Gospel in its response to the issue of child sexual abuse. It addresses none of the child abuse issues pertinent to Fatima. The emphasis in these

⁶⁵ Ibid.: 4-5.

⁶⁶ Ibid.: 9-12.

⁶⁷ For a summary of publications and initiatives by the Irish Bishops on child abuse see <http://www.catholiccommunications.ie>

⁶⁸ This committee was established in March 1994 under the chair of Bishop Laurence Forristal, Bishop of Ossory.

⁶⁹ The Irish Bishops, *Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response* (Dublin: Veritas, 1996) 5.

publications is on 1) child sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy and religious, 2) necessary guidelines for Church leadership in such circumstances and 3) the possibility of healing within the context of the Church community. Notably absent are: a *comprehensive* account of child abuse in all its manifestations in Irish society (physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual); a dialogue with the human and social sciences in regard to the phenomenon of child abuse, a comprehensive treatment of the experience of child abuse in religious-run institutions of child care in Ireland (a significant theme in Fatima interviews) nor the links between socio- cultural factors and abuse, a theme highlighted in Fatima-based research (chapter three). Therefore, they are inadequate from the basis of a Fatima hermeneutic.

5.6.2 Alcohol Misuse

Interviews with Fatima workers as well as participant observation confirmed that excessive alcohol intake is the single greatest form of drug misuse in Fatima. Non-resident interviewees commented that alcohol misuse is widespread, tolerated, and a way of life in Fatima and that the whole social life of the community is built around alcohol and “dope”.⁷⁰ Others observed that this is how people are brought up in Fatima; it is perceived as ‘normal’, whole families, including young members, can be affected.⁷¹ Unemployment, a lack of structure to the day, and the acceptability of drinking cheaper alcohol - such as cider parties in gardens - play a significant role in alcohol misuse in the community (chapter three).⁷²

The pastoral letter *Human Life is Sacred* (1975) makes passing reference to alcohol misuse, but specifically in the context of Christian marriage (n. 98). For this reason it is exclusive of the Fatima experience. A more thorough-going treatment of the issue of alcohol misuse, however, is found in the pastoral letter, *The Temperate Way: Creative and Christian Responses* (1999).⁷³ Echoing the Fatima experience, the letter points out that, unwisely used, alcohol can lead to enormous pain and devastation, therefore Christians bear the responsibility of protecting future generations from such suffering. It reflects, in general terms, on the place of alcohol in Irish culture, but offers no analysis of the cultural differences *within* the Irish context with respect to alcohol consumption and its effects. Specifically from a Fatima perspective, what this letter fails to do is: 1) to provide any serious analysis of the relationship between alcohol misuse and poverty and/or social exclusion and, 2) to suggest any specific creative response in such

⁷⁰ RQF, Q.13, respondents C, D, E and H.

⁷¹ Ibid.: respondent K.

⁷² Ibid.: respondents N and O.

⁷³ The Irish Bishops, *The Temperate Way: Creative and Christian Responses*, 1999.

contexts. Hence, its inability to address the reality of the Fatima experience. In sharp contrast, the Bishops' publications on drug misuse achieve both of these ends, as we shall now see.

5.6.3 Street Drugs Culture

My Research highlights the enormous cultural impact of drugs on the Fatima community (chapter three). Repeatedly, in the interviews and group processes, the impact of drugs on the daily lives of residents came to the fore, revealing themes and values, such as *good mothering* and *care of the children*, as well as further central values held by the community, including: *truth and transparency, respect of property, trust, tolerance, care and compassion, communal responsibility, abhorrence of drug dealing while sympathy for the addict and self-reliance*. Earlier we saw how the Corcoran Report (1998), gave particular attention to the Fatima drugs culture, identifying it as “the single biggest issue which impacts on the quality of life” and “fundamentally a problem of social order in that there is a sense among residents that public space is outside of their control and has been taken over by undesirables”.⁷⁴ This statement has been strongly borne out by my own research; the challenge of daily life in a drugs culture was a central preoccupation in the interviews conducted.⁷⁵

Key documents published by the Irish Bishops, in response to the drugs street culture include: *Breaking the Silence* (1997), *Tackling the Drugs Problem Together* (1998), *Beyond Maintenance: Papers from a Drug Treatment Seminar* (2002) and *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture* (2000). In contrast to the publications discussed earlier in this chapter, *Breaking the Silence* (1997) is an example of a Church document that accurately reflects the experience of inner city communities, such as Fatima. It is comprehensive in its treatment of drugs street culture, dealing with such aspects as defining the problem of substance misuse, situating the drugs problem in the overall national context, examining the relationship between drugs and poverty, exploring the faith vacuum which accommodates substance misuse, exploring the roles of the community and church, promoting a partnership approach to prevention and treatment, challenging drug dealers and offering encouragement to drugs users and their families. This document combines a thorough sociological depiction of the drugs problem as well as a theological analysis of the values at stake. Theologically the document points to the human need to belong and find meaning in life, adding that drugs “promise ... excitement in a dreary life, a sense of solidarity for a person who feels excluded and alone, the thrill of defying a world that seems to offer no fulfilment.”, an analysis which closely mirrors

⁷⁴ Corcoran: 19-23 at 20-21.

⁷⁵ Interviews with Sarah, 03/03/2001; Fluffy, 27/04/2001; Elaine, 20/09/01; Liselle, 28/08/2001.

Fatima descriptions of the same.⁷⁶ The document adds that, in the end, drugs prove illusory and deceptive and their legacy is dependency, isolation and a fundamental powerlessness. These observations are repeatedly confirmed by Fatima-based interviews.⁷⁷

Importantly, from a Fatima hermeneutic, *Breaking the Silence* (1997) highlights the relationship between drugs and inequality in Irish society. It writes that those who experience themselves as excluded from affluence and power are particularly vulnerable to drugs, adding that heroin and other opiates frequently go hand-in-hand with poverty and social deprivation. Furthermore, the document asks whether we are prepared to recognize and remedy the root causes of *inequality* and whether we can ask people to relinquish drugs if we are not prepared to seek ways to help them out of the poverty trap. Applying a Fatima hermeneutic, certain values are specifically highlighted in this letter, which correspond directly to values uncovered in the context of the drugs culture, in Fatima (chapter three). These include: *truth, honesty, respect and caring for others, compassion and a particular commitment to the protection of future generations*⁷⁸. Following this document, *Tackling the Drugs Problem Together* (1998) presented a policy statement by the Catholic Church committing to a partnership approach to drug prevention and treatment.

In 2000 a drug treatment seminar was organized by the Irish Catholic Bishops in association with *The Irish Times* which was followed by the publication of *Beyond Maintenance: Papers from a Drug Treatment Seminar* (2002), the emphasis of which was on a holistic approach to recovery.⁷⁹ In this publication Archbishop Desmond O' Connell highlights not only the need to respond to the needs of drug users as they arise but also the need to reflect on the deeper causes, personal and systemic, that lead young people in particular to get involved in drug-taking. In line with the Fatima experience, as uncovered in my research, this publication identifies *boredom* as a significant factor in drug use (chapter three).⁸⁰ The document also affirms the dignity of the addict and offers *hope* in face of despair. It insists that drug users "are not 'no hopers', they are not 'junkies', they are not 'low-lives'"; they are ordinary people who have become entangled in a web of addictive living and who are in need of treatment that respects

⁷⁶ The Irish Episcopal Conference, *Breaking the Silence*: 3.

⁷⁷ Interviews with Fluffy 27/04/2001, Sheila 15/03/01 and Sarah, 03/03/2001.

⁷⁸ Following this document, the publication *Tackling the Drugs Problem Together* (1998) presented a policy statement by the Catholic Church committing to a partnership approach to drug prevention and treatment. The document identifies the Church's role as: 1) caring for drug users and their families; 2) helping to heal and prevent divisions in the community and 3) helping to prevent drug problems.

⁷⁹ This publication came in the wake of the publication by John Paul II on substance misuse, *Church, Drugs and Drug Addiction*, 2001.

⁸⁰ Archbishop Desmond O' Connell, "Opening Address", in Walsh (ed.), *Beyond Maintenance*: 8-9 at 9; also interview with Fluffy, 27 /04 /2001.

their inner potential and dignity; treatment that will replace their distant glazed stare with life and ambition.⁸¹ The compassionate tone and non-judgemental attitude evident in this publication finds strong echoes in Fatima narratives, where respect and compassion for the drug user is found.⁸² While this publication has much to offer, a Fatima hermeneutic would suggest that it is limited, especially in its discussion of freedom from drug dependency. There would appear to be a disconnect between the *ideal* of total freedom from drug-dependence and the *reality* for a large number of recovering drug users, who remain dependent on substitute drugs, such as methadone, anti-depressants and tranquillizers, long term (as is the Fatima reality). The fact that long-term methadone dependency is far more commonplace in inner-city drugs cultures than the experience of the ideal that methadone is a step towards recovery, receives inadequate attention in my view.

From a *methodological perspective*, this publication is a significant exception in comparison to other publications by the Irish Bishops. Indeed, part of the methodology employed parallels my own in terms of its ethnographic and narrative approach, which is grounded in the lived experience of drug users from inner city sub-cultures such as Fatima.⁸³ The appendix to this publication, *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture* (2000), in particular, is of value since it centres on the oral histories/narratives of drug addicts and their spirituality. While the emphasis in this document is on spirituality as opposed to morality, there is much overlap with my own research findings. Thematic findings in this analysis, all of which were evidenced in my research (chapter three), include:

- a community-based nature of the spirituality of the addict;
- a survival-based spirituality indicating a struggle for life despite the odds;
- a spirituality where children have a central place;
- humour in the face of perceived absurdity and an intolerance of hypocrisy;
- a spirituality characterized by resistance and the need for the transformation of unjust structures; often a sense of shame or alienation and feelings of being uncomfortable in holy places and the experience of religion being ambiguous.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Walsh, *Beyond Maintenance*: 63.

⁸² RQF. Q. 13, respondent D.

⁸³ Cassisy, E. (ed.) *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture*. A Report Commissioned by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Drugs Initiative. (Maynooth: Irish Centre for Faith and Culture. 2000).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*:16-18. The parallels may be partly explained by the fact that I gave direct input into the research methodology and analysis.

While the researchers involved in producing this publication on the Irish street drug culture did not interview residents of Fatima, some interviewed former and/or current drug dependent residents in the adjacent Dolphin's Barn and Rialto neighbourhoods, as well as other Dublin inner-city communities (appendix A). Moreover, a number of the researchers involved in this publication (among them, myself) both lived and/or worked in the inner-city at the time of research. For these reasons the findings are more highly reflective of Fatima's experience than other publications by the Irish Bishops and are of greater significance in terms of my research findings. Overall, this document, which draws upon a wide expertise, reflects the lived experience of addicts and their family members and employs a narrative methodology, is a useful example of how the moral experience of the inner-city can be incorporated effectively into formal theological discussions on morality.⁸⁵

5.7 THE GRAVE OBLIGATION OF JUSTICE IN PERSONAL LIFE AND IN SOCIETY

In line with the Catholic tradition of social ethics, a further area of specific interest for the Irish bishops is that of *injustice in society*. My earlier analysis of Fatima's morality and value system highlighted various experiences of injustice, including: *discrimination, stigmatization, inordinately high levels of unemployment and poverty, inadequate education and training, lack of choice* (linked to a lack of financial means), and *limited access to the institutions within the State, including financial institutions* (chapter three). This relationship between injustice and economics is analyzed by the Irish Bishops in three of their publications: *The Work of Justice* (1977), *Work is the Key: Towards an Economy that Needs Everyone* (1992) and *Prosperity with a Purpose: Christian Faith and Values in a Time of Rapid Economic Growth* (1999).⁸⁶

The pastoral letter *The Work of Justice* (1977), while it make no specific reference to morality and the inner-city, has relevance for Fatima since it strongly challenges Irish people to build up a just society. It looks to Catholic social teaching, insisting that injustice in the world and society is a responsibility for all (n.64). Articles 65-67 deal with the responsibilities of capital and property. Ownership, the letter argues, carries responsibilities and obligations to society, especially to the poor; no one has an *absolute right* to do what he/she likes with money, capital, wealth; private ownership implies social function. The letter also points out that the concepts of social partnership and worker participation outlined earlier (chapter one) is a welcome

⁸⁵ Expert knowledge is drawn from the fields of theology, sociology, psychology, community development, national and international drugs treatment services, the government Ministry of State for Local Development and the School of Pharmacy, Trinity College, Dublin.

⁸⁶ Irish Bishops, *The Work of Justice: Irish Bishops Pastoral* (Dublin: Veritas, 1977); *Work is the Key* (Dublin: Veritas, 1992) and *Prosperity with a Purpose: Christian Faith and Values in a Time of Rapid Economic Growth*, (Dublin: Veritas, 1999).

development in Irish society, since it ideally leads to shared responsibility. This social partnership approach was evidenced in Fatima in the contributions of such groups as: the former Fatima Task Force (FTF), the Canal Communities Partnership (CCP) and the Social Integrated Project (SIP). The partnership approach significantly benefited Fatima in terms of a collective and unified forward planning for the estate's development and the provision of on-going supports, including the funding of and provision of resources for community projects.

Work is the Key (1992) speaks to an earlier and different social context (the 1980's) where unemployment levels in Ireland were amongst the highest in Europe (16% of the adult population) and were coupled with mass emigration. However, it has relevance for Fatima, in that it specifically addresses questions of poverty and social division, and looks to the contribution of Catholic Social Teaching. The document highlights the following values: *the dignity of the human person, the dignity of human work, integral human development, and the virtue of solidarity*, all of which were identified as significant values for Fatima members (chapter three). The document provides a comprehensive analysis on improving economic stewardship, deepening a consensus on jobs, business enterprise, empowering communities and regions, job creation and the environment, jobs within the European context, and justice while unemployed. A major concern outlined is the way in which unemployment contributes to divisions in Irish society (as was previously examined in discussions on 'relative poverty', in chapter one). What was missing, according to this letter, is an overall sense of *social solidarity*. While no explicit reference is made in this publication to the context of the inner city, many of these themes could serve as a useful starting point for dialogue and the establishment of a future moral theology of the inner city.

The publication *Prosperity with a Purpose* (1999) sought to analyze a radically different economic context, namely Ireland's experience of unprecedented prosperity, commonly referred to as the 'Celtic Tiger'. This letter highlights *quality of life* issues and suggests that the purpose of the Celtic Tiger prosperity ought to be the *common good* of Irish society. The Bishops argue throughout the letter that it is the common good which determines whether there exists a prosperous economy in the true sense; one that contributes to human flourishing. This is an argument with potential relevance for the inner city. Indeed this is evident from the follow-on publication, *Prosperity with a Purpose: What Purpose?*, which offers a commentary on the Bishop's publication.⁸⁷ Here Donal Murray writes that *Prosperity with a Purpose* (1999) is best understood by acknowledging that the Church's contribution to economic and social debate takes place primarily in the sphere of morality, on the level of the fundamental values

⁸⁷ E. Cassidy (ed): *Prosperity with a Purpose* (Dublin: Veritas, 2000).

that social, political and economic activity are meant to serve (as opposed to any cogent economic analysis, *per se*).⁸⁸ He points out that the pastoral, which focuses on fundamental values in society, is addressed primarily to the consciences of individuals and to the moral sense of the community, which can be powerful agents of social transformation. According to Cassidy, the Bishop's letter promotes an economic policy, which fosters "the creation of an inclusive society, one that respects the equality and dignity of all citizens and is conscious of its responsibilities to the wider world".⁸⁹ Cassidy further points out that the Bishops' letter looks at the perceived negative effects on society of an increasingly competitive and therefore individualistic culture.⁹⁰

Of direct relevance to Fatima is the view in this publication that policy developments should have the potential to foster the creation of an inclusive society, one that respects the equality and dignity of all citizens and is conscious of its responsibilities to the wider world. A further connection to a Fatima worldview is the suggestion that "the challenge of hardcore unemployment" has a "corrosive effect on individuals, families and whole communities, sapping self-esteem and motivation".⁹¹ The document points out that despite Ireland's economic success, levels of long-term unemployment in Ireland were significantly higher than E.U. levels. Significantly, Dublin's inner city is identified as an "unemployment blackspot".⁹² It is precisely here that we find a direct point of connection with the Fatima experience.⁹³ Furthermore, I suggest that Irish culture, as depicted in the Bishops' letters, has much to learn from a counter-cultural communitarian ethical system, such as that operative in Fatima

5.8 CONCLUSION

A critical examination of the Irish Bishops' pastoral letters (1969 to 2005), adopting the hermeneutic of the Fatima value system and moral practice, indicates that the moral voice and experience of the Irish inner city is notably absent from the Bishops' deliberations. My analysis demonstrates that no explicit analysis of Irish inner city value systems and moral practice is provided in the Irish Bishops' publications. Neither do the Bishops' letters incorporate concrete

⁸⁸ Donal Murray, "The Social Concern of the Church" in Cassidy, (ed.) *Prosperity with a Purpose*: 19-36 at 21. See also A. Britton, "Prosperity in Economic Theory and in Christian Belief", in Cassidy: *Prosperity with a Purpose*: 59-77.

⁸⁹ Cassidy, *Prosperity with a Purpose*: 13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*:15.

⁹¹ Eithne Fitzgerald, "The Challenge of Hardcore Unemployment in the Jobs Boom" in E. Cassidy (ed.) *Prosperity with a Purpose*: 97-108 at 99.

⁹² Fitzgerald: 99.

⁹³ The Corcoran Report (1998) pointed out that the employment level in Fatima was extremely low, at a meagre 9.9% of the total Fatima population: 15.

examples from inner city life experience to illustrate positive moral values or to make wider moral distinctions. Moreover, with the exception of one publication, *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture* (2000), the expertise of inner city residents, and researchers and/or ethicists and theologians based in the inner city, is largely ignored.⁹⁴

The issue of theological dialogue is highlighted in my earlier analysis of Fatima morality (chapter four). It is notable that, whilst numerous contemporary theologies of justice worldwide (including *mujerista* and womanist theologies) examine the distinctive morality of marginalized communities, the Irish Bishops fail to draw on any of these sources in their analyses of morality. Such theologies and my own research highlight the fact that both cultural and socio-economic contexts impact directly upon, and significantly shape, morality. Despite this fact, the Bishops' letters fail to explicitly address questions of cultural context and social exclusion. Notably, systematic explorations of the distinctions between the moral systems of minority groups in the state and those of wider Irish society have been repeatedly demonstrated to be absent in the Bishops' publications. Added to this, there is a general failure to incorporate relevant sociological data in any analysis of morality. As a result socio-economic exclusion and its implications for morality are neither acknowledged nor systematically explored. With the exception of a few significant documents, pertaining to fundamental social rights, justice and the economy and drugs misuse, examined in this chapter, one moral worldview is presented for all sub-cultures within the dominant culture in Ireland, without qualification.

Notable also is the absence of analyses of gender in discussions of morality despite the availability of an extensive body of contemporary research writings on gender differences in moral development and moral values. Taking one example related to gender explored in my own research, namely the abuse of and violence against women, the Bishops' publication *Domestic Violence* (2000) seeks to address a central experience of many Fatima women's (and children's) lives. However, the publication itself provides a limited and generic treatment of the topic.

This chapter has also indicated that an appreciation of traditional approaches to moral theology within Roman Catholicism is necessary in order to understand the basis of arguments offered by the Irish Bishops on questions of morality. Since the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Natural Law tradition, borrowing from Greek philosophy and Roman Law, has distinguished uncritically between an 'order of nature' and an 'order of reason' approach to the treatment of morality. Matters of sexuality and medical ethics are traditionally examined under the 'order of

⁹⁴ Even here, the emphasis is on spirituality rather than on morality and values *per se*.

nature' paradigm, while matters of justice (including social justice) are examined under the 'order of reason' paradigm. As indicated in this chapter, this traditional separation of both orders indicates a fundamental dualism, which reflects itself in a general failure to integrate theologies of personal and sexual morality with those of justice. This in part explains a notable failure on the part of the Bishops to contextualise discussions of sexuality and family life within the contexts of social exclusion and social justice as is necessary in the case of Fatima (chapter three).

More positively, a select number of the Irish Bishops' letters and documents provide prophetic challenges to specific forms of injustice and poverty in Ireland which are directly relevant to Fatima. These include discussions of the right to adequate housing, the requirement of economic justice and quality of life, and the death-dealing nature of the drugs street culture in the Irish inner city. As well as this, many of the moral principles and values highlighted in the Bishops' letters also have potential relevance for Fatima, including the principles of *the sanctity and dignity of human life* and the *fundamental equality of all persons*, together with the values of *truth, justice, compassion and tolerance*, all of which are values identified and highlighted in my Fatima-based research (chapter three). However, since these values are not explored in relation to specific cultural contexts of social exclusion in Irish society, such as the inner city, they are of very limited value to my specific research context.

In light of the above analysis, I argue that, collectively, the Bishops' contribution fails overall to represent or dialogue with inner city value systems and morality. I suggest that the Bishops' publications are primarily directed towards the experience and the concerns of the dominant group in Irish society, hence their limitation from the perspective of Fatima. The question now arises: can a more comprehensive analysis of inner city morality be located elsewhere? In the following chapter I propose to extend my examination of sources of moral theology in the Irish context to a second significant source of moral theology, namely publications in selected Irish theological journals. The journals selected for the purposes of this research provide a comprehensive overview of approaches to moral values and practice as published in dominant academic and pastoral theologies in Ireland.⁹⁵ They may be seen as a representation of the dominant theological approach in Ireland.

⁹⁵ They are *The Furrow*, *Doctrine & Life*, *Milltown Studies* and *Irish Theological Quarterly*.

CHAPTER SIX

VALUES AND MORAL PRACTICE IN SELECTED IRISH THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FATIMA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Consistent with the analysis offered in the previous chapter, this chapter sets out to provide a critical appraisal, from the perspective of a Fatima morality, of a further formal source of moral theology in the Irish context. The source in question is selected Irish theological journals. The journals under investigation collectively reflect a balance between academic and pastoral theological interests. They are: *The Furrow* (F), *Doctrine & Life* (D), *Milltown Studies* (M) and *Irish Theological Quarterly* (I).¹ The period of investigation is January 1995-June 2005.

As with the critical analysis conducted in the previous chapter, these explorations are to be distinguished from a standard research literary review since hermeneutical authority is given to the Fatima moral worldview. The purpose of this analysis is to consider whether there may be a disjunction or mismatch between Fatima's cultural themes and values and the preoccupations of more formal debates. More precisely, the examination focuses on the extent to which, and manner in which, the selected Irish theological journals accommodate and critically assess the inner city moral voice and experience. Consistent with the methodological approach in the previous chapter, both a frequency analysis and an in-depth content analysis of these Fatima-related themes are provided. The frequency analysis, based upon mean representations of Fatima-related themes (as in the previous chapter) provides the overall context for the chapter's discussions. This frequency analysis is necessary in order to establish as closely as possible the actual level of inner city representation. Following on this, the content analysis seeks to address commonalities and differences with respect to my own research findings, to identify and explore omissions and to examine the methodologies employed. Throughout this investigation the emergent cultural themes identified and examined in my research (chapter three) provides the baseline for a critical analysis of formal sources of moral theology.

¹ A research precedent is already set in taking these four Irish journals as representative, by Bernadette Flanagan, in "Women in Theology". Public address at 'A Meeting of Representatives of Theological Institutions, Ireland', Dublin, 19/02/2004.

With these considerations in mind, the primary objectives of this critical analysis are:

1. To establish whether explicit explorations of Irish inner city morality are in evidence and/or whether illustrative examples of inner city ethics are included within wider ethical discussions;
2. To positively highlight and critically examine those contributions that are explicitly inclusive of inner city moral experience and insight (if any), and to identify more general elements of an inclusive moral theology;
3. To establish whether a critical assessment of inner city communitarian ethics, from the perspective of Christian social ethics, is incorporated into discussions, and
4. To identify gaps and omissions in relation to representations of inner city values and moral practice.

With respect to the methodology employed, this investigation also examines to what extent the contributors engage with the tools of the social sciences and incorporate inductive approaches, as well as deductive approaches, in order to give voice to the inner city community. Evidence is also sought of discussions of morality which address the moral significance of culture, social exclusion and poverty, since these aspects have been demonstrated to be significant in my analysis of inner city ethics (chapter three). Finally, evidence of an interdisciplinary approach, such as that advocated in my own research methodology, is sought.

Let us begin, then, with a frequency analysis of Fatima-related themes.

6.2 FATIMA-RELATED THEMES: A FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

A preliminary critical examination of the contents of these journals, over a ten-year period (June 1995- June 2005), identified six 'Fatima-related' themes which provide the organizing principle for a frequency analysis. These include: 1) *women and men: roles and identity* (W), 2) *marriage, family and responsible parenthood* (M), 3) *health care and social exclusion* (H), 4) *the drugs culture: prevention and treatment* (D), 5) *abuse of women and children* (A), 6) *poverty: a failure of the economic, political and social system* (P).²

As indicated in chapter two, in order to provide for frequency comparisons, both the *minimum* and the *maximum* numbers of articles representing Fatima-related themes identified in the

² It must be acknowledged that theological explorations of such issues as *the common good, pluralism, spiritualities of justice, alienation and inclusion and imprisonment*, which are broadly related to my research, are also in evidence in the selected journals, but these are not included in my analysis since they provide no direct links to the context of inner city socio-economic exclusion.

selected journals were calculated. Numerically, the minimum representation was calculated as *one* contribution and the maximum representation was calculated as *forty*, which was the case of contributions dealing with *child sexual abuse*. Following on this the simple mean (20.5 articles or 21%) was established as a standard of comparison.

Out of the total of 1609 articles examined in the selected journals *none* dealt with values and moral practice in Fatima. Neither did *any* explore values and moral practice in the inner city (nor indeed, the values and moral practice among minority groups in the state). 97 articles (6%) were located, however, that represented the broader Fatima-related themes identified in the preliminary analysis (Fig. 2).

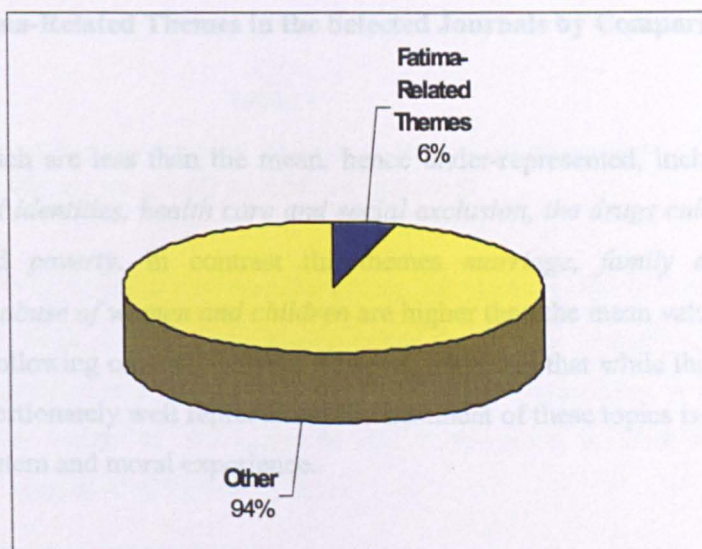


Fig.2 Frequency (%) of Fatima-Related Themes in the Selected Journals

Of these 97 articles, 17 (17.5%), dealt with women and men: their roles and identities (W), 30 (31%) dealt with marriage, family and responsible parenthood (M), 5 (5.1%) dealt with health care and social exclusion (H), 2 (2.1%) dealt with the drugs culture: prevention and treatment (D), 40 (41.2%) dealt with the abuse of women and children (A), and 3 (3.1%) with poverty (P). (See Fig. 3)

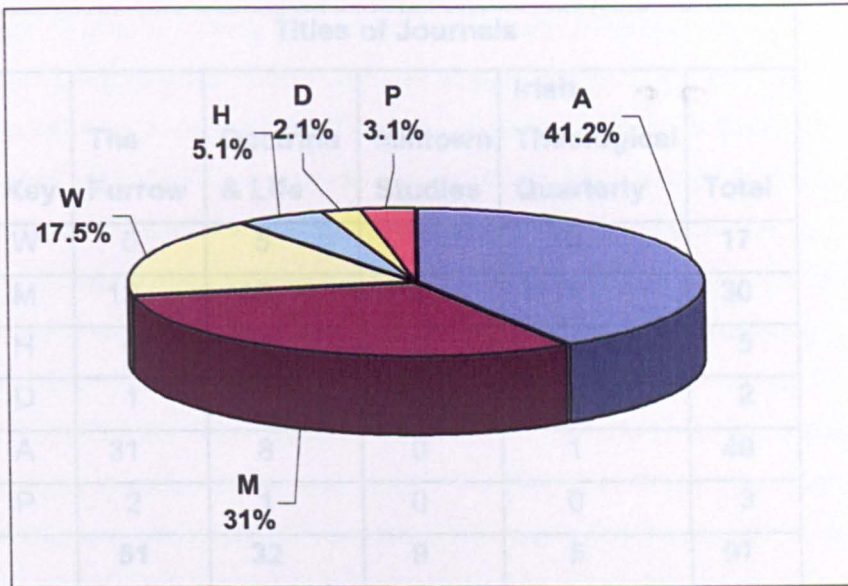


Fig. 3 Fatima-Related Themes in the Selected Journals by Comparison (%)

Representations which are less than the mean, hence under-represented, include *women and men: their roles and identities*, *health care and social exclusion*, *the drugs culture: prevention and treatment*, and *poverty*. In contrast the themes *marriage, family and responsible parenthood* and *the abuse of women and children* are higher than the mean value (at 30 and 40, respectively). The following content analysis, however, indicates that while these latter themes are apparently proportionately well represented, the treatment of these topics is not reflective of the Fatima value system and moral experience.

The distribution of the Fatima-related themes across the four journals was also analysed.³ Of the 95 articles which dealt directly with Fatima-related themes, 34 (35.8%) were identified in *The Furrow*, 35 (36.8%) in *Doctrine and Life*, 10 (10.5%) in *Irish Theological Quarterly* and 16 (16.8%) in *Milltown Studies*. (See Table 1)

³ What must be kept in mind in interpreting this data, however, is the fact that the four journals are not directly comparable with respect to the number of issues per annum, nor with respect to the average number of articles per issue. *The Furrow* has eleven issues per annum and averages 6 articles per issue. *Doctrine and Life* has eight issues per annum and averages 6 articles per issue. The *Irish Theological Quarterly* has four issues per annum and averages 5 articles per issue and *Milltown Studies* has two issues per annum and averages 8 articles per issue. There are a few exceptions to this general pattern. For example, in the case of the *Irish Theological Quarterly* only three issues were released in 1995 (issues 3 and 4 were combined) and in the period 1996/1997 a total of three issues were published in all (issues 2 and 3 were combined).

Titles of Journals						
Fatima-related Themes	Key	The Furrow	Doctrine & Life	Milltown Studies	Irish Theological Quarterly	Total
	W	5	5	7	0	17
	M	12	13	2	3	30
	H	0	4	0	1	5
	D	1	1	0	0	2
	A	31	8	0	1	40
	P	2	1	0	0	3
	Total	51	32	9	5	97

Table 8

**Frequency of Fatima-Related Themes in the Selected Journals
(based on actual numbers of articles)**

From the perspective of *frequency of representation*, the above analysis clearly confirms the central thesis of my work, namely that these selected theological journals fail to adequately represent the value systems and moral practice of inner city communities. A *content analysis*, however, adds further weight to this argument and, furthermore, it raises further important questions from the perspective of Fatima, such as:

- To what extent is the authorship representative of socio-excluded communities?
- What are the underlying assumptions in the representative articles?
- Whose moral voice and experience is prioritized?
- What is omitted?
- What arguments are proposed and how are the arguments presented?
- Who benefits from the interpretations provided?

With these questions (among others) in mind, I begin applying a Fatima moral hermeneutic to the issue of gender roles and identity.

6.3 WOMEN AND MEN: ROLES AND IDENTITY

The identities and roles of women and men proved a central aspect of my earlier analysis of Fatima value systems and morality (chapters three and four). In examining the selected journals

it is found that 17 articles in total address issues of gender roles and identity directly. Gender-specific issues examined in the journals include: 1) gender roles in the world and in the Church, and 2) the question of men and sexual politics. These contributions have only very limited points of contact with the Fatima context. Two of the articles under examination specifically address the issue of women's voicelessness, which was singled out in my research as significant in Fatima women's experience.⁴ However, since these particular articles do not consider the relationship between voicelessness and socio-economic exclusion (including the Fatima experience of classism) they are demonstrated to be inadequate from a Fatima perspective. Significantly other gender-related issues identified in my research, such as women's strength, woman-bonding and women's suffering, in the context of socio-economic marginalization, are not explicitly addressed in any of the selected journals.⁵ While acknowledging a repeated failure to represent the Fatima moral worldview, a close analysis of the treatment of gender roles, including male sexual politics, in these journal articles is helpful in order to accurately identify commonalities, differences and omissions. This analysis is a necessary one since it forms the basis of a future, more inclusive, moral theology in the Irish context.

6.3.1 Gender Roles in the World and in the Church

The most explicit treatment of gender roles in the selected journals is found in two independent review articles of the Vatican's *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (2004). These review articles are by Benedict Hegarty, and Gerry O' Hanlon, respectively. A further article on sex and gender, with respect to Catholic teaching, is provided by Lisa Sowle Cahill.⁶ In all cases it is notable how far removed the theological language and framework is from that of Fatima

⁴ See Angela Fleming, "Recovering Women's Voices in Christian History" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 54, No. 8, Oct 2004: 22-29. A very brief treatment of the voice of women in the church is also provided by John Dale, "Martha or Mary- a story for men and women?" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 49, No.11, Nov. 1998: 628-634.

⁵ The general theme of *suffering* was also dealt with in the selected journals but *not* in the context of gender and/or socio-economic exclusion. See, Bill Cosgrave, "Suffering: The Mystery Explained" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 48, No. 9, Sept. 1997: 467-472, also Brendan Leahy, "Pope John Paul II: Teaching and Suffering" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 55, No.5, May-June 2005: 9-17.

⁶ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (Rome, 2004). With respect to journal articles, see Benedict Hegarty, O.P. "The Collaboration of Men and Women-according to the Vatican and to the Bible" in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 54, No. 8, Oct. 2004: 38-48; Gerry O' Hanlon, "A Theological Reflection on 'Jesus and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society'", *Milltown Studies*, 40, 1997: 147-157; also Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Sex and Gender: Catholic Teaching and the Signs of our Times", *Milltown Studies*, 34, 1994:31-52.

(chapter three). It is also notable, that despite the fact that these are *Irish* theological journals, no reference to the specifically Irish context of ‘gender’ is included, including gender and the Irish inner city. However, there are certain more general points of convergence with the Fatima experience, which are worth examining. Hegarty, for example, while not addressing the significant relationship between sexism and classism, provides numerous insights, which have the potential to illuminate, and indeed challenge, the Fatima experience of gendered relations. He makes the point that a romantic essentialism characterizes the Vatican’s approach to gender roles; men and women are presented as having fixed modes of being which endure and there are contrasting complementary male and female types, which is a problematic anthropology.⁷ He writes that the appeal of the document to those who “believe that a woman’s role is as a docile, obedient homemaker, and child-bearer, giving due attention to her husband’s conjugal rights” is highlighted.⁸ The limitations of the document with respect to feminist theology and contemporary reflections on the role of men in the family (one of the more pressing issues in a Fatima-based gender analysis) are similarly highlighted, but this aspect is highly under-developed, hence, of limited value for my research. More positively, however, in this review article, an anthropology that potentially defines oppressive roles for women and men is strongly challenged. Passivity, Hegarty suggests, “is not an icon for modern womanhood”.⁹ The article regrets that the “ecclesiology of fellowship” at the heart of a contemporary Trinitarian theology, which has obvious implications for the relationship between men and women, is not elaborated upon.¹⁰ An ecclesiology of Trinitarian fellowship, the author suggests, would imply mutuality in gender relations, a striking and liberating contrast to the stereotypical roles occupied by Fatima women and men, described earlier (chapter three).

This liberative vision of an inclusive Trinitarian theology is also explored by O’ Hanlon. Borrowing from Elizabeth Johnson, he cautions against ascribing sexuality in any univocal sense to the persons of the Trinity.¹¹ Similarly he cautions against stereotypical designations of what is typically masculine and feminine being ascribed to the persons of the Trinity, such as the Son being receptive. He suggests that one ought to look to the “self-emptying, kenotic quality associated with love and personified in the solidarity of Jesus Christ with us women and men in his incarnation”.¹² He writes

⁷ Hegarty, “The Collaboration of Men and Women”: 38

⁸ *Ibid.*: 38

⁹ *Ibid.*: 42

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 45.

¹¹ O’ Hanlon: 151. See also Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

¹² O’ Hanlon, “A Theological Reflection...”: 150.

Men and women are equal *and* different (not equal *but* different, which so often yields to an anthropology of subordination), so that difference is a principle of fullness and richness, not of exclusion; in the present historically-skewed state of their relationship it behoves all Christians to act in solidarity with women in order to redress the inequalities which have become endemic.¹³

Both of these representative articles demonstrate a genuine concern with regard to the inclusion of women, in the context of society and the Church. They also exhibit an engagement, however limited, with the dominant (white, North American) feminist emphasis on the inclusion of women in Church and society in general. But, to what extent might these articles relate to the Irish experience, or, more specifically, to the experience of Fatima? It can be argued that these contributions, which tease out the potential of a more inclusive Trinitarian theology, speak directly to the general experience of alienation from the church experienced by women of faith, everywhere. They highlight such universal values as *inclusion, equality and difference, solidarity with oppressed women, pro-active female roles, etc.*, which are identified in my own research as critical values with respect to gender and the inner city. However, both contributions fail to contextualize these values. Lacking, for example, is any reference to specific socio-economic contexts of women. Lacking also is any discussion of the insights of feminist theologies which specifically provide necessary analyses of the relationship between sexism and classism. Here women are presented as a homogenous, generic group and specificities, which are morally significant, are ignored.

This same critique can be levelled at the contribution of Lisa Sowle Cahill. She provides a concise, critical analysis of Catholic sexual teaching but, while she opens with a caution to incorporate an analysis of culture into sexual teaching, she fails, for the most part, to contextualize her own arguments. More positively, Cahill does make certain salient points, with which I am in agreement. She points out, for example, that in Roman Catholic discussions on morality, the issue of contraception has become a distraction from more fundamental discussions of sexual morality and gender justice.¹⁴ Importantly, in addressing the issue of pluralism in the Church, Cahill addresses the question of *cultural differences* which is also central to a Fatima understanding of sexuality. She regards pluralism as a challenge to seek more earnestly for an understanding of sexual meaning, which can serve as a touchstone for intercultural dialogue. She states that the best way forward is a phenomenological, inductive approach (in the tradition of Aquinas) which seeks to generalize, but not with over-confidence, nor the language of absolutes. So, while Cahill fails to address issues of sexism and classism

¹³ Ibid.: 151.

¹⁴ Cahill, "Sex and Gender": 32.

and their relationship with culture *per se*, she does open out a possibility of creative dialogue between Church teaching and minority cultures, such as Fatima, on the question of sexuality.

More specifically, in relation to women and the church, my own research revealed the experience of Fatima women in relation to the Church to be one of alienation and, on occasion, shame (chapter three). The issue of inclusion is therefore very pertinent. Women's inclusion in the Church receives some limited attention in the selected journals, most particularly *Doctrine and Life*. Both mainstream and (white) feminist concerns and points of debate are represented, with reference to such issues as: 1) sexism in the church, 2) women and ministry, including ordination, 3) women and liturgy, 4) patriarchy and power as alienating factors, and 5) structural injustices in the Church. From the perspective of Fatima, however, questions relating to women's ordination, ministry and liturgy, in particular, did not emerge as points of interest, relevance or concern, since they are significantly alien to the lived experience of Fatima residents (which raises significant questions about access and social status). Furthermore, the dominant feminist critique of the patriarchal nature of the church was not reflected as an area of relevance in my research. Indeed a specifically feminist awareness and/or perspective did not reveal itself in *any* of the research interviews conducted in Fatima. Moreover, while the issue of sexism in the Church is examined in the selected journals, it is not examined anywhere in the selected journals in relation to classism, which is a significant limitation from the perspective of Fatima.

A further question arises as to whether the same lack of representation occurs in the case of socio-economically excluded men. My own research highlighted the perceived absence of males in the Fatima estate (chapter three). Turning to my examination of the selected journals, the dominance of the female parental role, the general absence of the male parental role and the marginalization of the Fatima male, which are defining features of the inner-city experience, did *not* receive explicit attention in the selected journals. However the broader issue of men and sexual politics was addressed, with some relevance for this research.

6.3.2 Men and Sexual Politics

Despite the prevalence of debate on gender and parenting roles in the Irish media in recent years, fathering *per se* is only exclusively examined in one journal article, namely, "Fathering - A Christian Perspective" by Michael G. Lawlor.¹⁵ From a Fatima perspective, however, while Lawlor addresses the issue of the *absent father* he does so in the strict contexts of marriage and

¹⁵ Michael G. Lawlor, "Fathering - A Christian Perspective" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 52, No. 10, Oct. 2001: 523-531.

American society where the dominant family type is described as “the dual earner model”, hence its failure to reflect the Fatima experience of the absent father.¹⁶ A more relevant approach, however, particularly in that it dialogues directly with feminist insight, is adopted by Harry Ferguson and Hugh Arthurs in their article “Men and Sexual Politics”.¹⁷ While the Irish and Fatima contexts are not examined, we find in Ferguson’s and Arthurs’ work an intense engagement with feminist research regarding gender and clear possibilities of creative dialogue regarding Fatima. With respect to understanding the notable absence of the male in Fatima-based research, the authors provide helpful insights on the ‘caring role’. They challenge “the essentialist view that casts women in the role of being the sole providers of care and leaves men absolved of the responsibility to care for women and for each other”.¹⁸ This analysis resonates closely with the Fatima experience. Women in the estate who had taken responsibility for their own development often battled with an internal conflict; to advance and leave their partners behind or to forego personal advancement in order to ‘keep the peace’?¹⁹

Ferguson and Arthurs also comment on the dilemma of male involvement in their own development.²⁰ This resonates closely with the Fatima experience at the time of my research; at the level of community development numerous attempts were made to recruit males in the estate onto community projects and project management teams. However, attempts to advance the development of men proved largely ineffective. As cited earlier, in 2000, of a group of thirty employees of the Fatima community employment (CE) scheme, only one was male (chapter three). It was the exception when males took responsibility for their own development and that was sometimes done in a covert way (such as attending computer classes in the evenings, when the estate was quiet and participants would be less likely to be noticed). Ferguson and Arthurs suggest that part of the problem is silence and secrecy among men, which are crucial aspects of how men’s power and dominance are maintained; “self-exclusion has suited men”.²¹ This may well throw some light on the politics of the hidden male in Fatima. The article also provides some interesting insights into males and child-care which are of relevance to the Fatima context. It is suggested that narratives of status and power constantly compete with (and usually win out over) narratives of the direct delivery of love and care. The authors indicate that research confirms that men have largely failed to share child-care responsibilities with women in the home. They add that men “are excluded from domestic care predominantly

¹⁶ Lawlor: 523.

¹⁷ Harry Ferguson and Hugh Arthurs, “Men and Sexual Politics” in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Jan. 196: 4-11.

¹⁸ Ferguson and Arthurs: 5

¹⁹ Interview with Anita, date 20/05/2001.

²⁰ Ferguson and Arthurs: 5

²¹ *Ibid.*: 4-5

because the value men place on these activities and relationships is less than that which they place on other aspects of life.”²² Reflecting key aspects of the Fatima experience, the authors add that, where through unemployment men are excluded from the meaning and status that work brings, they still tend to aspire to those values finding it hard to make the transition into a domestic role, such as caring for children and giving real value to those activities in terms of their masculine identity. The authors pose the question as to whether men are prepared to exchange some of the meaning and status they gain outside the home for the day-to-day responsibilities within it, and to change the low social value that is given within the patriarchal system to children and child care and the domestic domain.²³ This analysis concurs with similar observations made by Deignan, who holds that, while men living in the Fatima estate traditionally did not engage much with domestic or childcare duties, and from an economic perspective were rarely the sole breadwinners in the home, they were nevertheless considered, especially in the earlier years in Fatima to be the heads of their households; hence the complexity of the male role and male inclusion.²⁴

The authors also specifically address the issue of male violence against women, which, as demonstrated earlier, is a pressing issue in Fatima (chapter three). They write that it is complicity amongst men in tolerating routines of abuse of power by other men which underpins the survival of patriarchy. Moving beyond duplicity and silence demands that men take a proactive approach to being included and tackling the issues alongside women. But men’s experience of social power is often contradictory. Many men do not feel that powerful. Increasing numbers of unemployed men struggle to find dignity and status. The price for men is a high one; increased depression and suicide rates.²⁵ This analysis provided by Ferguson and Arthurs, while not claiming to represent a Fatima experience, directly points to very heart of the experience of men in Fatima. Its primary weakness, however, from the perspective of Fatima, is that the analysis is confined to the single issue of *sexism* without reference to the impact of poverty and socio-economic exclusion. The intimate relationship between sexism and classism, central to my research findings, is not examined.

An examination of gender roles in Fatima is intimately linked with an analysis of central relationships within the estate. In the next section we will address the issues of intimate personal relationships, family relationships and parenting, which, in the journal articles, as a rule, are situated within the discussion on sexuality and marriage.

²² Ibid.: 7

²³ Ibid.: 8-9

²⁴ Aisling Deignan, “Gender and Development: A Case Study”, submitted for the purposes of M.A. in Women’s Studies, National University of Ireland, Dublin. (Unpublished Paper) 2000:1.

²⁵ Ibid.: 11.

6.4 MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

My earlier analysis of Fatima's value system and moral practice provided strong evidence to suggest that *the primary value in the life of the community is the care and protection of the children*. In chapters three and four this primary value was explored in the context of parenting within Fatima-specific family units. We saw that the Fatima family unit is headed predominantly by a lone mother, with or without a co-habiting partner, who bears the greater part of parenting responsibility; indeed, most often, the full responsibility. My research also indicated that the extended family, or kin, plays a crucial role in the rearing of children within the community. It was generally observed that, in Fatima, *mothering* could, in many cases, be substituted for *parenting* and that many mothers are lone mothers without partner support. It was particularly striking that concerns around sexual morality (more specifically in relation to contraception, abortion, marriage and divorce) were rarely raised in the research interviews when *responsible parenthood* was under discussion; the Fatima framework of responsible parenthood concerned itself more with child protection issues in the context of poverty and the drugs culture. Finally, *marriage and divorce* were largely seen by the community to be concerns of the middle and upper classes, given the cultural rarity of marriage within the community.

In sharp contrast, the more limited context of sexual and procreative morality provides a central focal point for discussions on responsible parenthood in the selected journals. Thirty articles address the issues of marriage, family and responsible parenthood (Table 1). More specifically, areas pertaining to marriage and the family which receive particular attention in journal articles, include: contraception and abortion, divorce, marital breakdown and the elaboration of a consistent Catholic sexual ethics (which situates marriage as the appropriate context for sexual relationships).²⁶ Proportionately, however, a much larger number of journal articles address a

²⁶ The journal articles pertaining to abortion and divorce were mostly responses to the experience of divorce and abortion referenda in the State during this period. On the elaboration of a consistent Catholic sexual ethics see, as a representative article, Russell B. Connors Jr. "Towards Consistent Catholic Ethics: a Different Dialogue Partner for Sexual Morality", *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 61, Nos. 3/4, 1995:219-234. See also Maurice Dooley, "Abortion: Referendum or Legislation?" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 49, No.2, Feb. 1998: 87-90. See also John S. Grabowski, "Public Moral Discourse on Abortion: The Contribution of Theology" in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 64/4: 361-378 and Vincent Twomey, "Language, Imagination, and the Status of the Human Embryo" in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 66/4, 2001: 365-383. Anticipating the national Divorce Referendum (1995) pre-divorce editorials in *Doctrine & Life* specifically discuss the question of divorce. See Bernard Tracy OP (Ed.), "Preaching about the Divorce Referendum" in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 45, No. 8, Oct. 1995: 522-523 also "The Sovereign People" in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 45, No. 9, Nov. 1995: 586-587

variety of questions related to marriage. (This may be a theological response to heated public and media debates on divorce in the State during the early nineties, given the context of the divorce referendum). It is notable that *none* of the articles examined address the experience of exclusion from the institution of marriage on economic and cultural grounds (chapter five).

While marriage is not a primary locus for elaborating a Fatima morality, the question of *family relationships*, is central. Inter-generational familial support networks and familial loyalties play significant roles in the overall cohesion of the community and the determination of its value system and moral practice, as testified to in many of the interviews conducted with residents.²⁷ With respect to the selected journals, *one* article, by Harri Pritchard Jones, explicitly addresses distinctions between the concept of the ‘nuclear family’, experienced by the mainstream or dominant group in Western societies, and the *kinship* models of family.²⁸ The article offers some limited points of intersection with the Fatima experience, even though it is not representative of the Irish context *per se* (especially where it examines parenting roles). While the article is fundamentally an apologetic for the institution of marriage, where marriage is perceived as the most stable and meaningful context for raising a family, it specifies child-rearing concerns which specifically arose in my Fatima based research, examples of which are: 1) the rarity of the two-parent family and, 2) the reality of multiple biological fathers within the same family unit, reflected in differing surnames among siblings. One Fatima-based worker commented upon a moral challenge in her working role: “I have experienced children using a different surname for themselves within a few months... I could see the identity problems this will entail later.”²⁹ Acknowledging the demise of the nuclear family, the article concludes with the comment that the future viability of family may be found in a return “to the extended family and a supportive society”.³⁰ Fatima, therefore may have something significant to offer mainstream society today; the values of the extended kinship and inter-familial/intra-community relationships, highlighted in the article, are values which have been demonstrated to be central to the Fatima value system.

Only one article, by Christopher Jones, provides a comprehensive social analysis of family in the Irish context in the mid-nineties.³¹ The article is a featured review of the publication of

²⁷ Interviews with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001, Marie, 23/05/2001, Sheila, 15/03/2001, Mrs Kelly, 06/03/2001, Donna, 12/11/2001, Fluffy, 27 /04/2001, Liselle, 28/08/2001, and Niamh, 04/0/2001,

²⁸ Pritchard Jones 146-158.

²⁹ RQF, 10b, respondent Q.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 158

³¹ Christopher Jones, “The Changing Family” in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Jan. 1996: 28-30.

Irish Family Studies (1995).³² The author notes that, in the context of rapid changes in the Irish family, the definition of family proves difficult.³³ The article pinpoints the lack of a critical, theoretical analysis of the family. Significantly, from the perspective of Fatima, the effects of poverty and unemployment on the family are highlighted, and calls for the church to be involved, at local level, in providing support services, especially in light of official teaching on the centrality of the family, are pertinent. The author highlights aspects of the research pertaining to alcohol-related problems in the family context, the participation of women in the workforce, lack of adequate child-care provision, the need to develop flexible working hours and the vulnerability of lone mothers, all of which specifically characterise the Fatima experience. He also writes that low income, inadequate housing, poor nutrition and the stress of child rearing in such circumstances make women vulnerable to ill health, which Fatima-based research testifies too strongly. While Traveller women are singled out for mention, as well as the issue of domestic violence, no mention is made of inner-city or other socio-excluded communities in Ireland. In line with my own research, the failure of fathers to share labour and duties of care in the house and the general lack of father-participation is highlighted. Fathers, according to the research, are conflicted between the traditional view of the male roles and society's expectations today. Importantly, with respect to Fatima-based findings, Jones comments that he would like to see more research on the relationship between family and neighbourhood.³⁴ Since my own research indicated the intimate relationship between the life of the extended family and the community, such a proposal would directly benefit the Fatima community.

As indicated earlier, responsible parenting within the Fatima context, entails, among other things, *a care for the health of the children*. My research clearly demonstrated the direct relationship between health-care problems and social exclusion (chapter three). The question therefore arises as to whether this correlation is reflected in journal representations. This question is the focus of the following discussion.

³² Imelda Colgan McCarthy (ed.) *Irish Family Studies: Selected Papers*, (Dublin: Family Studies Centre, University College, Dublin, 1995).

³³ Jones: 28.

³⁴ An analysis of the family is also provided by *The Furrow*, but since it fails to reflect the experience and viewpoint of socio-economically marginalized communities in Ireland it provides no relevant insights for my research. See editorial "Marriage and the Family" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 55, No. 6, June 2004: 323-335.

6.5 HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The issues of health and access to health care were significant concerns in Fatima-based research (chapter three). My research highlighted the ill health of the children, the high incidence of depression and mental illness among adult women (including the threat of suicide), drugs related illnesses, the difficulty of access to health services, and, significantly, the direct relationship between health problems and the Fatima environment, social exclusion and poverty (chapter three).³⁵ While a total of *ten* contributions in the selected theological journals deal with the theological (including ethical) dimensions of illness and health care, *only five* are seen to make minimal links between health and socio-economic exclusion (Table1).³⁶ The question of suicide is also addressed, but without reference to relevant socio-economic factors.³⁷ More directly related to the context of Fatima, are those articles which examine HIV/AIDS.³⁸ However, what is notably lacking in the analyses provided in these articles, overall, is any explicit and critical examination of the links between ill health (including HIV/AIDS) and socio-economic marginalization. Notably, *none* of these articles address the *primary* health concerns in Fatima, namely the health of the children, with reference to environmental conditions and poverty. Since points of direct contact in these articles with the Fatima experience, as evidenced in my research, are: 1) poverty and health care access, and 2) living with HIV/AIDS, my analysis therefore focuses on the treatment of these two health issues in the selected journals.

³⁵ Interviews with Mrs Kelly, 03/03/2001; Anita, 30/05/2001; Debbie, 26/04/2001; Fluffy, 27/04/2001; Marie, 23/05/2001; Elaine, 20/09/2001; Liselle, 28/08/2001; Sheila, 15/03/2001 and Sarah, 03/03/2001.

³⁶ Important theories of medical-ethics are however explored in these articles. They do not always address a specifically Irish context. However, since they address the issues of fair distribution of resources and access, they could have significant potential if applied directly to the context of socio-economic exclusion in Ireland. See David Smith, "The Ethos of Roman Catholic Health Care" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 49, No. 1, Jan. 1999: 3-16; Michael D. Place, "Catholic Health Care Ministry in the Marketplace: a Time of Challenge" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Feb. 1999: 78-86; Jean deBlois, C.S.J. "Theological and Ethical Challenges in Catholic Health-Care Ministry" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 49, Apr 1999: 240-245; Patricia Talone R.S.M. "Shaping the Future of Catholic Health Care" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 49, No. 6, July/Aug. 1999: 362-371.

³⁷ Sean O'Conaill, "The Spiritual Dimension of Mental Illness" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 51, No. 9, Nov. 2001: 567-571.

³⁸ J.D. Fuller and J.F. Keenan, "Condoms, Catholics and HIV/AIDS Prevention" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 52, No. 9, Sept. 2001: 459-467; Enda McDonagh, "The Catholic Church and HIV-AIDS" in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 54, No. 8, Oct. 2004: 2-6; Ann Smith, "HIV Prevention-perspective of a faith-based agency" in *The Furrow*, Vo. 55, No. 11, Nov. 2004: 616- 630; Julie Clague, "HIV/AIDS: The State of the Question" Featured Review, in *The Furrow*, Vo. 54, No. 11, Nov. 2003: 630-633.

6.5.1 Health Care Access

The question of the provision of and distribution of adequate resources in the area of health is highly relevant to Fatima (chapter three). The issue of resource allocation is explicitly addressed by David Smith and Pádraig Corkery, though not, in the case of Smith, with specific reference to the Irish context.³⁹ Smith, however, does pose questions which are of broader significance to socio-excluded communities, among them: ‘what criteria are to be used to ensure that the limited funding in the field of health-care is justly distributed?’⁴⁰ Smith addresses the two arguments which defend the right to health-care; 1) an “argument from collective social protection”, and 2) “an argument from fair opportunity”, both of which may be clearly applied to the context of Fatima. In the first case society is seen to be obliged to treat the health of its citizens since government have the obligation to *protect citizens against threats*. This has significance for Fatima since the threat of ill health has been demonstrated in Fatima-based research to be significantly high, given its overall negative environmental conditions and the poverty experienced by the majority of residents (chapter three). In the second case the justice of social institutions is gauged by their tendency to *counter lack of opportunity* caused by unpredictable bad luck or misfortune over which the person has no meaningful control. Health-care ideally provides fair opportunity in such cases. In Fatima, where people by virtue of birth find themselves in the position of having little or no control over their location with respect to health resources, this fundamental right re-establishes justice.⁴¹ Smith further points out that in “many respects, the literature on justice and health policy recognises that there is substantial inequality in life expectancy and health-related quality of life between the rich and poor nations of the world, as well as between the rich and poor within nations.”⁴² He challenges the present correlation between market-driven health-care access and wealth, where those who can afford the more expensive treatments access them, making the point, corroborated by my own research, that those in poverty, for systemic reasons, often acutely need access to health-care more than the wealthy (chapter three).

³⁹ David Smith, “Health and Health-care Funding” in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 52, No. 9, Nov. 2002: 525-531; Pádraig Corkery, “Ethics for Health Care” in *The Furrow*, Vol. 46, No. 7/8, July/Aug. 1995: 407-415. M.J. Iozzio also addresses this question in his article “Justice is a Virtue both in and out of Healthcare” in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 1998: 151-166. He provides an account of philosophical approaches to the question of rights and resource allocation, including utilitarian approaches, contract theories, principle-based approaches and a feminist ethics of care.

⁴⁰ David Smith, “Health and Health-care Funding” in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 52, No. 9, Nov. 2002: 525-531.

⁴¹ As well as health provisions, social housing and social welfare provisions are also in this category of rights.

⁴² Smith:526

The ethics of health-care is also examined by Pádraig Corkery and here more specific connections are made to the Irish context.⁴³ Like Smith he addresses the theoretical issue of rights in relation to health care; such as 'patient rights' which have now become a part of public consciousness and, from a theological perspective, he highlights Gospel values which ought to be at the heart of any Christian vision of health care, including, *compassion, care of the poor and the marginalized, respect for the equal dignity of persons and the values of justice and fair play*, all of which mirror Fatima values.⁴⁴

Applying a Fatima hermeneutic, the above articles are important since they 1) scrutinize ethical theories which have serious implications for health-care policy and practice, and 2) echo much of the Fatima experience of exclusion from access to adequate health care, by virtue of socio-economic standing. They are, however, of limited value to my research in their overall failure to contextualize their theory. In Fatima, for example, the reality of ethical conflict and health-care is most highly evident in the case of drug misuse, recovery, and HIV/AIDS, which are defining features of Fatima life given its dominant drugs culture. None of these issues are examined by Smith and Corkery. The following sections, however, examine certain moral issues with regard to health which are more directly relevant to Fatima, namely, morality related to HIV/AIDS.

6.5.2 Morality and HIV/AIDS

The challenge posed by the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the life of Fatima is enormous. As a participant observer, it was striking to note that many local families have lost members to AIDS and many more were living with HIV within the family. This reality was creatively addressed by the local Rialto Drugs Treatment Centre (RCDT).⁴⁵ With regards to HIV/AIDS questions of morality arose in my research in relation to such issues as *tolerance and respect for persons infected* (even if they are involved with drug use) as well as a *communal responsibility* for care of drug users and the provision of treatment services. *Compassion* for persons and families who

⁴³ Pádraig Corkery, "Ethics for Health Care" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 46, No.s 7/8, July/Aug 1995: 407-415.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ During my time in Fatima I was a regular participant in the annual Rialto Community Drugs Team reconciliation and healing ritual service, where locals gathered in the Rialto community centre (St. Andrew's Centre) to remember and pray for those who had died that year due to AIDS and drugs-related illnesses. The service was highly personal and creative, incorporating mime, dance, songs of significance to the families involved, symbols and spontaneous prayer. Typically a quilt was incorporated into the ritual which displayed the names and symbols of those who had died. It is significant that locals who felt distinctly uncomfortable in the local Catholic Church turned up in great numbers to this community-based religious service.

are afflicted, as well as *non-judgemental attitudes* towards them, are notable characteristics of the community (chapter three).

Significantly, the defining experience of HIV/AIDS in Irish inner-city communities, over recent decades, receives *no* explicit attention in the theological journals selected. In fact, of the journals examined, only *The Furrow* addresses ethical aspects of HIV/AIDS explicitly.⁴⁶ However, the emphasis is predominantly on the moral use of condoms in prevention HIV/AIDS strategies by Catholics and Catholic development organizations.⁴⁷ This contrasts sharply with my research, where I found *no* evidence to suggest that members of the Fatima community regard the use of condoms, in the case of AIDS prevention, as a moral dilemma. Global and developmental perspectives are also found in selected journal articles, which, although having no direct relevance to the context of the inner-city in a developed country, offer insights of potential significance.

Irish moral theologian, Enda McDonagh, is one such contributor. In his article, “The Catholic Church and HIV-AIDS”, he addresses the global responsibility for the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Challenging an emphasis in Catholic theological literature on the morality of the use of condoms, he writes that “the grubby details of HIV and AIDS, such as the use of condoms or mandatory testing before marriage, may, by receiving disproportionate attention, obscure the larger picture and more important tasks”.⁴⁸ McDonagh brings to the fore factors such as: *compassion and caring, a new consciousness of the body, education, solidarity of the human community, rights and responsibilities, the dignity of each person within the community,* and, most significantly, *the relationship between HIV/AIDS, poverty and injustice.* Here we find direct points of contact with the Fatima experience, hence an opportunity for constructive dialogue.

In the same vein, contributions on HIV/AIDS, by Ann Smith and Julie Clague respectively, while they specifically address the context of world development, contain direct points of connection with the Fatima experience. I will take Smith’s contribution to illustrate the point. Smith provides a comprehensive treatment of the topic of HIV prevention, which is highly sensitive to the complexity and great diversity of factors affecting people’s vulnerability to

⁴⁶ This involves a total of five articles, including one feature review.

⁴⁷ See J.D. Fuller and J.F. Keenan, “Condoms, Catholics and HIV/AIDS Prevention”; D. Logie, *The Furrow*, News and Views, Vol. 52, No. 11, Nov. 2001: 626-627; Myles Rearden, CM, *The Furrow*, News and Views, Vol. 52, No. 10, Oct. 2001, p. 558-559; Eamonn Murphy, *The Furrow*, News and Views, Vol. 52, No. 10, Oct 2001: 559-561.

⁴⁸ McDonagh, “The Catholic Church and HIV-AIDS”: 2-6.

HIV, including one's geographic, cultural and socio-economic setting.⁴⁹ Smith affirms cultural responses which are locally based and community driven. This is precisely the nature of the Fatima response, where many local women avail themselves of community and college based education programmes in regard to drugs and HIV/AIDS, and where a locally based community treatment centre, proves model treatment services.⁵⁰ The emphasis in Smith's discussion is on persons being enabled to make their moral choices in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention, to the extent to which they are able at any point in time.⁵¹ Extrapolating from this, the limited choices, real possibility of forced sex (particularly in cases of domestic violence and drugs-related prostitution) and the general lack of education and of Christian formation, which characterises Fatima, presents a wholly other context of morality to that of the dominant group in Irish society. Therefore, it requires a culturally sensitive moral evaluation.

A similar approach is taken by Kevin O Gorman, in his article "Chronicle - Moral Theology after Aids", which, while not addressing the context of the Irish inner-city, provides certain pointers of direct relevance to socio-economically excluded communities.⁵² Addressing an argument, which I have forwarded earlier in this work (chapter five), he makes the point that western theology has tended to emphasise *sexual morality* while in the developing world *social morality* has been to the fore and this has significant impact of one's moral response in the case of HIV/AIDS. Significantly, he highlights the integral connection between HIV/AIDS and poverty. He writes that the poor and the marginalized are primarily the victims of the virus. Poor malnutrition and sanitation and the stress of daily struggle to keep body and soul together are conditions in which infection flourishes and rapidly finds its finality. He adds that chief among the poor are women, and through women children are, in turn, affected. Furthermore, in a context where women cannot negotiate the terms of sexual intercourse (to say nothing of the scale of rape) HIV/AIDS is seen chiefly as a consequence, not a cause, and disease and death

⁴⁹ Ann Smith gives a detailed account of the strategic response to the pandemic by the developmental agency Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD). See "HIV Prevention- perspective of a faith-based agency" in *The Furrow*, Vo. 55, No. 11, Nov. 2004: 616- 630. See also Julie Clague, "HIV/AIDS: The State of the Question" Featured Review, in *The Furrow*, Vo. 54, No. 11, Nov. 2003: 630-633, and Ann Smith and Enda McDonagh, *The Reality of AIDS/HIV* (Dublin: Veritas, 2003).

⁵⁰ Liselle, for example, spoke of her third level studies in "addiction studies" in the national University of Dublin. Interview with Liselle, 28/08/2001.

⁵¹ In the Roman Catholic tradition this pastoral approach to morality is most notably associated with the patron of moral theology, Alphonsus Liguori, who advocated a careful balance between lax and scrupulous moral responses. It also reflects the appeal in contemporary moral theology to the principle of *excessive burden*, proposed by renowned moral theologian, Bernard Häring, (among others), namely that persons ought not to be burdened in conscience beyond that which they are capable.

⁵² O' Gorman, "Moral theology after Aids" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 49, No. 10, Oct. 1998: 568-572.

are “the final instalments of degradation and the loss of human dignity”.⁵³ Addressing the context of the developing world, O’Gorman highlights specific ethical issues which, in my view, are of direct relevance to Fatima, among them:

1. the need for an ethics of social and economic liberation;
2. the need for a just allocation of basic health care resources;
3. the obligation of national governments and the international community to alleviate the scale of suffering;
4. the necessity to reaffirm fundamental moral values such as freedom and fidelity, truth and tolerance, and
5. rights, relationships and responsibility must be rooted in respect for the human person and compassion as the basis for all morality.

Importantly also, from a Fatima perspective, he insists on the necessity of respect for narrative theological approaches and the pastoral requirement “to listen to the human experience”; in other words, moral theology “must be contextual and dialogical”.⁵⁴ In the case of HIV/AIDS and the inner-city, this would imply particular attentiveness to the context of the street drugs culture, which has been demonstrated to define the inner city moral experience (chapter three).

6.6 THE DRUGS CULTURE: PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Fatima-based research identified the prevalence of drugs in the estate as a significant culture shaper (chapter three). In fact misuse of drugs (including alcohol, prescription drugs and illegal drugs, both soft and hard) was shown to one of the most significant factors impinging on the quality of life in the estate. Repeatedly, in the interviews and group processes, the impact of alcohol and drugs on the daily lives of residents came to the fore, revealing important Fatima cultural themes and values. These include: *care and protection of the children, tolerance, compassion and communal responsibility for the drug addict, abhorrence of drug dealing while sympathy for the addict, isolation of the drug dealer and self-reliance*. In light of these findings, it is interesting to note that, with respect to the theological journals under investigation, out of a total of 1609 articles, only *one* article deals directly with the issue of problem drinking and only *two* articles explicitly address unique moral dilemmas posed by the drugs culture in the Irish inner city apart, that is, from the broader drugs related question of HIV/AIDS discussed earlier. Desmond O’ Donnell addresses the issue of problem drinking in

⁵³ Ibid.: 568-569.

⁵⁴ Ibid.: 567-572.

the Irish context in an article entitled “Problem Drinking: Culture, Religion and Parents”.⁵⁵ Since this article offers a generic analysis of problem drinking and alcoholism, a Fatima hermeneutic finds little of relevance, hence, it is not included in this analysis. In a different vein, Paul O’ Mahony, in “Community Vigilantism- Curse or Cure” discusses the mobilisation of local residents in disadvantaged areas against drugs.⁵⁶ Finally, Kieran Cronin, in “Harm Reduction and Drug Abuse” examines the moral dimensions of needle exchange programmes for drug users.⁵⁷ Given their *direct relevance* to the Fatima inner city experience, I will examine these latter two articles in some depth.⁵⁸ The strength of these contributions is that, not only do they address the Irish context, but they also address the specific context of Dublin’s inner city.

6.6.1 Community Vigilantism: Curse or Cure?

While acknowledging that vigilante resistance in drugs-ridden Irish communities has “challenged a long-festering, officially neglected, and ever more insidious and damaging drugs culture”, O’ Mahony writes that the outcomes of such activity has not been solely positive and that certain moral dilemmas have presented themselves.⁵⁹ The author provides an analysis of the reality of “shocking and appalling acts of violence under the banner of the anti-drugs campaign”.⁶⁰ This fairly describes the ambiguities of the Fatima experience (chapter three). Within weeks of my entry into the community local residents began to organise anti-drugs meetings and a collective anti-drugs protest. Women and children policed the estate entrances, during the day, and men at night, with the result of a speedy clearance from the estate of any visible drugs activity. The beating and subsequent death of a man in the Fatima vicinity, in May of the following year, led to the rapid demise of the protest since the question of the moral use of violence in anti-drugs protest was a contentious one.

Another practice associated historically with the Fatima anti-drugs protest, and which has significant moral implications, was the practice, by community resident leaders, of forcibly

⁵⁵ Desmond O’ Donnell, OMI, “Problem Drinking: Culture, Religion and Parents” in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Apr. 2004: 26-29.

⁵⁶ Paul O’ Mahony, “Community Vigilantism - Curse or Cure?” in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 47, July/Aug 1997: 325-333.

⁵⁷ Kieran Cronin, in “Harm Reduction and Drug Abuse” in *The Furrow*, Vol. 52, No. 3, Mar. 2001: 154-163.

⁵⁸ It must be noted, however, that while the questions of problem drinking were real sources of concern in Fatima-based interviews, the question of needle exchange did not arise as a moral issue in *any* of my research interviews with residents, though it emerged, in informal conversations, as a matter of concern for a small number of non-resident workers in the estate.

⁵⁹ O’ Mahony: 325.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*:326

evicting local drugs dealers.⁶¹ In these cases the women and children were not at risk; they were allowed to remain in the estate without fear and/or intimidation.⁶² On the other hand, during my own time in Fatima threats to *anti-drugs protesters*, particularly to Fatima leadership, were commonplace. O' Mahony records that elsewhere in the city, in Ballybough, members of an anti-drugs movement were attacked and one seriously injured. He points out that many of the difficult moral dilemmas arising from an analysis of the anti drugs movement centre on the question of "legitimacy and legality of action"; lines can be blurred between valid protest and "rough justice".⁶³ He advocates instead a community empowerment that ensues from the work of community projects (women's groups, literacy groups, development committees, etc.) which allows the voice of the oppressed to be heard at national level, as indeed is the case in Fatima. The contrast which O'Mahony presents between community empowerment and the morally illegitimate vigilante response is a close reflection of the moral landscape of Fatima.⁶⁴

6.6.2 Needle Exchange Programmes: Harm Reducing or Harm Enhancing?

A second moral issue relating to drugs abuse, which is directly relevant to the Fatima experience, is morality related to needle exchange programmes in drug treatment centres. This moral dimension of this issue is specifically addressed in *one* article, in *The Furrow*, by Kieran Cronin, namely "Harm Reduction and Drug Abuse".⁶⁵ Cronin cites the case of the Australian Sisters of Charity in Sydney, who, in partnership with the New South Wales government, planned to situate a medically supervised injecting service in their hospital. However, the Sisters were formally challenged by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (Rome), on the basis that the medical facilitation of the direct injection of non-therapeutic drugs is morally regarded as a *co-operation in evil*.

I include an analysis of this article consider this article an effective illustration of the tensions inherent in a Roman Catholic theologian's struggle to contextualize moral theory. The author seeks to bridge the gap between 1) a traditional, mainstream and principle-based moral theology, and 2) the pressing pastoral and moral dilemmas posed by drugs misuse in areas of

⁶¹ Interview with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001.

⁶² O' Mahony: 327. O' Mahony cites examples of where such activity got out of control, elsewhere in Dublin. Such cases, he writes, have "fuelled rumours that the anti-drugs movement is being infiltrated and exploited by the militant republican movement". There was no evidence, in my experience, of any such paramilitary-style activity in Fatima during my period of residency, nor was there any reference to such activity in informal conversations in the local community.

⁶³ Ibid.: 327-328

⁶⁴ Ibid.: 329-332.

⁶⁵ Kieran Cronin, "Harm Reduction and Drug Abuse" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 52, No. 3, Mar. 2001: 154-163.

socio-economic disadvantage, such as Fatima. Drawing upon a traditional Roman Catholic ethical framework, the article presents the argument that needle exchange is morally licit.⁶⁶ It identifies moral principles potentially applicable to this case among them: *double effect*, *co-operation* and *totality*. The pertinent question as to whether needle exchange is a “harm enhancing” as opposed to “harm reducing” act is posed, as is the question of whether talk of “*safe injection practices*” is a contradiction in terms.⁶⁷ The bulk of the article then focuses on a detailed examination of two traditional approaches, 1) the *doctrine of co-operation* in traditional moral theology, and 2) the problem of *scandal*. Invoking to some degree the *principle of totality*, he suggests that the total welfare of the chaotic drug user - physical, moral, and spiritual - provides serious reason for allowing the practice of needle exchange and for education in safe injecting practices.⁶⁸ The present official Church position on drugs, as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), is also examined; here the use of drugs is prohibited (on the basis that they inflict very grave damage on human health and life) except in the case of strictly therapeutic purposes (paragraph 2291).⁶⁹ This statement, according to Cronin, is vague and lacking definition and, while there is reference to the traditional principle of co-operation in the *Catechism*, the example cited is the production of, and trafficking of, drugs, which Cronin clearly does not regard to be on the same moral level as needle exchange. Cronin forwards one possible solution to the dilemma is to argue that some forms of needle exchange may fit into the Vatican definition of “therapeutic”. He also surmises that the Vatican prohibition on the proposed needle exchange programme of the Australian Sisters of Charity may well have been motivated by the desire to avoid scandal; the Sisters might be seen to be co-operating in evil. He suggests that the value of avoiding scandal (good in itself) has to be balanced out with other competing and important values, in this case protection and promotion of the life and health of vulnerable people.

But to what extent does the ethical analysis, provided by Cronin, mirror, or incorporate, the Fatima moral worldview? Significantly, this contribution, while directly related to the practices of Irish drugs treatment services, such as the Merchant’s Quay Project, Dublin, and while specifically addressing the moral legitimacy of needle exchange, a practice commonplace in inner city communities, is *not*, however, reflective of Fatima’s moral concerns regarding its own drugs culture. An appreciation of the moral argument of ‘co-operation in evil’ was not at

⁶⁶ For a medical practitioner’s response to Cronin’s article and Cronin’s reply see Sr. Eileen Keane and Kieran Cronin, respectively, News and Views, *The Furrow*, Vol. 52, No. 5, May 2001: 296-299.

⁶⁷ Cronin: 155-156.

⁶⁸ Ibid. The author draws on the theology of moral theologian Henry Davis, in his manual of moral theology, *Moral and Pastoral Theology* (1934), to argue this point in-depth.

⁶⁹ See John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin : Veritas, 1994), para. 2291.

all uncovered in my research. In Fatima the question of needle exchange is discussed solely in terms of the pragmatics of health and safety; the central moral issue is protection against disease and death. The gap between an 'outsider' and formal ethical interpretation of the morality of needle exchange and that of an 'insider' perspective is striking. This, of course, raises questions about the exclusivity of ethical frameworks, language and argument. Put simply, Cronin's, while stimulating and intriguing for the theologically literate, does not mirror an 'insider' inner city perspective. Overall, it fails to contextualize this moral debate in any significant way.

Inter-related with the complexities of drug misuse and the morality of treatment is the issue of abuse of women and children, since, as my earlier research indicated, such abuse is often exacerbated by alcohol and drug misuse (chapter three). The following section examines the treatment of the abuse of women and children in the selected journals.

6.7 ABUSE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

As indicated earlier (chapter three) the abuse of women and children in Fatima centres around two aspects of Fatima life, 1) situations of domestic violence which were demonstrated to be prevalent in Fatima, and, to a lesser extent, 2) memories and hearsay about the abuse of women and children in religious-run institutions. Beginning with domestic violence, which was demonstrated to be prevalent in Fatima, a most striking finding in relation to the selected journals is that not one article, out of the total number of 1609 articles examined, deals exclusively with the issue of domestic violence. While *Doctrine and Life* draws the readers' attention to responses by the Irish bishops regarding domestic violence, the journal fails to follow up on this with any serious theological reflection and/or critical analysis.⁷⁰ In contrast, as with the Irish bishops, a prioritization of clerical paedophilia is clearly evident in the selected journals.⁷¹ While this exploration is also necessary it proves unbalanced since the broader discussion of child abuse in Irish society (especially within the home and wider family in context of domestic and sexual violence) and correlations between child abuse and socio-economic exclusion, which are the predominant emphases in Fatima-based research, receive no attention whatsoever (chapter three). A preoccupation with child sexual clerical abuse was overwhelmingly demonstrated. A complete failure to dialogue with the large body of feminist

⁷⁰ Editorial, "Preaching on Violence Against Women", Forum, *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 45, No. 9, Nov. 1995: 631-633.

⁷¹ A total of 40 articles address this reality; the highest number of representative articles on any single topic of general relevance to Fatima.

theological literature on domestic violence and sexual abuse was also a striking finding, as well as the absence of an inter-disciplinary approach to abuse.

The *institutional abuse of women and children* is, however, examined, in a limited number of articles, and here we find a point of direct contact with one aspect of the Fatima experience (chapter three). During my time in Fatima, clerical scandals and artistic representations of institutional child abuse triggered strong anti-religious responses within the community (chapter one). It emerged from numerous spontaneous and informal conversations that some of the local families had direct, and largely negative experiences, of religious-run institutions of detention, mostly orphanages, or reform institutions such as the Industrial or Reform Schools and, more recently residential care units.⁷² One individual spoke of his negative personal experiences, as a child, in a reform school.⁷³ Others emphasised their abhorrence of social workers from the Eastern Health Board and their dread that their children would be taken into care, echoing painful memories of previous generations.⁷⁴

In the analysis of the selected journals, one of the key moral issues examined in regard to institutional care and abuse within these institutions is the question of *responsibility* or *culpability*, with the general consensus that society at large was to blame for institutional abuses, a position argued by Eamon Maher and Paula Murphy, respectively.⁷⁵ A second, and more relevant, analysis is the ethics of the criminalization of poverty, which closely reflects Fatima's historical experience. In the article, "*States of Fear, Child Abuse, and Irish Society*" Harry Ferguson critically examines the impact of the three-part RTÉ television series *States of Fear* and the publication *Suffer Little Children* (1999) by Mary Raftery and Eoin O Sullivan.⁷⁶ This latter publication chronicled the routine physical abuse of children, often with the knowledge of Government Departments, under the guise of reasonable corporal punishment, while, behind the scenes, it was alleged that children were subjected to rape and sexual abuse. Significantly, from the perspective of Fatima, the article highlights the failure of the State to address the real issue, *namely poverty and related failures in guardianship*. 80% of children were admitted to religious-run institutions, funded by the State, due to failed guardianship, yet

⁷² See Mary Killon, *Child Mistreatment in Ireland*. M.A. Research Thesis. (Unpublished), M.A. in Culture, Religion and Society in Modern Ireland, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. 2001.

⁷³ Informal conversation with Seamus, field notes, 15/07/1998.

⁷⁴ Informal conversations with Fatima residents (1995-2005).

⁷⁵ Eamon Maher, "Assuming Responsibility" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 54, No. 2, Feb. 2004: 46-51; also Paula Murphy, "'A Prison of the Mind' - The Magdalen Laundries in Popular Culture" in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 54, No. 8, Oct. 2004: 7-15.

⁷⁶ Harry Ferguson, "*States of Fear, Child Abuse and Irish Society*" in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 50, No. 1, Jan. 2000:20-30. See also Mary Raftery and Eon O Sullivan, *Suffer Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial Schools* (Dublin: New Island Books, 1999).

the children were blamed and treated in a punitive manner. Fintan O Toole is cited in the article as saying that what lay behind the industrial schools was, in essence, the ‘criminalisation of poverty’, as aspect that a future moral theology concerning institutional abuse must address in depth.⁷⁷

6.8 POVERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A FAILURE OF ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS.

My earlier research identified poverty and poverty management as defining features of the life of Fatima residents (chapter three). Older residents, in particular, spoke of such experiences as the constant juggling of debts, going to the pawn shop, hiding from the Jew man (money-lender), getting ‘little dinners’ from the nuns in Weaver’s Square, hauling fuel from the log-yard in Cork St., belonging to and having large families and minding babies, and working from a young age in local factories, on the buildings, or as domestics (chapter three). Despite the economic boom of recent years and improved welfare from the State, poverty, often linked with persistent and long-term unemployment, remains a central aspect of Fatima life.

Three articles in the selected journals deal specifically with the question of poverty. A global perspective on poverty is provided by Cathal B. Daly, which has little to offer an ethics of the inner city in the Irish context.⁷⁸ More relevant contributions are offered by Stanislaus Kennedy, in two articles, entitled “Preaching on Poverty” and “International Year for Eradicating Poverty”, respectively.⁷⁹ In her article “Preaching on Poverty” Kennedy highlights the need for a lived experience of poverty, and a mutual and respectful relationship with persons who experience poverty, as an indispensable requirement for those who preach on the subject matter, which, in my view, provides certain pointers for future moral theology. While she briefly addresses such issues as the structural nature of poverty and its associated inequalities, as well as a culture of complacency with respect to poverty, both of which have relevance for the Fatima community, *the lack of direct reference to the context of the inner city limits its usefulness for my research purposes*. A more localized examination of poverty is provided in “International Year for Eradicating Poverty”. Here Kennedy uses international statistics to illustrate that, no matter how good the general conditions in a nation, “the poor always remain

⁷⁷ Fintan O Toole, *Irish Times*, 14 May 1999, cited in Ferguson: 24.

⁷⁸ Cathal B. Daly, “World Poverty, Justice and Peace” in *The Furrow*, Vol. 49, No. 3, Mar. 1998:131-136.

⁷⁹ Stanislaus Kennedy, “Preaching About Poverty” in *The Furrow*, Vol. 46, No. 9, Sept. 1995: 495-500 and “International Year for Eradicating Poverty” in *Doctrine and Life*, Vol. 46, No. 9, No. 1996: 520-526

at the bottom of the heap”.⁸⁰ (This closely echoes my earlier examination of values in Ireland in chapter one). Drawing on Combat Poverty Agency figures she writes that, in Ireland, at the time of writing (1996), 10% of the people owned 42% of the total national wealth, and 25-30% of the population lived in poverty. Her analysis goes on to describe poverty as a failure of the economic, political and social system in Ireland; despite the growth in the economy the unemployment figures had not declined significantly. Specifying the South West of Dublin (the geographical location of Fatima) she writes:

Hundreds of thousands of people continue to be unemployed, while the economy in general is booming. And unemployment, whatever the countrywide rate, continues to be concentrated in pockets of extreme. For example, a report undertaken by Focus Ireland on the south-west inner city of Dublin this spring [1995] has revealed that there is up to 72% unemployment in some areas.⁸¹

Kennedy’s definition of poverty rings true of the experience of Fatima (chapter three). She suggests that a person’s or a family’s security rests on certain foundations: employment, health, housing and education, all of which have been identified as problematic in the case of Fatima. She adds that when these basic needs are met people can meet their responsibilities to their work, their families, their communities and they are able to enjoy basic rights as citizens. But where these basics are not met there is insecurity and it is this insecurity which constitutes poverty. This can, in some cases, lead to extreme poverty which becomes persistent. She adds that poverty in turn compromises a person’s or family’s chance of regaining independence, lost rights and responsibilities.⁸² Kennedy strongly criticises the “pernicious theory of affluence” which falsely suggests that as countries become richer poverty automatically becomes eliminated, since such a theory absolves people of their responsibility to eradicate poverty. She writes that while Ireland may not have to deal with mass poverty and disease, whole families are ravished by drug dependency and HIV/AIDS (as is demonstrated in the case in Fatima). Citing the geographical location of Fatima and neighbouring complexes she comments that there are areas in the inner city, Dublin, where 65% of the families rely on contributions from St. Vincent de Paul to supplement their welfare income. Moreover there are on the streets of Dublin children who have been driven out of the home by poverty, family breakdown and violence. The lack of provision in Irish society means that there is a strong likelihood that these children are at high risk of crime, prostitution, and drug-dealing.

⁸⁰ Ibid.: 521. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, in their annual report (Oct. 2005) highlighted the fact that despite sustained economic security in the State, calls to the society’s headquarters rose by 300% in the previous three years. RTÉ News, 02/11/2005.

⁸¹ Ibid.: 522.

⁸² Ibid.: 523.

Echoing my earlier analysis of poverty in Ireland (chapter one) Kennedy argues that while Irish people who are categorised as 'poor' are not experiencing *absolute* poverty, they are regarded as being chronically poor in an affluent society. The article suggests that perceptions of poverty are significant; poverty exists because the poor are so voiceless and so invisible. What is required, therefore, is a properly developed social policy. Kennedy's depiction of the poor in Ireland is an accurate description of the poverty that is prevalent in Fatima. It has strong echoes of Hispanic and womanist descriptions of poverty (chapter four), therefore, I quote at some length:

The poor are engaged daily in a battle to survive and bring up their children. They are constant supplicants: they go from social welfare office to Vincent de Paul to housing authority, in a constant search for income supplements, repairs to their house or flat, help with the problems of everyday living. Wherever they go they are powerless, they are expected to be grateful. They have no choices about where they live. They have no choices about where their children go to school. They have no choices about the sort of work they do, if they are lucky enough to get any sort of work. They are subject to constant questioning, constant means-testing, constant insensitivity about their private lives. They are expected to reveal their personal circumstances in public places. They have no voice, no power, no prestige and no status. This is what means to be poor in an affluent society, to be without influence and without control over your own life.⁸³

Finally, it must be noted that interwoven with the theme of poverty is the question of *human rights*. Fatima experiences, such as high levels of unemployment, sub-standard levels of education, an educational curriculum which fails to represent inner-city community life, inadequate health provision, a physical environment which seriously contributes to ill-health, and threats to personal security (chapter three), raise the question of human rights in the inner-city context. The individual's right to education, to health services, to employment, to safety and to adequate housing are seen to be of paramount importance. The question of human rights also arises in relation to the drugs culture, where the community's right to anti-drugs protest was examined. In Fatima, the right to protest is generally considered a basic human right. An example is standing in the 'Block' or at entrances to the estate to prevent people going to dealers.⁸⁴ Inhumane or humiliating treatment of drugs users and small-time dealers (and their families) was considered to be a *violation of human dignity* was *explicitly* seen as a moral issue.⁸⁵ Broader cultural rights were also addressed in my research. One research questionnaire respondent, for example, comments on the lack of recognition of the Fatima culture by agencies responsible for meeting their needs.⁸⁶ As indicated in the previous chapter, these social, economic and cultural rights are regarded as individual rights. In the case of Fatima these

⁸³ Kennedy: 525.

⁸⁴ Interview with Sheila, 15/03/2001.

⁸⁵ Interviews with Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001 and Marie, 23/05/2001.

⁸⁶ RQF, Q.12, respondent E.

individual rights are exercised in a community context. Participant observation indicates that the more educated and empowered members of the community are aware of their fundamental rights (particularly in relation to welfare) and pro-actively pursue these rights through developmental and supportive agencies operative in the estate and the wider local community. However, participant observation equally makes clear that a large proportion of residents are both unaware of certain fundamental rights and furthermore lack the capacity, in terms of voice, self-confidence, knowledge, motivation, literacy and power, to pursue them. My research indicates overall that the capacity to access one's individual human rights is negatively impacted upon by the general experience of communal poverty and socio-economic exclusion.

It is notable then that *no* article in the selected journals addresses the question of the relationships between poverty, socio-economic exclusion and human rights. Neither does *any* article address the broader question of human rights and inner city communities. Moreover, despite the in-depth treatment of social, economic and cultural rights in *Re-righting the Constitution*, discussed earlier (chapter five), there is *no* theological commentary on this contribution in the selected journals. This is all the more surprising given that human rights issues have a relatively high representation in the journals as compared to other Fatima-related themes.⁸⁷ Where human rights are discussed, however, a primary concern is the debate on the distinction between individual and group rights, which, as presented, is not relevant to my research. Other concerns are: the distinction in the language of rights between 'human rights' and 'special rights'; the 'Christian' history of human rights, liberal philosophical approaches to 'human rights' and the question of whether human rights are sacred or secular; discussion which are not contextualized, therefore of no real relevance to the context of Fatima.⁸⁸

6.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to critically examine one selected source of moral theology, from the perspective of a Fatima morality, in order to explore the perceived disjunction between Fatima's cultural values and the preoccupations of more formal debates. My preliminary analysis of selected theological journals in the Irish context demonstrated a radical failure to represent the value system and moral practice of the Irish inner city. A frequency analysis of the selected journals confirmed this initial finding; it established the complete absence of explicit explorations of the value systems and moral practice of inner city communities in

⁸⁷ In all, a total of 16 articles address the question of human rights.

⁸⁸ For an extended analysis of human rights see the *Milltown Studies*, Winter 1998, which features public lectures from the conference entitled *Human Rights: Sacred or Secular*, held in the Milltown Institute, April 23rd-24th, 1998, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights (1948).

Ireland. Neither was the moral practice of any specific minority community in Ireland examined explicitly in any single article. In light of this preliminary finding it was necessary to broaden out my analysis to more general explorations of 'Fatima-related' themes. Out of the total number of articles examined, only 97 articles (6%) were located that represented those Fatima-related themes which were identified in the preliminary analysis.

A *content analysis* of Fatima-related themes revealed that central elements of Fatima or inner city experience were rarely incorporated into or prioritized in the journal contributions. Discussions of gender are a case in point. Articles addressing women's voicelessness, for example, did not consider the question of socio-economic exclusion (including the Fatima experience of classism). Significantly also, other gender-related issues identified in my research, such as women's strength, woman-bonding and women's suffering, in the context of socio-economic marginalization, were not explicitly addressed in *any* of the selected journals. In general, these contributions were problematic from a Fatima perspective because they failed to incorporate any systematic reflection on gender relations and gender roles within socio-economically marginalized cultures. Neither did they examine the intrinsic relationship between sexism and classism which was demonstrated in this research (chapter three). The abuse of women and children is a further case in point. Domestic violence was demonstrated to be prevalent in the inner city (chapter three). Despite this fact, *not one article* in the theological journals examined the experience of domestic violence, whether in the context of Irish society in general or in the specific context of the inner city. Instead, the notable prioritisation of child sexual clerical abuse, which was clearly demonstrated, appeared to indicate a prioritization of ecclesial concerns over and above concerns for the abused child. A similar failure to represent the inner city value systems and moral practice was demonstrated in the areas of marriage, family and responsible parenthood, health care, the inner city drugs culture and poverty, with a few notable exceptions, not least Stanislaus Kennedy's analysis of poverty (above).

It is important also to note that, in almost all cases examined above, the *authorship* in the selected journals is neither emergent from, nor representative of, socio-excluded communities, which suggests that these communities benefit least from the interpretations presented. That the moral voice and experience of the dominant group in Irish society is prioritized has been repeatedly demonstrated; the underlying assumption being that of a single homogenous Irish morality. Omitted is any analysis of the moral significance of social and cultural location, with respect to Irish society at large. In other words, a radical failure to address the challenges of social exclusion, including class and cultural distinctions is in evidence; moral arguments proposed are repeatedly demonstrated to further the concerns of the dominant group. Moreover, a general failure to critically dialogue with a variety of disciplines is repeatedly

demonstrated. Finally, inductive theological methodologies are rarely employed and the incorporation of liberationist/feminist perspectives is minimalist. Even when feminist theologies are referred to, white, middle class, North American contributions are prioritised. Significantly, there is *no* evidence of dialogue with feminisms from “communities of struggle”, which explore the explicit links between sexism and classism (as well as racism), and which, therefore, more closely reflect the Irish inner city experience.

In light of the failure of significant sources of moral theology, in the Irish context, to adequately include, and reflect upon, the moral experience of the inner city (as is clearly demonstrated in both the previous chapter and in this chapter) I wish to examine, in the following concluding, chapter, potential ways in which an Irish moral theology might address this failing and strive towards a more genuine inclusivity, while also maintaining a critical stance from the perspective of a Christian ethics. I also wish to identify how the process of articulating cultural values might be taken further as the basis of building a contextual (moral) theology, and I provide a brief commentary on how some of the expressions of religious faith and spirituality, evident within the research data, might become the basis of a more intentional theological methodology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

*... the process of bringing 'the darkness' to light
'the silence' to speech, the 'dyings' to life, however painful
is a pathway to healing and freedom...*

(Susan Gannon, Fatima resident)¹

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has provided a critical examination of the invisibility, within Irish society and academic discourse, of the values and moral practice of the Irish inner city. Its core objectives were: 1) to identify and provide a comprehensive analysis of the central values and moral practice in the Fatima community, and 2) to critique, using the hermeneutic of Fatima ethics, selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context, with a view to examining the inclusion/exclusion of inner city morality in formal sources of theology in Ireland. The selected sources were publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference (since Vatican II) and publications in selected theological journals (1995-2005).

The term which I have coined for the research model employed in this work is the 'cultural themes process model' (chapter two). Central to its methodology is a process of *ethnographic ethics*, namely the application of ethnography to the 'everyday ethics' of the research context. A woman-centred, multi-dimensional and ethnographic case study of one Dublin inner city estate, namely Fatima, was conducted. Grounded theory, which incorporated a creative and organic unfolding of the research process, was intentionally employed. Primary research involved a variety of fieldwork processes which were conducted within the Fatima community during the period 1995-2002. These included: 1) immersion and participant observation; 2) semi-structured ethnographic interviews with twenty two women residents; 3) five focus group interviews with both residents and non-residents (including three on-going creative workshop focus groups with women residents) and, 4) research questionnaires conducted with eighteen non-resident workers in the estate. This multi-method, ethnographic case study of Fatima provided a thick description of the community's value system and moral practice (chapter

¹ Susan Gannon. *The God of the Abused*, Fatima Mansions, Dublin. (Private Circulation) 1992.

three) which subsequently provided the hermeneutical basis of the critical analysis of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context (chapters five and six).

The overall failure of the selected sources of moral theology to acknowledge the distinctive socio-cultural basis of Irish inner city morality is demonstrated. It is also shown that they fail to critically incorporate insights and illustrations from the value system and moral practice of the Irish inner city in their wider deliberations. Moreover, when themes and values closely related to inner city morality are examined in these sources, the perspectives and preoccupations of the dominant group in Irish society are shown to be prioritised. More positively, however, I suggest that this critical analysis of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context has uncovered significant indicators of a potentially more inclusive theology of the inner city, an aspect of my research implications which will be closely examined later in this chapter.

The focus of this present chapter is that of the wider implications of my research methodology, ethics and findings. The vital interrelationship between research methodology and research ethics, particularly in the context of this work, is examined, since the nature of this relationship is central to the methodological choices employed in this thesis. Moreover the problematic of the critique of the emergent cultural themes, within the framework of classical ethnography, is examined in the context of this inseparable relationship between methodology and ethics. As is clear from both the general introduction to this work and the in-depth discussion of research methodology (chapter two) I prioritise research ethics throughout this work and argue that the unique ethico-political challenges encountered during this research process played a pivotal role in relation to the methodological and analytical choices made. In this chapter, then, I first provide a summary account of significant ethical challenges which presented during the research. In dialogue with the field of research ethics, I outline an ethical justification of my research methodology. In particular, in light of ethico-political challenges arising in the research process itself, I examine the problematic of the critique of emergent findings in the context of employing a classical ethnographic methodology.

Subsequent to my examination of research methodology and ethics I will address the significance of the emergent cultural themes and values in this research (chapter three). I begin by presenting a synopsis position of Fatima's value system and moral practice, as elaborated from the 'thick description' of emergent cultural themes identified in my Fatima-based research (appendix B). In this context the Fatima ethical system is described as a communitarian survival ethics and its defining features are outlined. Following on this, the question of the problematic of the critique of emergent findings within the ethnographic framework employed, is addressed. In this instance, potential critiques of the emergent findings are examined from the

field of feminist ethics, as an example of one of a number of possible ethical systems with the potential to provide a critique. The relevance of the research findings for the fields of mainstream moral theology and contextual theology, within the Irish context, is then critically examined. I end with a comment upon the replicability of the research as a 'cultural themes process model' and discuss its potential in the context of future comparative ethics relating to the inner city and beyond.

Let us begin, then, with an examination of the significance of the methodological and ethical challenges which presented themselves during this research.

7.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH ETHICS: AN INSEPARABLE RELATIONSHIP

An on-going process of self-reflexivity was indispensable in this research since numerous ethical considerations arose during the research process (chapter two). Specific concerns around questions of confidentiality, appropriate and informed consent, autonomy for all parties, respect for the person (especially the most vulnerable), uneven power distribution in research relationships, appropriate 'pay-back' to the community, editorial control, and the potential exploitation of the community with respect to future publications, among others, were but a few of the significant ethical challenges encountered and examined in some detail in this work (chapter two). I further suggest that a prior and more fundamental question of ethics, and one which impacted significantly upon this research, is that of the relationship between ethics and methodological choice. An important question, raised by this thesis, is: "Which is prior in any research project: ethics or methodology?" In other words, in research practice, does methodology arise out of a foundational ethical stance or do ethical considerations follow after initial methodological choice? In the case of my research, ethics was intentionally located prior to method and this foundational stance towards research ethics defined the research methodology (including analysis) from the outset. As discussed in the introduction to this work, the most significant outcome of this prioritization, on my part, was the decision to embark upon a non-feminist ethnographic methodology. This approach was considered more suited to the specific research context of Fatima since participant observation highlighted the fact that Fatima women were not aligned with feminism at either individual or collective levels. Subsequent research interviews confirmed this observation; in my analysis of Fatima narratives feminist awareness was not demonstrated to be a part of the ethics of 'daily life' of the community (chapter two). In fact, the women who participated in the research process were

almost exclusively self-defined as non-feminist women.² Interviews revealed that participants were not generally educated in the meanings of feminism and lacked exposure within the Fatima context to the feminist experience and agenda (chapter three). In participating in the research, their desires were simply both to tell their story in a public context and to assist me in my academic research. Since my research aims entailed the challenge of uncovering Fatima's moral worldview *on Fatima's own terms*, a classical ethnographic approach was therefore demanded, in my view. This approach also sat well with research participants.

Certain critical ethical values were at operative in this decision. These included the values of *non-exploitative relationships*, *non-betrayal* and *non-deception* of the researched community. The question of betrayal, in particular, played a defining role in my work. Betrayal is an aspect of research examined by Plummer, who highlights the problematic of entering into intimate and secret spaces of person's lives only to expose such intimate revelations in a critical light.³ Like Cohen *et al*, I regarded betrayal and deception as closely linked.⁴ They ask: 'What is the proper balance between the interests of science and the thoughtful, humane treatment of people who, innocently, provide the data...?'.⁵ Because of the ethical conflict associated with the question of the critique of findings arising from ethnographic processes designed to give voice to the Fatima community, it was necessary to reflect in some depth upon the fact that an immediate application of a critical analysis, on my part, would most likely have been considered an act of betrayal and /or deceit. Furthermore, such a critical analysis did not sit well with a classical approach in ethnography, the function of which is to describe the internal meanings of a bounded system. It was decided on the basis of a betrayal ethics, and on the basis of fidelity to the ethnographic process, to allow the findings to stand on their own terms in the initial analysis, while also pointing towards potentially problematic findings from alternative ethical perspectives (chapter three).

Conflicts of values inevitably arise in any research and an ethical judgement must be made by the researcher on the basis of a careful cost/benefit analysis, as in the case of this work. This is a dilemma most particularly faced by 'insider' researchers and theologians (as was the case in this research). The Irish contextual urban theologian, Martin Byrne, for example, speaks about

² Only two of the twenty women interviewed demonstrated a knowledge of, and awareness of, feminist perspectives, and were open to some extent to a feminist worldview, but they did not align themselves personally with feminism.

³ Plummer, cited in Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 5th ed. (London/New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000, rep. 2003) 63.

⁴ Cohen: 63

⁵ *Ibid.*

the “very thin line between validating and legitimising” when engaging with a community’s narrative or truth-telling, adding that

(t)hese stories have an authority and a power by reason of individuals in the ... community expressing their truths. It is not for others, be they academics or professional theologians, to pass comment good, bad or indifferent on these collections of stories and it is certainly not my task as gatherer, to package these ... stories to accommodate the perspectives or acceptable templates of others. Such would be disrespectful.⁶

In an attempt to address the challenge of presenting a non-manipulated ethnographic account of a Fatima ethics, while also allowing for an exploration of certain problematic research findings from the basis of alternative ethical perspectives, I opted for a two-pronged approach: 1) my ethnographic account, or ‘thick description’ of Fatima cultural themes presents the ethnographic findings of a Fatima ethics on Fatima’s own terms - but also indicates certain problematic areas (chapter three), and 2) the question of problematic research findings is taken up in a critical fashion by means of a dialogue with feminist ethics - as *one* example of an alternative ethical framework (below).

This, of course, raises a further important question in relation to the overall research, namely, “where precisely is the central critique of this thesis located”? As is clarified in the general introduction to this work, the central critique provided in this thesis is that of selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context (chapters five and six). In this critique the hermeneutic of a Fatima moral perspective is intentionally employed, an approach which ethically demands a non-manipulation of the ethnographic research findings (chapter three). This, of course, is not to suggest that a mutual critical analysis between my research findings – arising from a liminal context - and dominant ethical perspectives is inappropriate and/or unnecessary. An expectation would be that formal sources of moral theology would engage critically with inner city ethics, and *visa versa*. However, a mutually respectful engagement demands a prior account of inner city ethics itself, which is precisely what is offered in my research analysis (chapter three). Importantly, the argument presented here extends beyond inner city ethics to other liminal ethical systems within the Irish context (such as the ethical systems of the Travelling Community and the New Ireland communities).⁷ I suggest that these ethical systems also need to be systematically uncovered and analysed and subsequently incorporated, by means of a respectful dialogical process, into wider ethical discussions and debate. I suggest that a pre-dialogical critical analysis of the ethnographic findings of the ethics arising from liminal systems is problematic because of the potential imbalances of power involved in critiques by more dominant ideologies and theologies in society. What is first required, in my view, is a pre-

⁶ Martin Byrne, *Freshly Baked Bread*: 55

⁷ By the ‘New Ireland’ community is meant the immigrant population.

critical experience of *transcultural exchange* which attends closely to the complexities of cultural difference, and which sets the scene for a later mutually respectful critical analysis. There is a precedent for such a stance in the work of Tony Walsh, who writes that this process of transcultural exchange

implies far more than a different language and some unexpected behaviours; at a much more radical level it can entail a completely different understanding of the world, and a totally different range of assumptions about ethics, relationships and priorities...

It's only if we listen carefully, caringly and non-judgementally that we will learn about the other. This is particularly so when dealing with people from a different culture. It is only through really hearing their stories and experiences and their values that you begin to ... get some sense of their culture, their world of beliefs and assumptions. (Italics, the authors)⁸

Walsh lays down certain guidelines for genuine transcultural openness with which I am in agreement, including: learning to live with cultural difference; the need to acknowledge and explore difference; recognising that no culture has all the answers; recognising cultural biases; exploring cultural assumptions; standing in the other's cultural shoes, and nurturing good relationships.⁹ The research methodology adopted in this work similarly seeks to establish transcultural openness and to model a culturally inclusive approach. I further argue that once respectful inclusivity is established, an honest critical dialogue and exchange, for the mutual benefit of all, is then both possible and necessary.

In order to highlight the complexity of ethical decision-making within research and to demonstrate various conflicting values at work in relation to the ethical critique of emergent research findings, I wish to respectfully acknowledge that other researchers take a different perspective to my own. Numerous alternative ethical judgements regarding appropriate research methodologies in the context of cultural difference are found both in the literature and in practice. For example, certain teleological (consequentialist or utilitarian) ethical arguments are presented by some feminist researchers in their justification of applying feminist methodologies to non-feminist contexts and women.¹⁰ Such arguments follow the line that the feminist teleological goal of the liberation of women from all forms of oppression within patriarchal contexts ethically justifies an application of feminist methodology to non-feminist

⁸ Tony Walsh, "Changing Culture" in Bernard Treacy OP, Alan V. Martin and Tony Walsh (eds.) *No Longer Strangers: Cultural Integration in Church and Society in Ireland, A Doctrine & Life Special*. (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2006) 103-128.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 110-111.

¹⁰ For example, see Katherine Borland, "'That's Not What I Said' - Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research" in S. Berger Gluck and D. Patai (eds.) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York/London: Routledge, 1991) 63-75.

women since it leads to the transformation of and ultimate flourishing of women. It is effectively argued that the consciousness-raising process of feminist methodology will benefit women who may not otherwise have access to feminist awareness and that this justifies the ethical and methodological decision to proceed. In the context of this work, however, I do not subscribe to such arguments, on the basis of the following ethical considerations and values:

- 1) the potential invasion of personal *privacy* of research participants in order to achieve research goals alien to their own interests and concerns;
- 2) a lack of *informed consent* at the outset of research and often during the research process since non-feminist women, with limited educational opportunities, cannot possibly appreciate the complexities of a feminist perspective and methodology in scholarly research;
- 3) the potential misrepresentation of the normative worldview of research participants with implications for *academic integrity*;
- 4) the potential refusal to provide the right to a genuine *freedom of speech*, since the methodology might systematically suppress the non-feminist voice, and
- 5) the potential patronisation of participants in the research process which is ethically regarded as an act of '*power over*' another, whereby a worldview alien to the community may be imposed upon that community, for a perceived benefit.¹¹

While acknowledging the strengths of a teleological ethical framework, namely its sensitivity to future consequences and its attempt to achieve the maximum benefit for the majority involved, I adopt a primarily *deontological* (Kantian) approach, in this work, which prioritises ethical considerations, such as: 1) valuing human rights, responsibilities and duties, 2) prioritising care of minorities, and 3) insisting that a potentially 'harmful means' cannot be used to attain a goal, however worthwhile and beneficial in the longer term.¹² Recognising the appropriateness of the feminist methodological process in other circumstances, the research process model employed in this work, for the reasons outlined above, provides a context-appropriate approach to research methodology where intensive conflicts of values arise. I take the view that the researcher, as a moral agent, is ultimately required to choose from among many conflicting values and moral philosophies, each with their strengths and limitations.¹³

While above I provide an ethical argument for my own ethical stance and methodology, I also indicate that alternative ethical approaches to this problematic of the critique of emergent

¹¹ For an analysis of varying forms of power, including 'power over' see Christine Firer Heinz, *Comprehending Power in Christian Social Ethics* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995).

¹² I am not here implying that feminist ethics is exclusively teleological in its approach, but am merely highlighting one aspect of feminist ethics within the literature to illustrate a particular point.

¹³ For a summary position on varying moral philosophies see Peter Vardy and Paul Grosch, *The Puzzle of Ethics*, (London: Fount, 1994, rep. 1999), Part One.

findings are to be found, which, in the context of transcultural openness and respect, might also be considered applicable. This aspect will be explored in the following discussion subsequent to a prior examination of the emergent cultural themes (chapter three).

7.3 FATIMA'S COMMUNITARIAN SURVIVAL ETHICS: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF CRITIQUE

This research has uncovered the value system of one inner city Dublin community, namely Fatima. Recurring patterns of a distinctively Fatima ethics, born of four generations of struggle for survival, indicate that its value system and moral practice, which is structural in nature, is an alternative moral system to that of the dominant moral system in society. In this section I provide a summary account of the distinguishing features of the Fatima ethical system (chapter three).

7.3.1 The Fatima Value System and Moral Practice: A Summary Account of the Emergent Cultural themes and Values

This research has demonstrated that the Fatima ethical system specifically functions to facilitate *survival* in situations of social and cultural exclusion. Communal expressions of morality point to a predominantly *communitarian ethics*, most notably demonstrated in various *solidarity* experiences which are shown to characterize Fatima's internal social relationships. This defining nature of a Fatima ethics is, in a sense, a double-edged sword. While solidarity experiences function to cultivate a vibrant community spirit and to empower a collective forging out of a future for the Fatima community, they equally serve to diminish an individualist ethic, to prioritize a child-centred worldview, and to sustain a relationship of suspicion with outsiders, all of which may be viewed as problematic from alternative ethical perspectives, including mainstream and feminist. While acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of this ethical system, as uncovered in this research, the point which I wish to make here is that, as an ethical system, it has an internal logic when examined from the perspective of a Fatima worldview or 'a hermeneutic of survival'. Examples of defining features of Fatima's life uncovered in this thesis, which point towards a survival ethics, include:

- communal resistance behaviours;
- women's insight and pragmatism in the case of public demonstrations of 'domestic' violence;
- distinctive understandings of truth and deceit which is defined by relationships with outsiders,;

- the inter-generational transmission of cultural (including moral) codes, perceptions of theft based upon location within society, and
- creative poverty management, among many others.

Significantly, *community* is a central value and the future survival of the Fatima population, as a community, is a central priority. A primary (and related) value in Fatima is the *care and protection of the children*. Sub-themes explored in this context are manifold and include: Fatima understandings of ‘good mothering’, the responsibilities of mothering, value conflicts inherent in the mothering role, the importance of ‘being there’ for the children (in a culture of drugs and violence) and care for the children’s health and safety, including adequate housing. Significantly, it was demonstrated that interpretations of responsible parenting did not necessarily correlate with those perspectives of persons from ‘outside’. Outsider perspectives raised certain concerns associated with a predominantly child-centred communal ethics, not least the right to personal adult fulfilment for women, including their self-definition as independent woman rather than in terms of roles such as mother, and partner (chapter three).

Given the level of *sexism* which characterises the Fatima community, the question of gender relations was also examined in my research. Importantly, the inseparable relationship between sexism and classism is repeatedly highlighted in this analysis. Sexism, both in respect of Fatima’s particular socialization processes, and of the roles adopted by women and men in the estate, was repeatedly illustrated. Domestic violence, at inordinately high levels, where women are the primary victims, is but one case in point. Fatima mothers are depicted as strong (if also vulnerable), hard working and faithful and doing everything in their power to ensure the survival of their children. Significantly, the self-identity of Fatima mothers is virtually inseparable from the mothering role. Women’s self-sacrifice for the sake of the children is strongly in evidence. Fatima is primarily a child-centred community and Fatima women’s self-betterment is never undertaken without a view to child betterment. Self-advancement, while in evidence, is rarely a value in its own right, and never at the expense of child development. The general absence of males in Fatima and the heightened level of maternal responsibility for all aspects of child rearing, as well as for poverty management, are notable features of the community’s life. Men in Fatima were noted by their absence.¹⁴ This research indicates that

¹⁴ Here we find a notable point of comparison with another Dublin inner city community. An ‘expert interview’ with the contextual theologian, Martin Byrne (16/04/2008) indicated that in the North Wall inner city community men play a significant role in community development. Traditionally, and still today, the resident ‘King’ of the community assumes the role of overall chair of community development, unlike Fatima, where non-residents have the more significant and officially recognised roles and benefits relating to community development.

they are normally highly private (or hidden) within the community and rarely involve themselves in parenting or in the training and development opportunities in the estate.

Mujerista and womanist theologies further illuminated my original analysis (chapter four). My research had indicated that women's self perceptions are often apparently contradictory. Fatima women are shown to be strong, resilient, creative and resourceful. But they are equally vulnerable, powerless, voiceless and oppressed. The womanist analysis of mothering throws some light on this apparent contradiction, in its distinction between woman-strength and woman-power; while strong and resourceful, mothers in socially excluded communities are not necessarily powerful. Their sphere of authority and influence is very limited within the family and community contexts and virtually non-existent in the context of wider society; hence the inappropriateness of the term 'matriarchy' in relation to Fatima women. This observation confirmed both my own analysis of power distribution in Fatima and my option for the term 'women-identified' as opposed to 'matriarchial' (chapter three).¹⁵

In the area of relationships, Fatima values highlighted in my research include: *family loyalty, fidelity in friendships, tolerance, inter-dependence and support*. In this model, family connections and inter-support are considered vital. *Solidarity* and *care* are defining values in this network of supportive relationships, but this sense of support does not extend to 'outsiders'. Related values include: *sharing and interdependence, creative responses in relation to oppressive systems, respect and care for the most vulnerable in the community, human resilience, resistant wit, and practical wisdom*. Linked to this interdependence is the fact that the individual and the community are inextricably linked; as a general norm the individual does not advance at the expense of the community - a notion that challenges individualistic stances common to the dominant groups in Irish society. Explorations of survival, in face of a rampant drugs culture, for example, reveal the values of *widespread tolerance, care and compassion* for the addict, *self-reliance* on the part of the community, and its *communal responsibility* for its own addicts.

In striking contrast, however, relationships with outsiders tend to be characterized by *mistrust, suspicion* and *resistance*. Experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation were shown to be manifold. Resistance behaviours and survival strategies adopted by Fatima residents (including, lying to outsiders, the art of cunning and the prohibition on 'ratting') are in essence a struggle against poverty at all levels: material, anthropological and spiritual. I suggest that the value at

¹⁵ In contrast, contextual theologian Martin Byrne, speaks of the Dublin North Wall as a "matriarchal society with fathers", in *A Gutted God: Three Ways of Soul Searching in Dublin's Docklands*, (Dublin: Christian Brothers, 2003).

stake, in this context, is the theological value of *the right to life*. The cry for the right to life is most notable in relation to the inner-city drugs culture and it extends beyond physical life itself to socio-cultural and spiritual aspects of life, most especially social justice. Survival strategies, facilitated by the unique moral wisdom of Fatima women, are transmitted transgenerationally, (predominantly) mother to daughter. This moral wisdom is, in effect, a 'third sense', which is associated with being a 'remnant people' (as is described in *mujerista* theology). It is the capacity to read indicators of threat, however subtle, by means of a heightened intuition or a 'gut instinct' (as is described in womanist ethics). This uneasy relationship with 'outsiders' extends to the local churches, where it is described in terms of alienation and exclusion. Despite this alienation from the official churches (which is more accentuated in the case of Fatima than in *mujerista* and womanist accounts) there is some evidence of the sustaining power of: a private faith, popular devotion, localized intentional faith reflection, and communal spiritual/political celebrations. These resistant and transformative rituals reflect Fatima's unique identity and are of significance for localised contextual inner city theology (discussed below).

Finally, despite, and perhaps because of, the very real threat to life on a daily basis, the capacity to *celebrate life in the moment* is a central value in Fatima life. The underlying value (or theological virtue) operating in communal acts of celebration, such as those identified in Fatima, is *hope*, which, from a *mujerista* perspective, is a refusal to be defined by suffering. Celebration provides an opportunity for mutual encouragement and solidarity. It highlights the very transience of life and the human challenge to *live* in and through all circumstances. Being a display of solidarity, celebratory events are, however, more than mere occasions for celebration; they also have political importance since the solidarity which they express has to do with understanding the interconnections that exist between oppression and privilege.

The broader question of inclusion within wider Irish society is a pertinent one for inner city communities such as Fatima. Stereotypical accounts of Fatima by 'outsiders' highlight the general failure on the part of wider society to acknowledge the systemic nature of Fatima's 'lack of success', poverty and social exclusion. A re-reading of my Fatima-based research interview transcripts, in light of *mujerista* and womanist critiques of mainstream understandings of 'success' in society, confirmed that Fatima women's limited opportunities for advancement are structured into Irish society, given Ireland's politico-economic priorities. The systemic nature of Fatima's suffering was also brought to the fore in my comparative analysis with feminist theological sources. *Mujerista* theology would suggest that the distinctive resistance behaviours, born of the long-term suffering which characterises the life of the community, express a fundamental *choice for life* on the part of the Fatima community. Moral actions, such as intentional deceit and the collective ousting of drug dealers, testify to a

vital moral agency in the face of the threat of extinction. The *mujerista* analysis resonates with my own observations of Fatima life when it argues that this humanizing activity of resistance implies that Fatima residents are insisting upon being subjects of their own history in the face of their death dealing culture of violence. Furthermore, a womanist perspective clarifies the fact that Fatima's resistance behaviours are built upon an inter-generational transmission of cultural codes based around women's activities, which exist for the purpose of community survival. This too has been effectively demonstrated in the case of Fatima. It is on this basis that Fatima's morality can be accurately described as a "survival ethics".

This ethnographic discovery and analysis of a localised inner city survival ethics, on its own terms, is not, however, without its challenges. The question of the appropriateness of a critique of emergent findings, addressed above, is one such example. A critical exploration of the emergent cultural themes and values uncovered in my research, in the context of the inner city, might easily be provided by a variety of ethical systems, such as Christian social ethics, virtue ethics and liberationist/feminist ethics, among others. Such analyses might positively explore certain emergent themes, such as: *communal solidarity and loyalty, a care for the common good, human dignity and respect, care and protection of the most vulnerable in society, and the celebration of life and hope despite profound human suffering*, since these same themes are integral to their respective ethical systems. The traditions of Christian social ethics and liberationist/feminist ethics might also be expected to address the relevant question of structural sin as highlighted in my research.¹⁶ Virtue ethics would, most likely critically assess Fatima 'virtues' and 'vices' as depicted in the emergent cultural themes in dialogue with Christian interpretations of Aristotelian virtue ethics, such as those found in scholastic and post-scholastic theology and, more recently, in the writings of Hannah Arendt and Alisdair MacIntyre (among others).¹⁷ In the following section, in seeking to demonstrate key elements of a potential critical analysis of the more problematic findings in my research, I will confine my deliberations to a dialogue with the field of *feminist ethics*, since this field explores in depth such areas as: women's identity and roles, women's self-sacrifice for the sake of the children

¹⁶ This requires a cogent social analysis of Irish society in light of the Gospel. Contributions by the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI), the Irish Centre of Faith and Culture (ICFC) and the Jesuit Centre of Faith and Justice (JCFJ), reflection groups consisting of academic staff in Irish institutes of theology alongside members of local communities, among others, might form a solid basis for such an analysis. An prior example of such a dialogue group is the Cherry Orchard Faith and Justice Group. See *One City, Two Tiers: A Theological Reflection on Life in a Divided Society*. (Dublin: Cherry Orchard Faith & Justice Group, 1996).

¹⁷ See Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (US: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 2007); *Dependent rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999); Kelvin Knight (ed.) *The MacIntyre Reader*, 1st ed. (US: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998) and Dara Villa (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

(in a dominantly child-centred community), oppressive patterns of reproduction and gender socialization, as well as limited opportunities for women's flourishing, all of which are directly relevant to my research findings.

7.3.2 A Critique of Emergent Findings: Insights from the Field of Feminist Ethics

As was clearly stated above, the ethnographic approach employed in this research ethically prohibited a premature critique of the emergent findings on my part in the role of ethnographer. However, I also acknowledge that a number of the emergent cultural themes highlighted in my research are problematic from the perspective of feminist ethics (chapter three). Primary among these are:

- The extent to which the Fatima moral worldview is *child-centred*, which raises significant questions about the self-valuing of Fatima adults, both female and male;
- The potentially oppressive nature of an ethical system whereby adults, particularly women, extensively *sacrifice* their personal happiness and fulfilment for the sake of their children's future;
- The implications of gender socialization processes for a Fatima morality, including the fact that women are largely defined in relation to their *mothering role* and bear the burden of parenting;
- The extent to which the moral worldview of Fatima is defined by insider-outsider *mistrust* and *non-communication/absence of dialogue*;
- The fact that *conflict*, including domestic and sexual violence, is uncovered as being at inordinately high levels within the Fatima community.

To begin, feminist ethics is a complex reality and pluriform in nature. As an ethical system, it is characterised as resistance-based - Claudia Card describes it as: "born in refusal"¹⁸ It intentionally adopts a hermeneutics of both suspicion and liberation, taking the view that "authoritative representations of morality in canonical and contemporary works of Western tradition of philosophy are marked by *gender and other bias*."¹⁹ While some feminists, such as Joyce Trebilcot, reject the very project of ethics (deeming it excessively andocentric and hierarchical), others, such as Claudia Card, Ruth Ginzberg, Alison M. Jaggar and Sarah Lucia Hoagland (among many) seek to clarify the criteria, meanings, and future relevance of a specifically feminist ethics.²⁰ Of particular interest to this thesis, given the predominantly child-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understanding: A Feminist Study in Ethics*, (New York/London; Routledge, 1998) 51.

²⁰ Joyce Trebilcot, "Ethics of Method: Greasing the Machine and Telling Stories"; Alison M. Jaggar, "Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects"; Ruth Ginzberg, "Philosophy is not a

centred nature of the Fatima community, is the feminist debate on the 'ethics of care', originally associated with the ethicist Carol Gilligan.²¹ In her renowned work, *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan highlights *the conflicting tensions between women's tendency towards personal fulfilment and self-sacrifice for the sake of another* (a defining feature of women's self descriptions in Fatima, with respect to their children), suggesting the need for a separation from a tendency towards self-sacrifice, in order to become reconciled to one's own agency and needs.²² Moreover she highlights the ever-changing context of morality and moral agency.²³ These and subsequent explorations of the notion of an 'ethics of care' raise important questions regarding a critical analysis of the emergent values of Fatima, particularly relating to: the nature/nurture debate, gender socialization, gender roles, gender stereotyping and discrimination, dualistic and hierarchical concepts of masculinity and femininity, woman-denying interpretations of mothering, reproduction and production, sexism and sexuality, and biology and the body - all of which are significant categories within the field of feminist theory.²⁴ While gendered relations are variously examined in diverse ethical systems, the feminist analysis of gender socialisation, in particular, provides an in-depth critique of gender roles and socialisation processes in society, which are of direct relevance to the context of Fatima (chapter three). Feminist ethicists offer insightful deconstructions of patterns and perceptions of mothering. Kay Standing writes:

... the social construction of appropriate motherhood, and control of women's sexuality through a dominant discourse of normative mothering (in a heterosexual, married relationship – in a white middle-class model of the nuclear family) are issues that concerned me as a feminist. All women are defined in relationship to motherhood (either positively or negatively) (Gordon, 1990). This construction of all women as potential mothers (and some as potential 'bad' mothers) is one which impacts on women's lives and identities in various ways, organizing them in particular relationships with institutions...²⁵

Luxury"; Sarah Lucia Hoagland, "Some Thoughts About 'Caring' " in C. Card, *Feminist Ethics*: 45 -51; 78-104; 126-145; 246-263.

²¹ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) 134. Gilligan's research and analysis has subsequently critiqued within the feminist community as, for example, by Michele M. Moody-Adams and Sarah Lucia Hoagland, respectively. See Michele M. Moody-Adams, "Gender and the Complexity of Moral Voices"; Sarah Lucia Hoagland, "Some Thoughts about 'Caring' " in C. Card, *Feminist Ethics*: 195-212; 246-263.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 138.

²⁴ See Carol S. Robb (ed.), Beverly Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); also a comprehensive treatment of 'gender' is provided by Elaine Graham in *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood and Theology*, (London: Mowbray, 1995).

²⁵ Kay Standing, "Writing the Voices of the Less Powerful: Research on Lone Mothers", in J. Ribbens and R. Edwards, (eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives* (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998, rep. 2000) 186-202 at 188.

Another related recurring theme within the Fatima ethical framework is that of *maternal responsibility* and related internal conflicts, including lack of choices (chapter three). Feminist theorists typically address the complexities of ‘responsibility’ within a broad communitarian framework that also seeks the flourishing of individuals and minorities. Addressing the question of a *responsibility ethics*, Margaret Urban Walker speaks of the “strains of responsibility” inherent in her own and the feminist ethical framework:

I model the structure of responsibility ethics here in my own way, but I hope this way captures something important about a variety of related views, including ethics of care that have been favoured by many feminists. The basic claim about the structure of our responsibilities is this: Specific moral claims on us arise from our contact or relationship with others whose interests are vulnerable to our actions and choices, We are *obligated to respond* to particular others when circumstance or ongoing relationship render them especially, conspicuously, or peculiarly dependent on us.²⁶

An issue arising in my own research is that the communitarian perspective predominant within the Fatima ethical system is shown to be achieved, at least in some cases, at significant cost to individual/personal development. Critiques of communitarian ethics typically point towards its failure to adequately respect and provide opportunities for individuals and minorities. However, the tradition of feminist ethics positively suggests that an authentic communitarian ethics takes a both/and approach to personal/communal development and fulfilment; allowing for the advancement of individuals and minorities within the broader framework of the advancement of the community. In other words, a dualistic either/or perspective is supplanted by a both/and perspective.

A further predominant finding in my emergent themes was that of the inordinately *conflictual nature of Fatima relationships*. Levels of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual violence were shown to be characteristically high, and the general failure on the part of the community to address or to counter such conflict was demonstrated.²⁷ The phenomenon of domestic/sexual violence is extensively examined by pioneering feminist scholars, including Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Mary Shawn Copeland, Phillis Trible, Karen Bloomquist, Susan Hanks, Susan Thistlewaite, and Mary Marshall Fortune (among others). Bloomquist writes that sexual

²⁶ Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understanding*: 107.

²⁷ This account is in part informed by previous post graduate theological research pertaining to domestic and sexual violence which I conducted (1996-1997), namely, *Female Rape: A Theological Exploration*, dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Licentiate in Theology (STL), The Milltown Institute, Dublin, May 1997. (Unpublished).

violence and patriarchy are “viciously intertwined”.²⁸ She defines patriarchy as “the complex of ideologies and structures that sustains and perpetuates male control over females” (which is facilitated and maintained by socialisation processes) and she argues that patriarchal constructs define male-female relationships as relationships of domination and subordination.²⁹ In a similar vein, Hanks is concerned with sexual violence in the context of nature/culture and sex/gender debates.³⁰ Representing the feminist worldview she speaks of “the process of patriarchal socialization” suggesting that patriarchal values are subtly integrated into our gender socialisation process.³¹ Feminist theorists suggest that female socialisation processes largely *negatively* define women; women are expected to be non-aggressive, non-assertive, non-active and non-violent. They argue that, typically, relational aspects of the personality are affirmed and autonomy denied. Moreover, women are viewed as responsible for both male and female sexuality.³² Male socialization processes are equally demeaning within a patriarchal construct and involves the suppression of, and devaluing of, the feminine, which is intimately related to the objectification of women and violence against women (and, by extension, children and the earth).³³ This analysis firmly situates much of Fatima’s personal and social relationships in the context of oppressive power relations. In such a framework the empowerment of women becomes both an ethical and a methodological requirement. In conclusion, a feminist analysis of a Fatima ethical worldview strongly critiques the oppressive nature of Fatima’s gendered relations, the limited choices structured into Fatima gender roles and maternal responsibilities, the on-going development of the community at the expense of the self-actualization needs of individuals/minorities, and the denial of human flourishing inherent in Fatima understandings of self sacrifice “for the sake of the children”.

Having examined the question of the critique of the emergent cultural themes by means of a dialogue with feminist ethics, I now wish to explore the implications of my research findings for: 1) formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context, and 2) contextual theologies/spiritualities of the Irish inner city (and beyond).

²⁸ Karen L. Bloomquist, ‘Sexual Violence: Patriarchy’s Offense and Defense’ in C.J. Brown and C.R. Bohn (eds.) *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: a Feminist Critique* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1989) 62-69 at 62.

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 62

³⁰ Susan Hanks, ‘The Sexual Revolution and Violence Against Women: The Boundary Between Liberation and Exploitation’ in *Concilium*, 1984, 42-47.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² S. Thistlewaite, *Sex, Race and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publ., 1989)128.

³³ On male socialization see J.B. Nelson, Embracing Masculinity, in J. Nelson & S. Longfellow: *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994)195-215.

7.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

In addressing the question of the relevance of my research findings for moral theology in the Irish context, I begin by exploring the wider implications of the critical analysis of selected sources of Irish moral theology (chapters five and six). Following on this, I explore the implications of the research for the field of contextual theology. Here I will attempt a creative synthesis between my research contribution in the field of social ethics and those of the Irish inner city contextual theologians Martin Byrne and Bernadette Flanagan, in the hope of furthering a comprehensive and integral theology of the Irish inner city.³⁴

7.4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR FORMAL SOURCES OF MORAL THEOLOGY IN THE IRISH CONTEXT

Subsequent to my analysis of Fatima's value system and moral practice (chapter three) a critical analysis of formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context was conducted, using the hermeneutic of Fatima ethics (chapter five and six). This latter analysis confirms a general failure of formal sources of moral theology to explicitly include inner city moral experience and values. Beginning with the critical examination of the Irish Bishops' pastoral letters, in the period 1969 to 2005, no commentary or theological reflection on inner city value systems and moral practice is identified. Neither do the Bishops' letters incorporate examples from inner city life experience in order to make moral distinctions with reference to cultural and socio-economic contexts. Absent, for example, is any in-depth, critical analysis of different cultural experiences in regard to marriage and divorce. Absent also is any analysis of the inaccessibility of Christian marriage in cases of socio-economic exclusion. I have argued that, in order to include the inner city experience, the vision of morality in the Bishops' letters and statements, which is currently predominantly confined to the sphere of personal and sexual morality, needs to be extended to a broader vision of social justice, which requires a revised interpretation of Natural Law within Roman Catholic theology.³⁵ Also notable is the absence of any specific gender analysis in the Bishops' contribution. With the exception of a limited number of documents (discussed below) I argue that one dominant moral worldview is presented for all, without appropriate socio-cultural qualification, with the result that distinctive aspects of the moral experience of the inner city is sidelined (chapter five).

³⁴ By 'comprehensive' here I mean the integration of systematic theology, spirituality and ethics.

³⁵ As indicated earlier, in chapters five and six, the traditional theological legacy in Roman Catholicism of a separation between sexual morality and a theology of justice has direct impact on the inclusion of inner city moral experience in formal theological sources.

With respect to the selected journals, their general failure to represent the value system and moral practice of the inner city is also unambiguously demonstrated. A frequency analysis of the selected journals indicates the complete absence of explicit explorations of the value systems and moral practice of Fatima and of inner city communities in Ireland. With respect to content analysis, central elements of the Fatima moral experience are shown not to be included. The abuse of women and children is one case in point; not one article in the selected theological journals examines the experience of domestic violence, whether in the context of Irish society in general, or in the specific context of the inner city. Research reveals, in sharp contrast, a notable preoccupation with child sexual clerical abuse, suggesting a prioritization of ecclesial concerns. My analysis also indicates that, apart from a very few exceptions, the authorship in the selected journals is not representative of socio-excluded communities. Furthermore, in general, it may be claimed that the dominant group in Irish society (in other words, the middle and upper classes) benefits most from the interpretations presented. A general failure to critically dialogue with a variety of disciplines, including economics, sociology, and cultural studies, is also demonstrated. Moreover, inductive theological methodologies are shown to be the exception, and the incorporation of liberationist and feminist perspectives is minimalist.

However, as indicated earlier, certain positive aspects are also uncovered in relation to the inclusion of inner city ethics, with implications for an inclusive ethics. In the next section I focus exclusively on selected indicators of an inclusive moral theology in the Irish context, beginning with an examination of publications by the Irish Bishops.

7.4.1.1 The Critical Analysis of Magisterial Teaching: Indicators of an Inclusive Ethic

The area of relationships is central to my research analysis (chapter three). In this context, magisterial teachings raise important questions regarding the most authentic base for sexuality, relationships, parenting and the family. These teachings consistently suggest that the stability of a life long partnership of committed marriage is the most stable context for childrearing; a vision which contrasts sharply with the reality of Fatima life (chapter three). As indicated above, the critical analysis of magisterial teaching in the Irish context, offered in this thesis, highlights the disjunction between theologies of sexuality (*order of nature*) and theologies of justice (*order of reason*) as a result of neo-scholastic interpretations of Natural law theory.³⁶ It is precisely the need for an integral relationship between sexuality and justice that a Fatima-based analysis of values and moral practice highlights. The critical analysis conducted in this

³⁶ Ibid.: 239-240. See also Charles E. Curran & Richard A. Mc Cormack (eds.) *Readings in Moral Theology, No. 7, Natural Law and Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

work (chapter five) did, however, identify some indicators of an attempt to bridge both worlds, as, for example, in *Love is for Life* (1985), where the economic impediment to marriage for some is addressed, and the right to marriage for all is argued, on the basis of a deontological ethics (n. 213). Direct evidence of a ‘justice’ ethic is also evident when, in presenting its theology of ‘family’ the letter acknowledges the unfair hardship caused to families that are deprived of the right to “elementary well being and minimum human dignity” (n. 216-217). Reflecting the context of the inner city, the letter specifies inhumane conditions, such as poverty, malnutrition, inadequate hygiene, sub-standard housing, squalid environmental conditions, inadequate education, social inequality, unemployment and discrimination (n. 217). A more inclusive magisterial teaching of sexuality and relationships would therefore seek to situate its analysis of sexuality within a theology of justice, explore the ethical significance of specific cultural contexts and incorporate an in-depth social analysis.

Another potentially fruitful area of discussion, which might be developed with the inner city specifically in mind, is the analysis offered in the magisterial teaching on the contrasting ‘cultures of life’ and ‘cultures of death’ in contemporary society (a theme central to Roman Catholic theology since Vatican II).³⁷ This theological analysis insists upon the sacredness, dignity and radical equality of all human life and, furthermore, ‘quality of life’ arguments are forwarded which might effectively be applied to the social environment of the inner city. Within the context of a theology of justice, the cogent analysis of poverty in *Re-Righting the Constitution*, in particular, provides a very fruitful basis for an inclusive inner city theology, as does the Bishops’ analysis of the relationship between justice and economics (*Work is the Key*, 1992; *Prosperity with a Purpose*, 1999).

Further documents, which not only explicitly address the context of the inner city, but are also methodologically significant in terms of their inclusion of insights from the field of sociology and their adoption of an inductive and comprehensive approach, are: *Breaking the Silence* (1997), *Tackling the Drugs Problem Together* (1998), *Beyond Maintenance: Papers From a Drug Treatment Seminar* (2002) and *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture* (2000). This latter publication, in particular, uses an inclusive, inductive, narrative-based, ethnographic methodology. Employing grounded theory, this publication incorporates narrative analysis and extrapolates ‘recurring themes’ which significantly mirror cultural themes uncovered in the context of Fatima-based research. The document also includes indicators of significant

³⁷ For a summary position of Roman Catholic perspectives on culture see also Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: an Introduction to Faith and Culture*, Revised Ed. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997, rep 2003) chapters three and four; also, for a comprehensive collection of Roman Catholic publications on faith and culture, by The Pontifical Council for Culture, see http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/. Viewed 15/02/2008.

alienation from the official churches (an independent finding of my own). Taking the narrative analysis forward towards an explicitly theological analysis, the model adopted in this magisterial publication is that of correlating critical aspects of the narrative themes with the Gospel. Taking the Emmaus story (Lk 23:13-35), the model suggests that we: 1) walk together with and listen to the addict; 2) respond sensitively and appropriately to what has been heard; 3) recognise the importance of “embodied solidarity” (community) in the narratives of drug addicts, and 4) recognise grace at work in addiction.³⁸

Having explored in brief certain indicators of the potential of official teachings for an inclusive moral theology of the Irish inner city, notable gaps need to be highlighted if an inclusive theology is to be accomplished. Areas which explicitly require particular attention include *child abuse* and *domestic violence*. A less clerical emphasis, with respect to the former, and a detailed analysis, sensitive to culture and class, with respect to the latter, are required if magisterial teaching is to be considered inclusive of inner city moral life.

7.4.1.2 The Critical Analysis of Selected Theological Journals: Indicators of an Inclusive Ethic

As with the magisterial teachings, the overall failure of the selected journals to include the moral experience of the inner city in their deliberations is demonstrated (chapter six). Despite this finding, I suggest that the critical analysis of these publications also highlights potential areas of inclusivity. Theological perspectives on *anthropology* and *gender* are cases in point. As Hegarty suggests, the anthropology in official Roman Catholic teachings is problematic since it centres on the perceived passivity of women.³⁹ This contribution is particularly helpful for the context of Fatima, where one of the more pressing issues is women’s disempowerment.⁴⁰ In agreement with Hegarty, I argue that any anthropology that potentially defines oppressive roles for women, children and men, needs to be strongly challenged within the field of theology, on the basis of the foundational *principles of the right to life* and *the right to justice* (among others). These requirements demand particular, contextual studies in order to avoid inappropriate generalities and ideologies. In this context, Hegarty points towards the need for further elaborations of a contemporary Trinitarian theology that would imply mutuality in gendered relations.⁴¹ Taking a similar view, I suggest that Trinitarian themes and explorations such as *mutuality*, *difference yet radical equality*, *community of care*, *solidarity*, *inclusivity* and

³⁸ Ibid.: 20.

³⁹ B. Hegarty, (OP), “The Collaboration of Men and Women - according to the Vatican and to the Bible” in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 54, No. 8, Oct. 2004: 38-48 at 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 38

⁴¹ Ibid.: 43-45.

pluralism, much examined in the literature, might further be specifically linked to the inner city culture and contexts, and employ illustrations from inner city life. These themes also need to be more explicitly informed by a justice ethics, as, for example, is demonstrated in political, liberationist and feminist Trinitarian theologies.⁴²

Attention to the social implications of theology is also central to a theology of justice. Moral theologian, O’Gorman, advocates a theology of justice which is significantly inclusive of contexts of social exclusion, such as Fatima.⁴³ He suggests that such a theology includes:

- the need for an ethics of social and economic liberation;
- the need for a just allocation of basic health care resources;
- the obligation of national governments and the international community to alleviate the scale of human suffering;
- the necessity to reaffirm fundamental moral values such as freedom and fidelity, truth and tolerance;
- an insistence that rights, relationships and responsibility must be rooted in respect for the human person, and
- the prioritisation of *compassion* as the basis for all morality.

This approach, which is rooted in the tradition of Christian social ethics, including Catholic Social Teaching, is a rich resource for an inclusive moral theology.⁴⁴ It highlights themes such as *solidarity, the common good, justice and equality for all, human dignity and human rights, inclusion and option of the poor and most marginalized in society, bodily integrity and the critique of religious and societal structures*, which are areas of Christian social ethics with direct points of contact with the Fatima moral experience (chapter three). The Catholic tradition of a critique of ‘structures of sin’ in society, in particular, offers a rich theological foundation for any future theology of Fatima or the inner city.

An inclusive theology must also address culturally defined questions of gender and sexual politics; an aspect that the analysis offered in this research prioritises (chapter three). The paucity of the treatment of gender in the selected sources of theological publications is notable,

⁴² Theologians such as Jürgen Moltman, Leonardo Boff and Elizabeth Johnson, among others, advocate a politico-social ethics of the Trinity, more readily applicable to the context of the inner city than traditional explorations, in my view.

⁴³ Kevin ‘O Gorman, “Moral theology after AIDS” in *The Furrow*, Vol. 49, No. 10, Oct. 1998: 568-572.

⁴⁴ On Roman Catholic Social Teaching see Thomas Massaro (SJ), *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, (Franklin/Wisconsin: Sheed & Ward: 2000).

as is a predominant emphasis on the relationship between women and the church (chapter six). A comprehensive analysis of the role and position of women in Irish society, including Irish sub-cultures, is absent. General questions addressed in the theological journals examined include: sexism in the Church, the patriarchal nature of the Church, women and ministry (including ordination) and women and liturgy. The discussions are radically removed from the context of the inner city, where predominant themes include: women's powerlessness, violence against women, shame and alienation from Church - on the basis of poverty and social exclusion - women-bonding, strength and vulnerability, and the transgenerational transmission of moral values through the maternal line (chapter three). While male sexual politics receives some attention in the contribution of Ferguson and Arthurs, the lived reality of the 'absent male', which profoundly shapes the Fatima identity and core relationships within the community, receives no attention.⁴⁵ An inclusive theology would necessarily broaden out the focus of discussion to address these particular limitations. Most importantly the intimate relationship between sexism and classism, highlighted in my research, requires closer theological and social analysis.

The morality of health care is another significant discussion in my research (chapter three). Questions pertaining to health care access, the relationship between the environment and health, inadequate housing conditions, HIV/AIDS, the relationship between poverty and health, the moral legitimacy of the use of methadone, were central in a Fatima-based analysis but inadequately addressed in the dominant sources of moral theology examined. In this context, O'Gorman insists on a respect for narrative and the pastoral requirement to listen to the human experience and to seek a contextual and dialogical theology of health care and morality.⁴⁶ While certain insightful global and developmental perspectives on HIV/AIDS are provided by Enda McDonagh and Ann Smith, respectively, more localised theologies are also required.⁴⁷ Significant pointers in McDonagh's thematic analysis, however, may readily be directly applied to the specific context of the Irish inner city, such as; *care and compassion; body consciousness; education; solidarity; right and responsibilities; the dignity of each person and the relationship between HIV/AIDS, poverty and injustice*. In the case of the Irish inner city this would imply particular attentiveness to the contexts of the street drugs culture and poverty. A cogent analysis must situate poverty as a failure of economic, political and social systems. An analysis of the explicit links between poverty and ethics is required (as in my contribution). In

⁴⁵ Harry Ferguson and Hugh Arthurs, "Men and Sexual Politics", in *Doctrine & Life* Vol. 46, No. 1, Jan 1996: 4-11.

⁴⁶ O'Gorman, "Moral theology after AIDS": 568-572.

⁴⁷ Enda McDonagh, "The Catholic Church and HIV/AIDS" in *Doctrine & Life*, Vol. 54, No. 8, 2004: 2-6; also Ann Smith, "HIV Prevention - perspective of a faith-based agency" in *The Furrow*, Vol. 55, No. 11, Nov. 2004: 616-630.

line with Kennedy, I suggest that an authentic theological analysis of poverty can most effectively emerge from immersion in the life of the marginalised. Such a standpoint enables the respectful facilitation of a local narrative, which is considered a fruitful basis for an inclusive moral theology in the Irish context. This, in turn, raises questions about theological authorship. The general absence of a theology from 'the inside', and the moral failure to facilitate such a theology at the level of institutes of theology requires consideration, since a moral theology, which systematically excludes minority groupings in society, is inevitably bolstering the value system of the dominant group.⁴⁸ I suggest that a more critical and sensitive use of traditional theological language, categories, and frameworks, and the facilitation of a theological voice from 'the inside', by means of culturally sensitive theological education are necessary requirements for Irish moral theology.

Apart from the above suggestions of a more inclusive (mainstream) moral theology in the Irish context, I take the view that the emergent local values identified in my research have resonance with Irish contextual theologies of the inner city. In the following section, by means of dialogue with selected Irish contextual theologians, I wish to explore indicators of an integral and comprehensive contextual theology of the inner city emerging from this research. As indicated earlier, this approach, which seeks to integrate systematic, spiritual and ethical perspectives, within an over-arching narrative theology, is specifically explored in dialogue with theological contributions by Martin Byrne and Bernadette Flanagan.

7.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF THE IRISH INNER CITY

A detailed examination of how the expressions of moral values, religious faith and spirituality evident within my research data might become the basis of a more intentional theological methodology is the job of a further period of research. Here, however, I wish to begin to explore central categories which one might take forward in constructing such an integral contextual theology of the inner city. My research has demonstrated that much may be gleaned from inductive and contextual theological approaches which incorporate self-reflexivity, prioritise personal and/or communal transformation, and arise directly from communities that experience socio-cultural exclusion in society.⁴⁹ A dialogue with publications by the North

⁴⁸ I acknowledge a number of innovative publications by many religious communities that articulate a theology from the perspective of the socially marginalised (such as 'Grassroots' publications by the Jesuit Centre of Faith and Justice-JCFJ). I suggest that, generally, these publications do not have a significant readership base beyond professional religious communities.

⁴⁹ Faith reflections by the Fatima *Fig Tree Group* are a case in point (chapters one and three). A further notable example of an Irish theological publication which has explicitly sought to bridge the divide between the worlds of academic theology and one socially excluded Dublin

Dublin inner-city contextual theologian, Martin Byrne, and the analysis of South inner city spirituality provided by Dublin theologian Bernadette Flanagan illustrates this point. Taken together, these theologies embrace narrative, creative and ethnographic approaches to inner city theology. In approaching such a dialogue I hope to: 1) prioritise a narrative theological approach, 2) highlight emergent cultural themes as a central theological category, and 3) address the question of alienation from the official churches by examining the phenomenon of non-churched or secular faith operative within the inner city. This latter investigation suggests that localized rituals demonstrate distinctive communal meanings, hence are a fitting setting for an inclusive moral theology of the inner city.

7.4.2.1 Prioritising a Narrative Theological Approach

Narrative theology views story (including life story) as a significant pathway to meaning. Both personal and collective stories are considered to be sacred spaces; the locus of God's self-revelation. In his theological exploration of the relationship between faith and the imagination, William Bausch writes that "(a)ll theologies ... must somehow tap into and reflect life and point to story, and all stories are ultimately theological".⁵⁰ Arguing the validity a narrative theology, John Navone and Thomas Cooper, write:

Since story is the only means by which the interpersonal reality of humankind can be expressed in its cognitive and affective fullness and since our relationship to God is fundamentally interpersonal, it follows that storytelling and story listening provide the most appropriate means of enabling us to live in this relationship.⁵¹

With respect to the field of moral theology, Margaret Urban Walker similarly suggests that it is more authentic to view moral constructions and deconstructions in our lives by means of a narrative approach, which provides the bedrock for moral meaning at any time in the life cycle. She writes that: "the idea is that story is the basic form of representation for moral problems".⁵² Christian ethicist and theologian Lisa Sowle Cahill similarly explores the positive role of empirical and narrative approaches in the field of theological ethics, suggesting that "(D)escriptive accounts of what the human situation actually is like give us a 'window' onto the

community, Cherry Orchard, was the Cherry Orchard Faith and Justice Group, *One City, Two Tiers: A Theological Reflection on Life in a Divided Society* (Dublin: Image Printing, 1996). Cherry Orchard is a public authority housing estate in south-west Dublin.

⁵⁰ William J. Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty Third Publications, 1984, rep. 1999) 19.

⁵¹ Cited in Bausch: 19.

⁵² Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understanding*: 110.

normative”.⁵³ While contextual theologies dialogue with significant elements of systematic theology they typically adopt a narrative approach.⁵⁴ Byrne, for example, drawing upon the contribution of John Dominic Crossan, highlights varying story typologies - myth, analogue, action, satire and parable - which serve to subvert the worldview of the hearer/reader, and to prepare him/her for transcendence or mystery.⁵⁵ Bernadette Flanagan, who employs ethnographic processes to uncover the voices of the inner city ‘Liberties’ area of Dublin, similarly prioritises the personal story “of the soul” in her explorations of inner city spirituality.⁵⁶ This perspective is in line with my own approach to a Fatima-based morality, where the life-story or narrative provided the context for a hermeneutic or interpretation of a Fatima-based value system and moral practice.

The power of the story, in its simultaneous particularity and universality, is that it is a conveyor of truth, which is a fitting starting point for a contextual theology. As Byrne puts it: “the stories, words, idioms and language of the local people... are the best tools in the service of urban theology...⁵⁷ This stance is in harmony with wider Christian tradition of a theology of revelation. It is reflective, for example, of both Ignatian spirituality and the transcendental theology of Karl Rahner, where God is found in the ordinary of life, and perceived upon reflection and discernment.⁵⁸ The urban theologian argues that the starting point for reflection on the mystery of God is in the ordinary/extraordinary dimensions of the urban life story. Referring to the context of Dublin’s Docklands, Byrne writes that “attention to social context and to the articulation of a spirituality ‘from below’ are essential first steps in constructing a Christian spirituality in Dublin’s Docklands”.⁵⁹ Flanagan shares this sense of the sacred in the ‘ordinary’ aspects of Liberties’ life, which demands a radical openness to ‘otherness’, a suspension of the researcher-theologian’s personal religious perspective, and a non-judgemental and respectful embrace of the emerging narrative (mirroring my own research’s ethical stance):

⁵³ Lisa Sowle Cahill, ‘Sexuality and Christian Ethics: How to Proceed’ in J. Nelson and S. Longfellow, *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 25.

⁵⁴ For a comparison between systematic and narrative approaches see William Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*: 15-28

⁵⁵ Byrne, *Freshly Baked Bread*: 55

⁵⁶ Bernadette Flanagan, *The Spirit of the City: Voices from Dublin’s Liberties* (Dublin: Veritas, 1999).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 47.

⁵⁸ On ‘Ignatian Spirituality’ see *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola with Related Documents*. Edited by John C. Olin. Translated by Joseph F. O’Callaghan. (Fordham University Press, 1992) and *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*. Translation by George E. Ganss, S.J. (Loyola Press. The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992) and on ‘Revelation Theology’ (including Rahnerian perspectives) see also John Haught, “Revelation” in Joseph A. Komenchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (eds.) *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987) 884-899.

⁵⁹ Byrne, *Freshly Baked Bread*: 118.

The sheer distinctiveness of expression and accent of Liberty people also left me in no doubt about the unique world I was entering in these exchanges. The realisation that I was being confronted by something very distinctive strengthened my conviction of the necessity to exercise constant vigilance over my personal religious preferences so that I could become exposed to the spiritual world of the Liberties. As Moses took off his shoes to get in touch with the holiness of the ground on which he stood (Ex 3:5), so approaching these interviews involved a conscious recognition of the uniqueness of the God manifestation in this place and a willingness to be responsive to what was important for those who shared their stories.⁶⁰

Narrative approaches are manifold and can be highly localised, creative and original. They may be found in the form of music, poetry (including *theo poetics*), role, play, drama, art, the creative production of newsletters (such as *The Spirit of Fatima*, appendix H) and artefacts, such as local public murals and community quilts.⁶¹ The three creative focus groups in my research, for example, engaged in quilting, artwork and musical composition (chapter two). Narrative processes such as these provide an effective basis for ethnographic analysis, but they might equally be employed as a basis for explicitly theological analyses, as indicated above. A close reflection upon local narratives (in whatever form) facilitates the isolation of recurring cultural themes which can, in turn, effectively form the centre point of a contextual theology of the inner city (or other context). For example, in her analysis of inner city spirituality, Flanagan makes explicit biblical connections with the emergent ethnographic cultural themes.⁶² Alternatively, a dialogue with comparable themes in post modern theologies and spiritualities might have significant potential. Post modern cultural themes such as: *hope versus nihilism, human vulnerability, suffering and anguish, the paradoxical presence and absence of love (including God's love), inter-relationality and community, and the requirement of human flourishing*, as, for example, explored in the work of Michael Downey (among others) are directly relevant for an inner city contextual theology.⁶³ For reason of their suitability for the construction of a localised and authentic inner city theology, I, therefore, advocate the prioritisation of emergent cultural themes as a central theological category of the inner city.

⁶⁰ Flanagan: 61.

⁶¹ *Theo poetics* (theological poetry) is employed by Byrne as means of *praxis* in his contextual theology of Dublin's inner city. In *Freshly Baked Bread*: he includes a series of twenty four poetic reflections: 61-73.

⁶² Not referring to Flanagan's contribution, one pitfall to avoid in this process of theologizing after the fact is that of 'proof texting', whereby an analysis located outside of theology, is subsequently embellished with biblical references, without appropriate respect for the wider biblical context; a criticism levelled at pre and early post Vatican II moral theology in the Roman Catholic tradition.

⁶³ Michael Downey, "In the Ache of Absence: Spirituality at the Juncture of Modernity and Postmodernity" in *Liturgical Ministry* 3, Summer 1994: 92-99.

7.4.2.2 Prioritising Emergent Cultural Themes as a Central Theological Category

As stated above, the narrative approach allows for a reading/hearing and a re-reading/re-hearing of the emerging stories, with a view to identifying emerging cultural themes. In the case of my research analysis the seven over-arching themes that emerged included: *children: protection and future; women and men: perceptions and roles; relationships: familial and social; the individual and the community: inseparable realities; survival: persistence and resistance; drugs: a significant culture shaper, and celebration: living life in the moment*. Significantly, both Byrne and Flanagan, in their respective and distinctive theological contributions, have independently uncovered many of these same themes, suggesting a certain direction for a comprehensive and integral contextual theology of the inner city, including: *care of children, solidarity, survival (including poverty and the urban drugs culture), community, interdependence and living in the present*, (or, as Byrne puts it, '*An Aimsir Láithreach*', which is the Gaelic for 'the present').⁶⁴ In order to illustrate points of potential synthesis, I will focus on the cultural theme of *survival*.

Two related aspects of *survival* examined in my work are *poverty* and the *drugs culture*. These same themes are also examined by Byrne and Flanagan, from their respective theological perspectives. Beginning with poverty, the explicit links between the pervasiveness of *poverty* and the daily struggle for survival is singled out in all three contributions. My own analysis highlights the fact that financial hardship is seen as an unrelenting part of the struggle for survival in Fatima. This hardship is demonstrated repeatedly in Fatima narratives; borrowing from neighbours, systemic welfare dependency, juggling debts, running out of money for the electricity meter, heavy debts at Christmas, etc., are commonly observed (chapter three). Cultural themes such as *shame, financial dependency and the constant struggle to provide*, as well as *neighbourliness, solidarity, inter-dependence, provision for the family, humour and resilience* are evident in the analysis of poverty (chapter three). The historical background to the systemic and structural natures of this poverty is provided and explicit links between poverty, social exclusion and faith experience are also explored in the context of shame and alienation in relation to the official Churches (chapter one). I argue that a cogent *analysis of poverty* is a necessary requirement of any inclusive moral theology and that an authentic theological analysis of poverty can only emerge from immersion in the life of the marginalised;

⁶⁴ With respect to Byrne and Flanagan, I do not attempt to provide here a comprehensive analysis of their respective contributions, but instead focus on preliminary indicators of a future potential synthesis of various and distinctive, yet complimentary, Irish urban theological contributions.

a living alongside the poor in radical terms, and the establishment of mutually respectful relationships with the poor.⁶⁵ Such a standpoint suggests that the respectful facilitation of a local narrative is an effective, authentic and inclusive methodological basis for moral theology in the Irish context.

Byrne explores the inner city courage and instinct for survival in depth, and, in this context, he prioritises *poverty* as an issue central to “communal soul searching” in the North Wall.⁶⁶ He insists that “there is nothing romantic about poverty as it serves to eliminate beauty from people’s eyes... (It) tarnishes the individual soul, and collective poverty leaves a whole people comfortable in their familiar oppression”.⁶⁷ He suggests that a contextual theology requires creative healing spaces and processes in order for the community to overcome the suffering associated with poverty and the relentless struggle to survive. In his publication *A New North Wall Spirit* (1998), he incorporates a poem by Marie O’ Reilly, namely ‘From Our Hearts’, which succinctly and graphically highlights the issue of poverty and incorporates theologies of justice and hope as well as an exploration of soteriology:

FROM OUR HEARTS

*Open your eyes!
People are dying of hunger.
Abandoned and unwanted
Homeless, aimless, hopeless,
Searching for a way out.
Who will reach out to them?
Who will listen?
How long must they wait for their Saviour?*

*Can I ever hope for full employment
An end to violence
Strangers to be welcomed and treated with respect
The old and defenceless to live without fear
Even distribution of wealth
Can I ever hope?
I Must Hope.⁶⁸*

In Byrne’s work such theo-poetics acts both as a vehicle for spiritual and religious expression and as a resource for theology since it is suffused with images and themes compatible with soteriology, theologies of hope, liberation perspectives, and biblical texts.

⁶⁵ Stanislaus Kennedy, “Preaching About Poverty” in *The Furrow*, Vol. 49, No. 3, Mar 1998: 131-136.

⁶⁶ Byrne, *The Boundary Wall*: 108.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Marie O’ Reilly, ‘From Our Hearts’, in Byrne: *A New North Wall Spirit*: 60.

Flanagan, in contrast, employs a heuristic method in her ethnographic investigations of the spirituality of the Dublin inner city (the Liberties).⁶⁹ Paralleling my research, her analysis provides the historical context for Dublin inner city poverty, and further examines explicit links between poverty and spirituality. In her research, interviewees themselves make specific theological links with poverty. Problematic spiritual and theological perspectives identifiable within her narratives, include such as beliefs as: our misery makes God happy, the poorer you are the closer you are to God, the incapacity of the priest to know and appreciate what lived poverty is, and, the Church's official concern is with Church 'dues' rather than the suffering of people in poverty.⁷⁰ Other significant aspects identified in her research, which corresponds closely to my own research findings, are that poverty-related shame and unworthiness leads to estrangement from the Church, and that there is a failure on the part of the Church to develop a spirituality that truly engages with the poor. Reflecting the expressed concerns of her interviewees, and mirroring my own conclusions regarding a Fatima ethics which advocates immersions in the life of the poor on the part of the inner city ethicist (chapters six and seven), Flanagan concludes that "a spiritual hermeneutic of the experience of poverty would have to be at the heart of any future movements of evangelisation in the Liberties", and this would necessitate the public preaching of an option for the (local) poor which would affirm the "dignity of lives which otherwise might be of no account in society".⁷¹

Intimately related to the question of survival is the context of the *urban drugs culture*. My research highlights the enormous cultural impact of drugs on the inner city community (chapter three). Repeatedly, in the interviews and group processes, the impact of drugs on the daily lives of residents came to the fore, revealing defining values, such as *good mothering* and *care of the children*, as well as further central values held by the community, including: *truth and transparency, respect of property, trust, tolerance, care and compassion, abhorrence of drug dealing while sympathy for the addict* and *self-reliance*. Ironically, the drugs culture contributes to many of the more positive values lived out daily in Fatima; *respect, courage, fidelity, tolerance* and *compassion* as well as the willingness of the local community to support the most vulnerable members of the community. Most significantly, Fatima's initiative to take on a *communal responsibility*, for its own addicts, in its housing of its own Fatima treatment centre,

⁶⁹ Bernadette Flanagan, *Liberty God: a heuristic study of Irish Urban spirituality in Dublin's Liberties*. Doctoral Thesis. The Milltown Institute, Dublin, 1998. (Unpublished).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 87-88.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

(The Fatima Drugs Treatment Centre- RDCT) without objection, on site, is an example of the moral responsibility of the local community.⁷²

Solidarity experiences are also in evidence, such as local ‘whip-arounds’ (collection of money) and the purchase of goods, for a resident who was robbed by a local drug addict (chapter three). The negative impact of drugs related illness and death was also examined, as, for example, in the context of the ethics of healthcare. As well as an analysis of the narratives of Fatima women, in my research, one creative focus group, *The Drugs Culture Group*, consisting of former drugs users and partners and mothers of users and recovering users, explored the impact of the street drugs culture on the daily life of Fatima women. Round table discussions gave voice to women’s experiences and fears, and creative art work allowed these women to get in touch with their deepest dreams and hopes (plate 8).



Plate 7. *The Drugs Culture Focus Group*. Photograph by Olive Power, 2001.

Byrne’s contribution also incorporates explorations of the urban drugs culture. One creative voice facilitated by Byrne is that of Joe Lucey, who, in “Working with Youngsters who ‘Chase the Dragon’ ”, has employed insightful and imaginative and poetic-prose to reflect his experience of inner city youth chasing drugs. Brief extracts illustrate the approach taken and demonstrates how potentially fruitful poetic contributions can be for subsequent theological reflection:

⁷² The *Fatima Drugs Treatment Centre*, established in the late 90’s, was one of the first on-site treatment centres of its kind in Ireland and provided a model for the establishment of similar centres elsewhere.

I cannot really tell details of the labyrinth which led to your entrapment by the dragon's spell. Our community is small and details do not easily disguise. Suffice it to say that when you first scented the dragon's breath, there was an emptiness yawning inside you, as large as the dragon's lair. And that was something the dragon knew....

Early on the dragon chased you through the veins of your family story, which being human, unfolded as a broken fragile love. But you did not know that others shared your lot...

And then the dragon chased you through the backstreets of boredom and through the laneways of helplessness, which then began to seep into your bones. Choices drain from your body, as you paled to the inevitability of a useless, uneventful life...

We need to talk, you and I. We need to put away our games and sit again, and chat around a fire of turf and wood. We need to listen to our hearts again. We need to truth-talk and tell something more of the stories of our souls. Perhaps then we may learn to dance again, not to the rhythm of the dragon's drum but to the ever-strengthening rhythms of our conversing hearts.⁷³

This descriptive account incorporates such theological motifs and explorations as: human yearning and the search for meaning (faith), the caring role of the community, liberation/oppression, the limitedness and fragility of the human condition, hope/hopelessness, fate and determinism versus human moral agency (free will), truth and lies, spirituality, etc. Hence, it is a rich resource for a theology of the inner city.

Flanagan, in her narrative analysis, also addresses the negative impact of the urban *drugs culture* and increasing urban violence, in the context of a discussion on the 'social environment' of the inner city. Like my own research, and that of Byrne, her research draws attention to the acute awareness among inner city residents of rapid changes in Irish society, much of which is perceived as "associated with the unleashing of darker forces", including the "downwards spiral" of drugs and violence.⁷⁴ Citing a local Liberties resident, Cathy, who was the local community as one where people merely "survive from day to day", she writes:

In this part of the city I'd say drugs, HIV and death are the main issues for me. And I suppose linked to that would be the whole area of unemployment and poverty, and the kind of killing off of people's spirit in terms of hope, their dreams and any sense of meaning they may have. All the sources of meaning we had in the past no longer exists in terms of employment... (T)hat seems to have changed a lot of people.⁷⁵

Another of her interviewees, Vincent, commented that most of his generation was wiped out by HIV/AIDS, and that it would be the same for the present generation and Sarah confirms the

⁷³ Joe Lucey, "Working with Youngsters who 'Chase the Dragon' " in Byrne, *The Boundary Wall*: 57-58

⁷⁴ Flanagan: 76.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 77.

present threat to the community: “There’s families who are living with nine drug users, where all the children are on drugs...that involves being in constant crisis... (f)or some, particularly young drug users, it involves prostitution on a daily basis”.⁷⁶ The toll on neighbourliness and community relations due to drugs related “divided loyalties” is also highlighted.⁷⁷ As with my own research a concern for the suffering of the addict and the ethical demand for adequate health services were manifest in her narratives, as well as anger with respect to the perceived disinterest of the local Church in terms of a response.⁷⁸ Methodologically, her analysis is accompanied with an explicitly theological reflection.

The above cursory examination of *survival* in the context of the Irish inner city demonstrates the clear potential for a creative dialogical approach between an inner city ethnographic ethics and selected contextual theologies of the Irish inner city. This dialogue points to the necessity for the pro-active provision, on the part of the Irish theological community and the churches, of creative communal spaces for localised inner city theological and spiritual reflection; a response which is faithful to the rich tradition of Christian theological aesthetics.

7.4.2.3 Creating Creative Communal Spaces for Theological and Spiritual Reflection

The place of aesthetics and the arts within theology is not innovative. Archaeological data and oral spiritual traditions testify to the fundamentally human phenomenon of the creative and artistic expression of deeply imbibed spiritual/religious beliefs. The myriad of creation myths and of imaginative formative spiritual narratives, the ever-creative employment of symbol and ritual, and the expressed appreciation of the religious dimension of aesthetics are universal phenomena among world religions and spiritualities. With respect to Christianity, a formal theological study of aesthetics has been in evidence since its conception. However, the explicit exploration of aesthetics within theology has, historically, been a source of debate and conflict and the modernist legacy of suspicion of the imaginative dimension of faith has surfaced questions about the validity of the use of creative means in theology.

Christian aesthetics is rooted in Judaism, which has historically witnessed on-going and lively debate between iconoclasts and iconophiles (a debate which continued within Christianity and which came to a climax in the Reformation during the sixteenth century). It has also been significantly influenced by Greek philosophy, not least Aristotelian philosophy, which explicitly examines the relationship between imagination and faith. Throughout the centuries

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 78.

⁷⁷ Ibid.: 92.

⁷⁸ Ibid.: 79-80.

Christian reflection has incorporated a theology of aesthetics/beauty and has facilitated a fruitful dialogue between theology and the creative arts. Traditionally theological aesthetics has explored theologies of God's glory and has linked beauty with 'the vision of God' and 'the image of Christ', while also cautioning against idolatry. Since the 20th century the role of art in relation to theology, has been increasingly explored within respected theological circles, as, for example, in the works by Hans Urs von Balthassar and Paul Tillich. Moreover contemporary interdisciplinary explorations of 'faith', such as the psychological explorations of 'faith stages' by James Fowler (1981), have highlighted the role of the imagination in the process of knowing (epistemology) and have prioritized the inherent relationship between the imagination and faith.⁷⁹ Such explorations provide the bedrock for the legitimate use of the creative arts in theology.

Another dimension of this debate concerning theological aesthetics is also of relevance to our explorations. Contemporary theological explorations specifically relate aesthetics to the context of 'inculturation'.⁸⁰ This term (predominantly associated with Roman Catholic missiology) refers to the adaptation of the Gospel to cultures being evangelized. Employing the imagery of the 'pilgrim Church' explored in *Lumen Gentium*, the Vatican II document on the Church, Aloysius Pieris describes inculturation in terms of the Church on a *paschal journey* with the poor; finding faith, hope and love in the "small daily glimpses".⁸¹ Michael Amaladoss suggests that "it is in these glimpses that the prophetic artist must immortalize in sound and stone, in rhythm and image, in word and body".⁸² Addressing this challenge of inculturation Alex Garcia-Rivera, in *The Community of the Beautiful: a Theological Aesthetics*, relates aesthetics to 'difference' - in the context of liberation theologies - and Michael Amaladoss, in *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be One?*, explicitly highlights the creative role of the creative arts, broadly interpreted, in animating the local church.⁸³ Amaladoss, whose reflections on the theological role of the creative arts closely reflect my own, writes:

It is dreams of a better future that inspire and motivate the movements of the people. The prophetic action of the gospel community will also evoke such images, symbols and dreams. Just as Jesus evoked the coming of the Kingdom, his disciples too would evoke

⁷⁹ Specifically within the Irish context, the relationship between theology and art is examined by theologian Ghesa Thiessen. See *Theology and Modern Irish Art* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1999).

⁸⁰ On contemporary debates pertaining to inculturation, see Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, New and revised edition. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003) chapter nine.

⁸¹ Aloysius Pieris, cited in Michael Amaladoss, SJ, *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many be One?* (Delhi: Vidyajyoti Education & Welfare Society/ISPCK, 1998) 78.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.: 78-79; also Alex Garcia-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful: a Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville, Minnesota: the Liturgical Press, 1999).

the Kingdom, but in images and symbols related to the experience and culture of the people. It will give rise to narratives and artistic productions in song and dance, painting and literature. These will give a body to the hope of the people. Creative art that evokes the present and the future need not be [*explicitly*] Christian..., but simply human. Such art will provide a vision of the future for the struggling people and energize them. Biblical, as other religious, themes are not excluded. But they are evocative rather than illustrative...⁸⁴

In the case of Fatima, it was my experience that an artistic and creative approach to the narrative of the community more readily allowed an unfolding of self-descriptions that literacy-based means or round-table discussions failed to achieve (being considered both formal and alien by the women who opted to engage in the research). Along with the three creative focus groups which formed a key part of my ethnographic research, a Halloween community celebration, *The Spirit of Fatima*, was held in October 2000; an event that creatively celebrated the deeply held values and hopes of local community groups.



Plate 8: Celebrating the Spirit of Fatima. Photographs by Kieran Doyle O' Brien. 2000

⁸⁴ Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*: 78

These creative methods were highly effective in enabling the uncovering of underlying values in the Fatima meta-narrative (chapter two). They were not, of course, exhaustive; I might also have fruitfully provided analyses of such sources as:

- *local poetry*, such as that of resident poet Sue Gannon and former resident and internationally renowned poet Paula Meehan;
- *local 'memoirs'* by the more elderly members of the community;
- *local song*, such as the nostalgic and spontaneous singing that formed a natural part of the quilting experience with older women in the estate, or the song *Something Inside so Strong*, regularly sung by local residents during significant celebratory moments in community life; and
- *local creative artefacts*, produced by the Fatima community and community workers, such as photo galleries displayed during community festivals, local community quilts (including quilts by the Rialto Drugs Treatment Centre- RCDDT), visuals employed by FGU during the regeneration process, sacred spaces in the community, etc.

As indicated above, Byrne similarly employs creative means of gathering the narrative of the Dublin North Wall community, by means of symbol, story, art, poetry (including theopoetics), memoirs and ritual. Since I have worked in collaboration with Byrne, as a part facilitator of one such Dublin inner city faith reflection process, I will take this experience as an illustrative example of an intentional and repeatable creative process for enabling a theological exploration of the inner city.⁸⁵ The process involved the following format:

1. *The Gathering*, where community representatives (residents and workers) from four inner city communities gathered for an intentional inner city faith reflection;
2. *Sharing our Symbols*, where participants placed symbols of their personal faith in a centre space and shared with the wider group - a prior reflection on faith symbols was required by participants;
3. *Sharing a Meal*, where, symbolic of Eucharist, a simple meal was shared, which facilitated animated discussion on inner city faith;
4. *Creative Explorations of Local Narratives*, where participants engaged in role play, poetry, art or clay workshops and later shared faith reflections with the wider group;
5. *Listening and Responding*- recurring themes were identified in the sharing and explicit Gospel links were explored;

⁸⁵ Ibid.

6. *Singing a New Song Together* - closure was brought with the singing of 'Something Inside So Strong';⁸⁶

7. *Reflection on the Experience*, where in line with praxis/action research methodologies, participants reflected on the experience, and

8. *Tell Me About It*, where the theological process and reflections were captured by means of a published account of the day's explorations.⁸⁷

The symbols which were gathered in the centre space on that day may be taken to illustrate the contextual nature of such faith explorations:

- An *I Ching* dragon, representative of the spirit of the community;
- *Cheque books* representing the struggle to cope financially;
- *Rag dolls*, one of which that had been re-skinned, indicating necessary reinvention and endurance despite the hardship, as well as comfort in spaces of isolation and loneliness;
- *Ar nAthair* - the slow praying of the Lord's Prayer in Gaelic (the Irish language) in order to connect with the faith of the ancestors;
- A worker's hard *safety hat and concrete brick*, representing development and the changing face of the community;
- A *college ID card*, reflecting tensions and isolations experienced by people of inner city and public housing estates seeking to build cultural bridges, within the context of mainstream education;
- A *fuschia plant*, known in Gaelic as '*Deora Dé*' (the tears of God), symbolising the beauty, life, spirit, soul and heart of the people as well as their spirit of endurance.⁸⁸

Explicit and intentional gatherings of inner city representatives for the purpose of creatively exploring personal and communal faith experiences facilitates a vibrant contextual theology and is therefore a valid theological endeavour. However, as an *intentional* interest group it may risk the charge, by some, of being non-representative of the community as a whole, hence problematic. I, therefore, suggest that a broader community faith perspective can also be achieved by means of a parallel theological exploration of local communal rituals, whether secular or religious, as we shall now see.

⁸⁶ Labi Siffre, *Something Inside so Strong*, cited in Martin Byrne, *Tell Me About It: Dubliners sharing something inside so strong*, (Dublin: Christian Brothers, 2000)36.

⁸⁷ Martin Byrne, *Tell me About It: Dubliners Sharing Something Inside so Strong*, (Dublin: Christian Brothers, 2000).

⁸⁸ The *fuschia* plant is a symbol of survival since it survives extreme climatic conditions.

7.4.2.4 Exploring Localised Rituals and their Communal Meanings

*The meaning of ritual is deep indeed.
He who tries to enter it with the kind of perception that
distinguishes hard and white, same and different, will
drown there.*

*The meaning of ritual is great indeed.
He who tries to enter it with the uncouth and inane
Theories of the system-makers will perish there.*

*The meaning of ritual is lofty indeed.
He who tries to enter with the violent and arrogant ways of
those who despise common customs and consider
themselves to be above other men will meet his
downfall there.*

(Xunzi, third century B.C.E.)⁸⁹

Notwithstanding current debate, within the fields of anthropology, psychology and theology, about the contemporary meaning and relevance of 'symbol' and 'ritual', this thesis suggests that a significant entry point for a contextual theology of the inner city involves a theological reflection on, or analysis of, the living rituals of the community.⁹⁰ Here is understood both religious and secular rituals, since "certain formal and psychological congruities between secular and sacred rites and ceremonies" are in evidence.⁹¹ Moreover, contemporary "secularization theologies" highlight the availability of God's grace within ordinary (non-religious, in an explicit sense) human experience.⁹² Catherine Bell, in *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, drawing attention to the universality of ritual, argues that ritual is "a cultural and historical construction that has been heavily used to help differentiate various styles and degrees of religiosity, rationality, and cultural determinism".⁹³ She highlights the particularity of ritual, which is our present concern. Stressing the tremendous complexity of any analysis of ritual (including the variety of frameworks presented in the literature) she writes of the current analysis of ritual as follows:

⁸⁹ Xuni, cited in Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) vii.

⁹⁰ For historical and contemporary perspectives on symbol and ritual see Stephen Happel "Symbol" and Margaret Mary Kelleher, OSU, "Ritual", respectively, in Joseph A. Komonchak, Dermot A. Lane and Mary Collins (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 996-1002; 906-907.

⁹¹ Gregor T. Goethals, "Secular rituals" in Peter E. Fink (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990) 1150-1156 at 1150.

⁹² Kevin W. Irwin, "Sacrament" in Joseph A. Komonshak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (eds.) *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press) 910-922 at 920-921.

⁹³ Bell, *Ritual*: ix

Today we think of “ritual” as a complex sociocultural medium variously constructed of tradition, exigency, and self-expression; it is understood to play a wide variety of roles and to communicate a rich density of overdetermined messages and attitudes. For the most part, ritual is the medium chosen to invoke those ordered relationships that are thought to obtain between human beings in the here-and-now and non-immediate sources of power, authority and value. Definitions of these relationships in terms of ritual’s vocabulary of gesture and word, in contrast to theological speculation or doctrinal formulation, suggest that the fundamental efficacy of ritual activity lies in its ability to have people embody assumptions about their place in a larger order of things.⁹⁴

Questions of identity, status and transition are reflected, both consciously and unconsciously, in localised ritual actions since they “provide a context in which to recognize and reflect on important events or changes in status”.⁹⁵ It has been my Fatima-based observation that, when culturally-appropriate formal religious rituals are not provided by the local Churches, organic rituals arise both spontaneously within the community and intentionally in the creative activities of community development groups (chapter one). This is reflective of the often radical disjunction between inner city faith life and the more formal faith and sacramental life of the local church. This reflects Cohen’s view that ritual occupies “a prominent place in the repertoire of symbolic devices through which community boundaries are affirmed and reinforced.”⁹⁶

While the Dublin inner city context may largely be described as a non churched context, in a formal sense, deep-rooted Catholic influences are apparent in private prayer and devotion, in participation in the formal sacramental liturgies of Baptism, First Confession, First Communion, Confirmation, and in participation in official funeral rites (chapter one). In *Seeds of a New Church*, John O’ Brien - theologian, community activist and former Fatima resident - makes the claim that the externals of religious rituals continue to have socio-cultural significance because of “the deep religiosity of the people”.⁹⁷ Characteristically, however, the boundaries between religious and secular expressions of faith are not always clear and there is strong evidence of secular rituals which convey profound communal and religious/spiritual meanings. These secular rituals point towards a collective experience of alienation from formal church life. Addressing this issue of alienation, O’ Brien calls for an intellectual conversion, within the Catholic Church community, involving the realisation that God’s grace is not limited to the Church’s formal sacramental/liturgical life alone.⁹⁸ Post Vatican II approaches (both mainstream and feminist) within the field of sacramental theology increasingly recognise and

⁹⁴ Ibid.: xi

⁹⁵ Gene Combs and Jill Freedman, *Symbol, Story & Ceremony: Using Metaphor in Individual and Family Therapy*, (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990) 219.

⁹⁶ Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, (Sussex, UK: Ellis Horwood Ltd, 1985) p. 50.

⁹⁷ John O’ Brien, (CSSp). *Seeds of a New Church* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1994) 210.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

celebrate this fact. For example, Karl Rahner, explores the universal availability of God's self-revelation as *Holy Mystery*, Edward Schillebeeckx, taking a personalist approach, explores sacrament as a shared personal encounter with God, David Power understands sacrament as a language event and, in this context, addresses the issue of rituals and marginalisation, and feminist sacramental theology highlights defining features of a feminist theology of worship.⁹⁹ With respect to the inner city, in cases of ambiguity, local community narratives and rituals facilitate both a critique of, and alternatives to, dominant (and potentially alienating) liturgical and sacramental expressions, attesting to the reality that dominant traditional beliefs have to be redefined, and particular spiritual heritages uncovered, owned and celebrated.¹⁰⁰ With respect to the inclusion of the inner city, the local official churches are challenged to address this potentially alienating power of formal Church sacraments; a challenge which is highlighted by Amaladoss:

The sacraments are not culturally rooted. So they may be alienating. People do not find them meaningful. If they come to celebrate the sacraments at all, their participation is not conscious, active and full... Not rooted in their life and culture, the rituals become indices rather than symbols. They do not relate to their experience. They simply point to their separate Christian identity...¹⁰¹

While formal sacraments may be alienating, my observations consistently indicated that *sacramentals* continue to play a significant role in Irish inner city spirituality, including: blessings, holy water, sacred relics, holy medals, holy statues, etc. Geraldine Ryan writes that sacramentals "really appeal to the sense of touch and highlight the importance of using symbols and sensory objects" in inner city contexts.¹⁰² One example of the use of sacramentals, involving a group of teenagers from a North Dublin inner city estate, may be taken to highlight the gap between community-based and Church-based rituals/liturgical actions.¹⁰³ In remembrance of their friend who had died in a joy-riding incident, they set an abandoned car on

⁹⁹ See Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, W. J. O'Hara (trans.), (Freiburg/London: Herder: Burns & Oates, 1963); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963); David Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, (New York: The Crossroad Publ. Co., 1999), also Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: a Feminist Sacramental Theology*, (New York: Continuum, 1998).

¹⁰⁰ For an example of the use of questionnaire-based interviews in elaborating a women's theology see Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins, *The Feminine Face of God: The Unfolding of the Sacred in Women*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), and on women-based rituals and liturgies, in the North American context see Janet R. Walton and Marjorie Procter-Smith (eds.) *Women at Worship: Interpretations of North American Diversity* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Amaladoss: 95.

¹⁰² Geraldine Ryan, "A 'Feet on the Ground' Approach to Engaging Pastorally with Young People on the Margins" in Byrne, *Unmasking God*: 99-119 at 112. Ryan is a school chaplain in North West inner city.

¹⁰³ Informal interview with a North Dublin Educational Development Officer, 16/05/2000.

fire, threw 'holy water' on the flames, and gathered in a circle around the car to grieve. This spontaneous community-specific response to grief drew upon primitive the spiritual elements of fire and water.¹⁰⁴ Significantly, their actions were publicly criticised by local Church representatives, highlighting the disjunction between both contexts.

What relevance, then, has an exploration of local rituals for an inner city contextual theology? I suggest that localised and meaning-laden rituals such as those of Fatima provide a significant basis for theological analysis since they may be seen as an embodiment or enactment of the community's worldview and most pressing cultural themes. Bell, in her examination of six genres of ritual action, provides a potential framework for an anthropological and theological analysis of such rituals. The genres include: *rites of passage (or "life-cycle rites")*, *calendrical and commemorative rites*, *rites of exchange and communication*, *rites of affliction*, *rites of feasting, fasting and festivals*, and *political rituals*.¹⁰⁵ A brief examination of selected Fatima rituals (chapter one) illustrates the potential effectiveness of applying this framework to the inner city faith context. Undoubtedly, the FGU-facilitated regeneration festivals in Fatima are highpoints of communal celebration, which may be interpreted as '*feasting*' in the context of Fatima life (where ordinarily the '*fasting*' of poverty and discrimination, in all their dimensions, forms the daily bread of life-experience). Fatima's joy-filled celebratory festivals and rituals are, in essence, *rites of passage*, in the sense of the passage or transition *of a community* to a new form of identity within the context of its self identity as community. During my time in Fatima (1995-2002) numerous communal processions were held, in which the community marched beyond the Fatima boundaries, to the adjacent local communities of Rialto and Dolphins' Barn in a *rite of exchange and communication*. Fatima symbolically used these opportunities to make statements of openness to reconciliation with the wider community.¹⁰⁶ Pageantries and festival processions were central to Fatima festivals and they symbolically enacted a journey full of hope of the promised land of the "New Fatima" (a phrase, which formed a significant part of Fatima-speak at the time of my residency). The great narratives of biblical journeys, particularly journeys of liberation, are direct points of contact

¹⁰⁴ As a non-repetitive action, this is not a 'ritual' in the strict sense but contains certain distinctive features of 'rituals of lament' as described by Catherine Bell. See *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

¹⁰⁵ Bell: 93-137. Amaladoss also provides a usable framework for an analysis of ritual. Addressing types or genres, he identifies: 1) *rites of passage* (and their role in integration into the community), 2) *rituals of involvement* (based on need, and including rituals of healing and blessing), and 3) *rituals of transcendence*. He also distinguishes between faith-based and secular rituals, in *Beyond Inculturation*: 83-84.

¹⁰⁶ On one such occasion, a pyrographic exhibition at the culmination of the celebrations depicted two hands shaking, a gesture of reconciliation with adjacent local communities.

with the Fatima regeneration journey.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the communal creative enactment of *metamorphosis* in the Fatima Festival (2000) highlighted the symbol of the butterfly; a symbol often depicted as a spiritual representation of the soul, resurrected life, or the Paschal Mystery.¹⁰⁸

The *calendrical and commemorative nature* of Fatima festivals is also notable- both Halloween and high summer festivals are reflective of Fatima's spiritual and historical connection with seasons of dark and light. During the (1997) Halloween Festival, 'Burn the Demons: Embrace the Future', for example, a mural of a drug user injecting drugs was burned in a giant bonfire off James' St. This was a creative representation of the community's rejection of its drugs culture and its desire to journey on.¹⁰⁹ As a commemoration of local residents who had died due to drugs and drugs-related illnesses in the community, it was a pain-filled ritual (a '*ritual of affliction*'), but it was equally hope-filled in a political sense (a '*political ritual*') in that, in burning a gigantic artistic depiction of drug abuse in the Halloween bonfire, the insistence on a life-giving and drugs-free future was boldly and publicly enacted. Undoubtedly, an intentional message was been sent to authorities and drug dealers about an insistence on future change. Regarding the commemorative aspect of Fatima rituals, a Fatima wall mural, 'Gone but Not Forgotten', was a dominant inspiration in the community as the memory of the 'old' Fatima was gathered creatively by a variety of artistic means, culminating in the Fatima Regeneration Festival (2001). The *political* nature of these regeneration festival celebrations is uncontested; in each case Fatima was making an intentional statement of its insistence on a new future to the wider community and to 'outsider' agencies and institutes. Finally, related to the commemorative and political dimensions of Fatima-based rituals, the notion of Fatima as a *sacred space* recurred in local narratives and festivities. At the launch of the community brief, *Eleven Acres Ten Steps* (2000), for example, the chairperson of FGU, in his address, made reference to the 'sacredness' of the Fatima land, and drew comparisons with Native American reservations, indicating that the distinctive cultural and spiritual heritages of minority and oppressed communities, worldwide, provide the possibility of fruitful dialogical resources for theological explorations.¹¹⁰ In sum, I suggest that explorations of inner city ritual-type actions, in dialogue with academic discussion of ritual genres, might be a fruitful basis for a theological

¹⁰⁷ Significantly, at this time I attended a reflective night with the *Fig Tree* group, where striking parallels were explored between the biblical Exodus narrative (1: 11-14) and Fatima life and where the theme of systematic and structural oppression was animatedly explored.

¹⁰⁸ See Byrne, *The Boundary Wall*: 87-89. The theme of the butterfly as symbol of the resurrected soul is explored by Irish theologian Gesa Thiessen, in her work *Theology and Modern Irish Art* (Blackrock: the Columba Pres, 1999) 159.

¹⁰⁹ *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

¹¹⁰ Chairperson, FGU, Opening address at the launch of *Eleven Acres Ten Steps*. St. Andrew's Centre, Rialto, November 2000, also *Spirit Level*, RTÉ, Radio 1, 26/04/2001.

exploration of both religious and secular displays of popular communal 'faith' in the context of the inner city.

Having explored the implication of my research for the field of contextual theology, and having highlighted the significance of the creation of creative theological spaces, the theological potential of cultural themes and the importance of attention to local ritual action, I now wish to close with a concise summary position of my research, its implications and future replicability.

7.5 ENDWORD

In conclusion, taking the case of Fatima, this thesis elaborates a detailed and comprehensive ethnographic ethics of the Irish inner city, with a view to critically highlighting the invisibility, within Irish society and academic discourse, of the values and moral practice of the Irish inner city. Specifically, as a contribution to the field of social ethics, it presents both a comprehensive analysis of inner city (Dublin) ethics and a critical analysis of dominant sources of moral theology in the Irish context, from the value-perspective of the Irish inner city. This contribution is pioneering in that it includes: 1) a detailed first case study account of the value system and moral practice of the Irish inner city, and 2) a 'cultural themes process model', which can be extended to other inner city contexts, with the potential for significant comparative research. This model employs grounded theory and is rooted in the everyday life of the research community. It prioritises an inductive, ethnographic, organic, creative, flexible, and community-sensitive research process. It, moreover, facilitates the elaboration of a comprehensive 'thick description' of inner city ethics, which forms the basis of an in-depth narrative analysis of inner city values and moral practice. The originality of the methodological model employed in this work derives directly from: a) the insertion of the researcher-ethicist within the researched community, and b) the community-inspired, organic approach adopted.

Significantly, the emergent cultural themes and values in this research were used as a hermeneutical tool to critique selected (dominant) forms of moral theology in the Irish context, namely, publications by the Irish Bishops and in selected theological journals. The overall failure of these selected sources of moral theology in the Irish context to acknowledge the distinctive socio-cultural basis of the Irish inner city, and to incorporate insights and illustrations from the value system and moral practice of the Irish inner city in its wider deliberations, was demonstrated. More positively, potential areas of inclusivity within dominant sources of moral theology in the Irish context were identified, with a view to a future integral and inclusive mainstream moral theology.

Another important aspect of this research is its critical examination of *research ethics*. The incorporation, in this work, of a self-reflexive process in relation to the assessment of the numerous ethical challenges that presented throughout the research process is an important contribution, in my view. Not least among these ethical explorations is that of the problematic of the critique of emergent research findings from the perspective of different ethical frameworks and research methodologies. In this context an account of the relationship between research ethics and methodology, is incorporated, especially as it impinged upon methodological choices in this work. Having navigated the intricacies of the ethico-political research terrain of one Irish inner city community, this thesis provides a flexible road map for future research ethics within the context of the Irish inner city.

With respect to the explicitly *theological* - as opposed to the ethical - implications of this work, it has not been my intention to elaborate an independent contextual theology of the Irish inner city, since a) this work, as a contribution to the field of social ethics, is an explicit and intentional exploration of inner city ethics, and b) contextual theologies of the inner city are already under way in the Irish context. Instead, with respect to future relevance, this thesis advocates and models a dialogical approach between inner city ethnographic ethics and Irish urban contextual theologies/spiritualities. Martin Byrne's North Wall (Dublin) contextual theology and Bernadette Flanagan's analysis of Dublin inner city spirituality are examples (among others) which have been highlighted in an exploratory fashion in this context. Here the specific areas of narrative theology, the facilitation of creative theological spaces, and theological facilitation of and analysis of, ritualistic actions - both secular and religious - within inner city communities are presented as potential ways forward.

Finally, focusing on the question of the future replicability of this research, I stress that the comprehensive list of cultural themes and sub-themes provided in my research analysis is not intended as directly applicable to other research contexts. Instead, the 'thick description' of a Fatima ethics provides a basis for future comparison (appendix B).¹¹¹ I propose that, if organically approached and self-directed by the research community, the 'cultural themes process model' employed in this work may be readily applied to a variety of inner city contexts and form the basis for comparative study. I also suggest that the organic and inductive methodological approach demonstrated in this work might easily be extended beyond the inner

¹¹¹ Significantly, one such Irish post-graduate study is already underway, at the Milltown Institute of Philosophy and Spirituality, Dublin, namely the study of the everyday ethics of inner city Galway. Furthermore a focus group exploring the values and spirituality of selected socio-excluded communities in Galway city, in which I was a co-facilitator and participant, was conducted by contextual theologian Martin Byrne, with students of Religious Studies in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Theology, 02/04/2008, with a view to future collaboration.

city context, to further liminal sub-cultures in Irish society, that also, but perhaps dissimilarly, experience social exclusion. I suggest that the following dimensions are to be considered as general guidelines for such comparative research:

- Significant *insertion* within the research community by the ethicist/researcher;
- Employment of an *ethnographic approach* which enables the revelation of the community's voice on its own terms;
- Use of *grounded theory*, involving the adoption of an inductive and organic methodology, co-created and owned by researcher and researched community alike;
- Intentional adoption of a *befriending* approach in regard to methodological selection and process, including the organic unfolding of the research itself, which enables collective ownership of the research and access to the more intimate aspects of the community's life;¹¹²
- The prioritisation of *the ethical relationship* established between the researcher and the research community, which proactively addresses the challenge of power relations in research;
- Prioritisation of the *research community's natural communication style* in elaborating a community-sensitive research methodology - in the case of this research creative narrative and artistic approaches were selected over and above research processes involving significant standards of literacy);
- Negotiating sensitively the local *politics of research*, such as networking with significant community leaders and organisation, including 'gatekeepers', while also respectfully and astutely negotiating a certain independence with respect to the research;
- Attending to the distinctive *rituals* of a community in order to uncover communal meanings.¹¹³

Finally, as indicated above, I propose that the 'cultural process model' provided in this thesis might facilitate future comparative studies and/or an ongoing 'collective case study' of inner city ethics within the Irish context (and beyond). In this way it is hoped to effectively advance a moral theology of the Irish inner city which seeks the end-goals of *inclusivity, dialogue* and *mutual critical exchange* within the context of formal sources of moral theology in the Irish context, including publications by the Irish Bishops and in Irish theological journals.

¹¹² The strengths and limitations of befriending in research, including the justification of my own employment of a befriending approach in this research, are discussed in detail in chapter two.

¹¹³ A selection of Fatima 'rituals', as illustrations of a communal spirituality and ethics, are described in chapter one.

EPILOGUE

To end on a more personal note, the experience of living and working in the Fatima community, and of having the opportunity to research within this unique context, has been a privilege. The influence on my personal value system and morality has been a lasting one. Perhaps more than anything, I have been moved by the vulnerability and inspired by the strength of Fatima women. Their many acts of resilience, resistance and just love, have energised, challenged and disturbed me. Their collective passion and relentless determination to carve out a future full of hope and dignity for Fatima children, have been for me signs of the fundamental goodness and dignity of the human person, and of the human capacity to love and hope beyond the odds. Their at-home-ness with an earthy, communal, and grounded spirituality; one that is action-oriented, militant and expressed most authentically through pageantry, fire and song, has shaped my own spirituality indelibly. I am proud, while also humbled, to have walked with this community for a brief while. I take with me vivid and lasting memories of the expressive and story-lined faces of many Fatima women, my friends; in particular, their infectious Dublin wit, which belies inner city wisdom.

I close with the words of the former Fatima resident and renowned poet, Paula Meehan, which express my sense of an on-going, spiritual connection to the Fatima community:

THE STANDING ARMY

*Now that I carry my mother's spear,
Wear my sister's gold in my ear,
I walk into the future, proud
To be ranked in the warrior caste,
Come to play my part in defence
of my people, from my bed of wisdom sprung
To converse with poets who
Even now are flocking in the streets,
Eyes aflame, weary of metrical talk
Starved of chant, crawling tribal songs.¹¹⁴*

¹¹⁴ Paula Meehan, "The Standing Army", *Pillow Talk* (Oldcastle, Co. Meath, Ireland: The Gallery Press, 1994, rep. 1997) 17.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Geographical Location of Fatima

Appendix B Fatima Cultural Themes

Appendix C Research Interviews and Focus Groups

Appendix D The Ethnographic Interviews: A Framework

Appendix E Consent Form for Research Participants

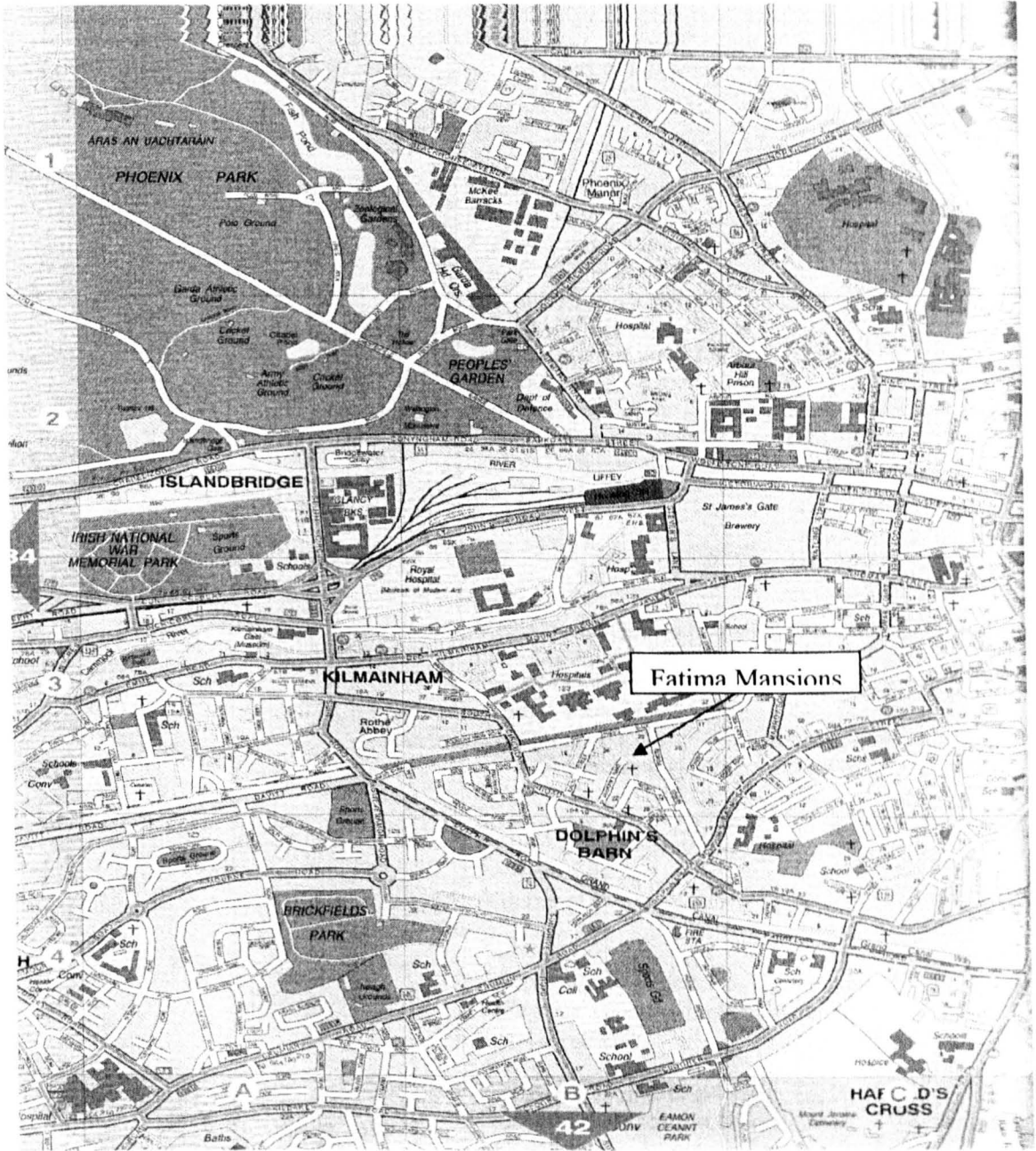
Appendix F Research Questionnaire

Appendix G The Spirit of Fatima

**Appendix H Publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference
(1969-2005)**

APPENDIX A

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF FATIMA



APPENDIX B

FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES

TABLE 1. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
FATIMA CHILDREN: PROTECTION & FUTURE

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Fatima Children	Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are embraced by the community Women's/men's child-related roles Family/community support in pregnancy 'Good' Mothering Self identification with the mothering role Responsibilities of mothering 'Being there' for your child, regardless Conflict within the mothering role Lone parenting as the dominant family model Practical demonstrations of love/care Mother-daughter relationships Provision for children Surrogacy Neglect by the child's mother
	Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mother-to-mother confrontation over children Exposure to the drugs culture Perceptions of child neglect Children being 'street wise' Communal care of children V nuclear family Defending children in conflict situations Covering up for children Protection of children's health Protection from sexual abuse/paedophiles Powerlessness Absence of choices
	Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community development & regeneration Living one's dreams through the children Equal opportunity Access Freedom from discrimination Education, development & employment Roles in family & community Providing a house for the children

Cont.

TABLE 2. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
WOMEN & MEN: PERCEPTIONS & ROLES

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Fatima Women & Men	Fatima Women	Female socialisation Socialisation & early mothering Self description Women's strength Women's vulnerability Voicelessness & powerlessness Female employment & training Community involvement Mothering Teenage pregnancy Newborns welcomed into the community Grandmothers & mothers-roles in childrearing Matriarchal or women-identified community? Women-men relationships Women and leadership The Women's Centre Body image Girls/female youth Gender & development
	Fatima Men	Perceived absence of males Socialisation Machismo culture Parenting Employment & training Community involvement Marginalisation Aggression Males as role models Lifestyle- pub/bookies Men-women relationships Boys/male youth Naming children (surnames)

Cont.

TABLE 3. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILIAL & SOCIAL

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Fatima Relationships	Familial & Kinship Relationships	Family as a wider kinship Role of family networks Mas & Das Children at the centre Mother-daughter relationships Partner relationships Levels of support Male-female relationships Tensions in the family Domestic violence Solidarity & inter-dependence Loyalty, fidelity & support Care & compassion Tolerance V intolerance Intergenerational intolerance Forgiving & unforgiving Protection Transparency Spontaneity & honesty- being 'real' Family feuds Dominant family names
	Fatima Community Relationships	Rootedness in the community Conflicting values in relation to self and family The transience of community Relationships with neighbours Neighbourly feuds Feuding & fragmentation Prohibition on ratting/reporting Covering for community members Mistrust of outsiders/general absence of trust Lying for protection of community member(s) Solidarity: self & community development Solidarity & 'looking out for one another' Solidarity & Fatima community spirit Friendships Authenticity- 'being real' Conflict in relationships
	Social Relationships	Them V Us - insiders & outsiders Loyalty/Disloyalty Disloyalty & punishment Celebration Inclusion/Exclusion Trust/Mistrust Enemies Power relations Personal dignity Human V inhuman/non human Lack of privacy Lack of respect for confidentiality

	<p>Local Environment</p>	<p>Requirement of respect/dignity Stereotypes & discrimination Racism</p> <p>Geographical location Green spaces Care of animals LUAS transport Cul de sacs/ramps Regeneration plans Consultation processes Housing and health A Fatima address</p>
	<p>Relationship with the Wider Local Community</p>	<p>Stigma & discrimination Public V private space Threat of violence Mistrust of outsiders A survival culture; outsider as threat Uneasy relationship with adjacent communities Local drugs treatment services Housing Authority Health Authorities Local schools School Attendance Officer Local pubs/bookies/clubs Local culture/arts services The Gardai (Police) Asylum seekers/refugees/ immigrant workers- racism Mountjoy Prison Negative V positive media coverage Media strategy Media and regeneration</p>
	<p>Relationship with Wider Society</p>	<p>Stigmatisation/discrimination Second class citizenship Perceived as less than human Ignorance Benefits of the Celtic Tiger Trust/mistrust Exclusion/access Absence of culturally sensitive education</p>
	<p>Relationship with Religion & Churches</p>	<p>Affiliation/practice Role of Church/priest Perceived absence of priest Private/popular spirituality Belief/non-belief Passing on the faith Clerical/institutional abuse Images of God Community rituals Prayer forms Our Lady of Fatima Shame and alienation</p>

Cont.

TABLE 4. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
THE INDIVIDUAL & THE COMMUNITY

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
The Individual & The Community	The Self	Self descriptions in relation to the community Self esteem/confidence Self versus roles (personal & communal) Individual versus community- a complex relation Perceived betrayal of the community-guilt & shame Strength versus vulnerability Voicelessness & difference regarding the wider community Self & Resistance
	The Community	Feelings about being a part of Fatima Fatima referred to as 'the community' locally Community a central value Solidarity & interdependence Loyalty & tolerance Conflict of values: self versus community Community involvement & self esteem Community development & guilt/shame Fear of community betrayal Housing transfers and children's health versus Commitment to the community A forgotten community? Alienation from the wider community & a sense of difference Local leadership & empowerment Support of the vulnerable in the community Spirit of Fatima & communal celebrations Outside perceptions of Fatima

Cont.

TABLE 5. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
SURVIVAL: PERSISTENCE & RESISTANCE

OVER -ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Survival	A Survival Culture	Resistance strategies Resilience Protection Family, friends, neighbours- support networks Cultural relevance of education Parenting, drugs & health education Suffering, pain & grief Powerlessness Strength /vulnerability
	Poverty & Survival	Lack of financial resources Financial struggle & shame Charity & cover up/shame Neighbourly inter-dependence Neighbourly solidarity & sharing Pawn shop, moneylenders & charity Constant financial dependency Constant struggle to provide Provision for the future Savings- life policies & funeral expenses Self reliance & solidarity 'Putting up with' as way of life Limited employment Stigmatisation & discrimination Poverty management- juggling debts Lack of choice Poor housing conditions Pressure <i>to be seen</i> to provide Pressure to provide for now and the future Humour, resilience & inventiveness
	Voice	Self esteem & voice Opportunity for expression, or lack of Voicelessness Voice & the Public sphere
	Choices	Life style & survival decisions Absence of/limited choices Cost of choices made Pub/club
	Stability & Instability	Debs/Celebration Community festivals Sense of humour

	Conflict	<p> Conflicting values Conflicting loyalties Negotiating conflict A polarized community Order V chaos Strength V vulnerability Internal conflict of values Moral dilemmas/decision-making Practical wisdom & conflict situations Perceptions of self in conflict Conflict and language Family/kin conflict Mother-child conflict Conflict within the core family Conflict with wider relations Conflict and physical threat Conflict in friendships/partnerships Being forced systematically into aggression/deceit Domestic & Sexual violence- public V private Domestic violence- environment, alcohol, drugs & unemployment Ignoring domestic violence Violence & a 'public culture' Male-female, female-male and adult-child violence Self protection strategies Women's self development Employment/training Immersion V withdrawal Money conflicts Divisions, feuds & cliques Breakdown of friendships Forms of punishment Conflict with neighbours Flat 'blocks' independent of each other Maligning/gossiping Threat of reporting/ratting Threat of violence Verbal, physical, sexual abuse Community & local drug dealers Conflict with 'outsiders' Conflict within & between development groups Gate-keeping conflicts Resistance strategies Conflict and survival Conflict and difference Conflict and reconciliation </p>
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Cont.

TABLE 6. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
DRUGS CULTURE: A SIGNIFICANT CULTURE SHAPER

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
The Fatima Drugs Culture	Exposure to the Drugs Culture	Impact on self, family & youth Impact on family Impact on local & community Tolerance of the drugs culture Anti social behaviours/social order Syringes in public spaces Drug use & dealing in public spaces Threat & intimidation Health concerns Child protection Drugs culture & education (or lack of) Wider society fails to protect Fatima Living in fear Boredom & Chasing the 'Buzz' Pain avoidance
	Alcohol as a Drug	Repeating familial patterns Alcohol and addiction Alcohol & Violence
	Morality & Drugs	Poverty & drugs Ratting/reporting Deceit & lies V truth & transparency Theft and destruction of property Prostitution Imprisonment Trust & mistrust Tolerance, care & compassion Stigmatisation Shame, guilt, denial & humiliation 'Scabbing' (looking for money) Respect for property Receiving stolen goods 'door-to-door' Respect, courage & responsibility Fidelity V betrayal Care & compassion Personal/communal resistance strategies Community rituals & rejection of drugs Community-based treatment services Treatment of community's addicts Behaviours towards community addicts /dealers Self reliance & solidarity of the community 'Marching on' the drug dealer Humane treatment of users 'Whip-arounds' for victims of drug abuse Informal neighbourhood watch/alertness

		Self reliance & solidarity Role of mothers & 'good mothering' Partner support & friendships Treatment services & methadone programmes Drugs & development/ education groups Powerlessness V power Stereotyping of addict/ humanity of the addict Respect/sympathy for the addict Supportive roles- family & community Debts & eviction Struggles with recovery Abhorrence of & 'marching on' the dealer Compassion for partner/children of dealers Prescriptive drugs Drugs & depression HIV/AIDS Death & bereavement Suffering & evil Prejudice & judgement Anti social behaviour Fear, threat & intimidation Security Silence
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TABLE 7. FATIMA CULTURAL THEMES:
CELEBRATION: LIVING LIFE IN THE MOMENT

OVER-ARCHING THEME	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Celebration	Celebration of Life in the Present	Buzz/Fun Humour/wit- 'have a laugh' Fun as a release/escape Practical jokes Humour and survival Celebration as resistance Fun as an antidote to/alternative to conflict Bonding & Socialisation Hopes & dreams Communal spirituality Communal Rituals Celebrating life "as it is" / in the moment Celebrations and financial debts
	Community Celebrations	First Communion & Confirmation 'Debs' ball & 'Grushie' Christmas/St. Stephen's Day & Halloween celebra Community festivals/rituals/pageants The Spirit of Fatima Beer parties in the blocks

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Code names are used, except where research participants requested to retain their own name.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH INTERVIEWS WITH FATIMA RESIDENTS

Seamus,	15/07/1998
Minnie,	10/06/2000
Patrick	20/06/2000
Teresa	12/06/2000

FOCUS GROUPS

The Training for Transformation Focus Group
03/12/2001

The Fig Tree Focus Group
22/05/2001

The Good Old Days Group- creative workshops
January- October 2001

The Drugs Culture Focus Group- creative workshops
January - October 2001

The Insecure Focus Group- creative workshops
January - October 2001

Cont.

**PERSONAL (ETHNOGRAPHIC) INTERVIEWS
WITH RESIDENT FATIMA WOMEN**

Sarah, 03/03/2001	Mrs Ryan, 22/03/2001
Marie, 23/05/2001	Melanie, 13/12/2001
Nicole, 08/10/2001	Liselle, 28/08/2001
Mel, 13/12/2001	Natasha, 30/05/2002
Mary, 15/05/2001	Niamh 04/03/2001
Debbie, 26/04/2001	Gemma 21/05/2001
Anita, 20/05/2001	Anita 30/05/2001
Mrs. Kelly, 06/03/2001	Mrs Byrne 22/03/2001
Fluffy, 27/04/2001	Paula 25/05/2001
Donna, 12/11/2001	Elaine 25/05/2001
Mrs Carney, 29/03/2001	Jennifer & Britney (joint interview) 25/02/2002

**QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED INTERVIEWS
WITH FATIMA-BASED WORKERS**

Christine 29/01/2002	Helen 28/02/2002
Marion 29/01/2002	John 02/03/2002
Denis 29/01/2002	Dympna 05/03/2002
Carmel 03/02/2002	Grainne 05/03/2002
Catherine 05/02/2002	Barbara 27/03/2002
James 21/02/2002	Sophie 27/03/2002
Maura 21/02/2002	Eilis 27/03/2002
Peter 25/02/2002	Fionnuala 19/04/2002
Angela 26/02/2002	Rose 23/04/2002

APPENDIX D

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS: A FRAMEWORK

1. SELF DESCRIPTION:

Can you tell me a little about yourself?

How would you describe yourself to someone who does not know you?

What words would you use to describe the sort of person you are?

2. PERSONAL HISTORY:

Tell me about your early memories of Fatima.

What was it like living in Fatima in those days?

How many were there in your family?

How did young people play/socialize?

Tell me about your education/ employment?

Looking back on your life what are the most important lessons you have learned?

Do any religious memories or events stand out for you as you look back?

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY:

How would you describe Fatima to a stranger?

What words would you use to describe the local community?

What are the main problems that the community has to deal with?

Does the community have a good community spirit? Examples?

Can you give any examples of a breakdown in community spirit?

How do you feel about the regeneration process?

How is it affecting you and your family, personally?

4. GENDER DESCRIPTIONS:

What are the women in Fatima generally like?

What roles, if any do they take up in the community?

How do the women in Fatima speak of the men?

What are the men in Fatima generally like?

What roles, if any, do they take up in the community?

How do the men in Fatima speak of the women?

5. RELATIONSHIPS:

How do you get on with your family, children, friends?

What is important to you in family relationships?

How do people from the outside generally relate with the local community?

How would you describe your relationships with Dublin Corporation, the Social Services, local schools, etc.

Cont.

6. VALUES / MORALITY:

What are the things you value most, or care most about in your life?
 What are the things you care most about in the lives of your children?
 What have you learned from your parents about right/wrong, good/bad?
 What wisdom did your mother pass on to you?
 In rearing your children what kind of things do you pass on to them as
 right/wrong
 or good/bad?
 What do you most want to pass on to your children?
 Are there things in Fatima that makes you say "that's wrong and I'm not
 standing for it!"
 Can you give a recent example of 'taking a stand'?
 What kind of things in the daily life of Fatima do you feel strongly about?
 What do you fight hard for? A recent example?

7. PERSONAL CONFLICT/CONSCIENCE:

Can you give an example of a difficult personal decision you were faced with
 (if you are comfortable with that)?
 How did you make your decision?
 Do you confide in others? If so, who helped you most at that time?
 Did 'God' or the local church play a role?
 What were the different steps involved in coming to your decision?
 How do women in Fatima generally deal with tough decisions?

8. PUBLIC CONFLICT:

Is there much conflict between neighbours in Fatima?
 When neighbours are in conflict how do they show it?
 In Fatima, how do people typically behave when rowing?
 How do you deal with conflict from neighbours?
 If you want to challenge a neighbour how do you go about it?
 Can you talk me through an example?

9. FAITH:

Do you believe in God? If so, what is God like?
 Do you pray to God or practice your faith? If so, how?
 If you do not believe in God, was there a time when you did?
 If you did, what was that God like and how did things change for you?
 Does Church have meaning for you?
 What has your experience of the local church been?

10. HOPES / DREAMS:

What are your dreams and hopes for yourself and your family?
 What are your hopes and dreams for Fatima?

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

As research director, I agree:

- to conduct the interview confidentially and to give you access to the tape recording and / or the typed interview afterwards, so that we can discuss together whether there are any parts of the interview that you might be uncomfortable with, or have concerns about;
- that you will have an opportunity to be involved with me in the editing of the interview material;
- to do all in my power to maintain confidentiality (where requested) through the use of a codename (of your choice) and changes in any factual details that may identify you;
- to discuss the later use of the interview with you at different stages of research.

As interviewee, I agree:

- to being interviewed and having aspects of the interview made available for the interviewer's research thesis;
- to being interviewed by tape recorder/dictaphone;
- to the possible and occasional use of photography, slides and video recordings of research processes (if necessary);
- that there will be no exchange of money for the interview conducted; I am happy, instead, to avail of training opportunities afforded to me in the research workshops.

I wish to use the name as my confidential research codename

Signatures -----

Date -----

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is a condensed outline of the questions explored with non-resident Fatima workers. The questionnaire which was used was a more extensive document, allowing space for responses.

The following questionnaire forms part of a wider research project currently being carried out by Pauline Logue, on the life, spirit and moral worldview of the community of Fatima Mansions (in particular the women of Fatima Mansions) since the origin of the flats.

As interviewee 1 agree that the contents of this questionnaire may be made available for research purposes by Pauline Logue, with due respect for confidentiality.

CONTACT DETAILS

Name -----
 Address -----

 Tel/Fax -----
 E mail -----

SECTION ONE: WORKING ROLE WITHIN FATIMA

1. Do you work in Fatima Mansions as part of an organization?

PLEASE TICK YES..... NO.....

If YES: What is the name of this organization?
 What are- the main aims and goals of the organization
 What is your role within the organization?

If NO: Would you like to describe your working role, in brief.

2. To which of the following categories do you belong?

Employed Worker ----
 Voluntary Worker ----
 Student on Work Placement ----
 Other (please explain) ----

Cont.

3. How long have you worked in the Fatima Mansions Community?

PLEASE TICK 0-1 yrs 1-5 yrs 5-10 >10 yrs

4. In brief, what does your work entail?
5. What would a typical reaction be when you inform people, unfamiliar with Fatima, that you work there?
6. Could you describe in a few sentences what people in the Fatima community think about your role?

SECTION TWO: THE FATIMA MANSIONS COMMUNITY

7. In a sentence, how would you describe the community of Fatima to someone who has never been to Fatima?
8. Please comment briefly on the following, giving examples where possible:
- a) How would you describe the current physical condition of the flats?
 - b) How would you describe your sense of personal security in Fatima?
 - c) What is your opinion of the work of Dublin Corporation in Fatima?
 - d) What is your opinion of the work of FGU in the flats?
 - e) What is your opinion of the current *Regeneration* Process?
 - f) Name two significant changes you have seen in Fatima over the past two years
 - g) In what ways do you consider Fatima to have a good 'community spirit'?
 - h) In what ways do you consider Fatima *not* to have a good 'community spirit'?
 - i) Can you give examples of commonplace stereotypical comments about or Fatima from 'outsiders'?
 - j) How have your personal perceptions and attitudes changed in relation to the Fatima community since you began to work here?
 - k) In what ways have your personal perceptions changed in relation to wider society since you began to work here?
 - l) In what ways do you see yourself as having changed as person through your involvement with the Fatima community?

SECTION THREE: MORALITY AND THE FATIMA MANSIONS COMMUNITY

- 9 In your opinion, what do residents of Fatima, in general, care about/value most in their lives?
- 10 a. Have you ever experienced moral conflicts in your role as a worker in Fatima?

PLEASE TICK

YES..... NO.....

Cont.

- 10 b. If YES, can you please give an example to illustrate?
11. Can you give an example of how the morality of Fatima differs from that outside of Fatima Mansions?
12. Which, in your opinion are the most relevant social justice issues relating to Fatima?
13. In what way might the local community's moral perception of the following social justice issues differ from your own, if any?
- a) *Poverty in the estate*
 - b) *Anti-social behaviour*
 - c) *Alcohol and drugs abuse.*
 - d) *Gambling*
 - c) *Door-to-door sale of stolen property*
 - f) *Vandalism*
 - g) *Ratting,*
 - h) *Racism*
 - i) *Domestic Violence*
 - j) *Tolerance of anti-social behaviours in the community*
 - k) *The Gardai (the guards/police)*
 - l) *Conflict with neighbours*
 - m) *The Social Services*
 - n) *Dublin Corporation*
 - o) *Outsiders in the community*
 - p) *Lone parenting*
 - q) *Prostitution*
 - r) *Abortion*
 - s) *Joyriding*
 - t) *Unemployment*
14. Are there particular rules or guidelines members of the local community generally appear to live by? If so, please give an example to illustrate.
15. If there are rules and they are not followed, what form of punishment follows?'

SECTION FOUR: GENDER ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

16. What words/adjectives would you use to describe Fatima women?
17. What messages do girls in Fatima, pick up about 'being a woman'?
18. What roles do the girls/women generally take up in Fatima?
19. What words/adjectives would you use to describe Fatima?
20. What messages do boys in Fatima pick up about 'being a man'?
21. What roles do the boys/men generally take up in the community?

Cont.

- 22. How do employment opportunities differ for Fatima men and women?
- 23. From the perspective of your work, what insights have you on gender distinctions in the Fatima Mansions community?

GENERAL COMMENTS

Signature – researcher _____

Signature – interviewee _____

Date of Interview _____

APPENDIX G

The Spirit of Fatima

"Fatima is never going to end, no matter what...."

Introduction

This newsletter presents a flavour of stories told to me and conversations shared with me, in Fatima, both before and during the Fatima regeneration process.

The voices from Fatima included here, have been reproduced as faithfully as possible.

This is my way of saying thanks for seven wonderful years in the Fatima community.

Good Old Days Quilting Group

Some of the earliest residents in Fatima, met on Wednesday mornings in the Women's Centre and the Homework Club to sew a 'Good Old Days' quilt. The quilt represented the days before drugs were a part of Fatima. Music from the early days- Patsy Klein, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra - was played and singing accompanied the sewing. A lot of early memories were shared.

The Drugs Culture Group

Women, who grew up in the Fatima drugs culture, shared different experiences. Later art work, including glass painting and clay modelling, facilitated by

professional artists, was used to explore what people cared most about in their lives.



INSECURE –

the Fatima Girl Band

Five young Fatima women (both residents and former residents) explored together what it was like being brought up since early childhood in a drugs culture and what it is like to live as a teenager in the Fatima of today.

Four of the girls later formed a girl band and recorded their own song:

No Words Can Tell.

The Fig Tree Prayer Group

The Fig Tree Prayer Group, meets weekly in Fatima. During one interview the

group shared with each other different memories that stood out from their many years together. They talked about the links they have made between the way they pray and the real life of Fatima Mansions, including the problem of drugs.

The Spirit of Fatima - A Halloween Celebration

An evening's celebration of the *Spirit of Fatima* was included as one part of the wider Halloween festivities in October 2000.

This event was a part of a much larger Fatima-based Halloween celebration, planned by Fatima Groups United and the Fatima Festival Committee, which celebrated the past memories, the present life, and the future hopes of Fatima.

*I hope you enjoy this
little trip down
memory lane....*

Compiler
Pauline Logue

The Good Old Days

Sewing our Quilt

We used to meet on Wednesdays in the Women's Centre and in the

Homework Club to do our quilting... fresh bread rolls and cheese and buns and smokes and old time music on in the background... sewing and chatting and telling our stories ... singing along to Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, maybe Elvis... and had a good old laugh remembering; the Little Dinners, the Pawn Shop, the Jewman, Bang Bang, the old Good Friday processions, fights in the block, having babies and rearing the children...



The Little Dinners

Oh Jesus, if me mother found out I was after going down to the little dinners she'd kill me. I hadn't a shilling, and the poor woman was after leaving me plenty but I just kept buying cakes and fancy pieces...

We used to go down to the nuns in Cork St... where was it? ... Weaver's Square... you'd go down for 12 o'clock and you'd have to say the Angelus; you'd sit down and get your dinner; sausages, potatoes, the bowl of rice... used to love that rice...

The rice pudding, yea it was gorgeous! With a bit of jam in the middle...

And you'd be coming up Cork St. and everyone would be looking at you with the pan and bangers sticking out of it...



Raw potatoes... you could get cooked potatoes but people would smell it on the way home... anyway you mightn't have the money to pay for the oven gas... my Ma used to stick it in the cold oven and pretend it came out of there all hot!!!

And we got the cooked sausages and peas... The kids used to say it too "Jesus, they're lovely".

The Log Yard

I had to go down there after school for the logs... very bottom of Cork St... The logs or the turf... carried it in the pram... some used a box car, remember?

Sometimes you would go for other people and get a penny or half penny for going for them... we'd have somebody at the front, you know the handles? We'd have a rope around them and they'd be running in front and we'd be sitting in the boxcar...

And we used to get loads of old pallets, a tube out of an old bike... you'd make elastic out of the old tubes and go around the doors with the sticks "a penny a bundle- a penny a bundle"

Bang Bang

Bang Bang would be hanging out of the pole of the bus... and give a big roar with his key "bang, bang"... when you were a child everyone would run after the bus... he used to walk up the Canal, to the bridge and we'd all follow him... and every couple of stops he'd turn around

and shoot you... we'd run back... we weren't afraid of him... he was harmless... every bus man in Dublin knew him... it was like a key out of Mountjoy or somewhere- a huge giant key! And he had that key for years, hadn't he?

The Pawn Shop, the Jewman and the Potman

Well it was very hard... you had to go down to the Pawn or the Jewman or the Potman ... the Potman would give you the pots to go to the Pawn... all in a circle... you'd go down to your Uncles (the pawnbroker) on a Monday... you were sure of coming back with a few shillings... if you did not have anything to pawn you could knock and ask your friend for something... the Uncle was grand ... you sneaked down ... went into your little snug ... if you went to the snug your neighbour wouldn't see you ...

You didn't use your own name... if anything happened at home, or there was a row, the children'd say "your mammy goes to the pawn!"... the shame...



The whole nation done it... the whole nation... it was a way of life...

At the weekend you'd be saying "don't dirty your suit ... don't dirty your shoes... polish them" ... you'd take your clothes or make your bundle and go down

The Pawnshop etc. cont.

... you'd take the sheets off the bed... the good sheets...

On my balcony they used to go to the pawn a lot... In them days you went ... one of the neighbours would wash her sheets early in the morning ... the pawn would close around six... she'd be rushing to get them dry... well, that's what we all done...

Well the Jewman was different... he'd knock on your door every week and you'd have to pay interest... and if you hadn't the money you were afraid to open the door... so he'd be hammering and hammering away and he wouldn't go... and you'd be saying to the kids "keep quiet" ... bent down in the scullery...

If you missed paying him this week you paid him next week but you'd miss your rent... you had to miss something... you might pay the rent and the Jewman and miss the insurance... you were never kind of

Straight ... you were missing one to pay the other...



Getting away from the Jewman was hard... yea... he was like an elastic stretching... You'd be saying "I'm not getting him back anymore" and then you'd look at your book and say "Oh, I've only such a thing to pay" and back over again... you never get out of it...

It's a long way to Tipperary; it's a long way to go,

(without your mother)

It's a long way to Tipperary, to the pawnshop we must go

Goodbye to your window

Farewell to your watch and chain

If you don't keep your eye upon your trousers

They'll go, just the same...



Good Luck, Bad Luck

It's bad luck to take a needle out of anyone's hand; stick it in your jersey or on the table- anywhere at all.

Other things that are bad luck; shoes, a hammer, gloves on a table or an umbrella up in the house... you got killed if you put it up; sent to bed and all! That's the way you were punished. I used to spend more of me time in bed! I'd wake up in the morning and know I was going to be put into bed before I done anything at all!

The Lend of Me Stockings

I remember the mother used to put these thick tights on us and it was of a Sunday and I had me white ankle socks on. About three o'clock she says to me "I want you...tae off your stockings! Take them off... I'll be lending them to B. She's getting her photo taken. I was roaring and crying. A lend of me

white fecking stockings! Jeaney, when you think of it! I said, "Jesus, I'm not going out again!"

Great Neighbours - the best!

I had lovely neighbours in the block I'm living in and some of them passed away and some of them got houses... now at the moment I know no-one in the block... that sort of took me down, when I lost all me neighbours...

When we came up here I was seven, seven and a half years old and it was brilliant, cos we all came from York St. and ...it was great...the first thing we made for was the bathroom...saying..."God, a toilet and all "... we had never got one; we had to go out to a yard, you know...

There was me mother and father and seven of us...and two bedrooms... and still next door there was only three of them and they got a three bedroomed flat...crazy, isn't it? But we managed...it was great...brilliant...we had very little...we had bad times and all but... ah... it was great... Great, really great! I mean you could leave your door open, go to the shops...nothing would ever be touché, great neighbours...sometimes my mother wouldn't have any money but she would go to another neighbour and pay back when my mother would get paid ...same with her...she would come to my mother...brilliant people, you know...so different no, but then it was great...



As regards the neighbours there was never any disagreement ... got on great... we used to do our stairs in turn... that's what everyone done ...

and we used to come out to the balcony, say New Year's Eve ... all along the balcony, calling out "Happy New Year Mrs. So and so" all to each other... "Happy New Year" ... and we'd stand out there for ages and look at the sky, everything, you know... it was great... and we were maniacs for dogs ... always had dogs... we got on very well...



Babies... and More Babies ...

I came to Fatima with eight children... into a two bedroom flat, from a house with four bedrooms, but it was condemned... at that stage the housing situation was very bad ... it was all the Corporation could give me, for eight children, me husband and meself... at that stage the eldest was 14 and the youngest a few months... I had three babies in the one pram at the same time; one two years and three months, one a year and two months and one a year... and a new baby. It was funny having the new baby after the three.

I left her up in the shop one day; forgot I had her... not 'til I was going in me own gate "God I forgot me child" and that's the truth! The children are all grown up and gone now, with their own houses and I'm still here!

We used to do our stairs and if anyone was pregnant you'd do it for them until they got on their feet, you know the way... great... and they'd come in and ask "have you enough milk for the baby... have you enough bread?" ... no such thing as sitting around wondering where you would get a cup of tea... They'd come to you or you'd go to them...

We used to have the babies at home... I had three of mine at home... well, you had the nurse... I forgot her name... very nice... gave her a few bob at the end of it... if you were having a baby there was always someone there... three of us on the balcony had babies within months of each other... once one was on their feet they helped the other out...



You see years ago, having a baby out of marriage was a terrible thing. In hospital the unmarried mothers were treated differently to the others. Everyone was called Mrs., regardless. At night the married mothers would get

tea but the unmarried mothers wouldn't, so one night us married mothers went for the kitchen and brought the others in tea and cake!!

The Black Pill

The Union in James' Hospital; a big ugly building where people died of TB. They said you got the black pill there. Once there was 14 bodies laid out on the concrete slabs in the morgue. Me mother would say "Jesus, never let me go in there; they'll give me the black pill"

Drugs Creep in...

Well in the nineteen eighties I began to notice changes...I did... there were a lot of strangers coming and going... juking and peeping and I did not know anything about drugs at that time... I knew there was something but I didn't know anything about drugs... I used to be amazed at people... until I got used to it... but like it was frightening sort of... you felt you were being... especially if they came up onto the balconies... I mean I cleaned them balconies... you should have seen them stairs...

Good Friday...

I used to put an altar down at the bottom of the stairs and there would be a big cross on it ... it would start from there... white cloths on the table and the big cross on it and we'd start and we'd go around doing the fifteen mysteries of the rosary... right round the block. ... we'd do the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday... and singing... it was lovely...

The Dances....

They were good times... good times cos at the end of the day ... when you were 14 you

could go to a dance, so it encouraged you to work ... you had the half crown to go to the dance ... sewing up your nylons ... if you had a hole in your tights you'd put a bandage around it... that's what we used to do... and you'd put a black patch at the back for a seam... and then you would get into a tight skirt and you couldn't walk... you were grown up then, or you thought you were...



What About the Children?

I worry for my children... the usual things, out watching them like a hawk...

I have fears for me child... constantly watching... "what's that you are after picking up?", you know, but at the end of the day no body can say what way their kids will turn out like...

I was going up to school the other day and the kids were after finding a bag of stuff, everything in it for drug use... a big bag of stuff there was...

There are families where young kids have watched their older brothers and sisters on drugs, not to mention what goes on around these flats... what are you supposed to do? You cannot watch them all the time...

It's always on the back of your mind... neglecting your children... like putting a child

into a room for an hour so as you can take your heroine...that's neglect...

Now in these flats it's mad with drugs. I'm after seeing loads of kids, lovely kids, buried out of here. Some families, three and four of them. The drugs are still around Fatima...

I often thought there was something wrong with me Da... always knew there was something wrong... I know now he was an addict but he never done it in front of me ...

With your partner on drugs you just have to split yourself in two... you just have to cope ... if you have brought children into the world you have to take care of them.

It Changes You...

You don't realize you are changing... everyone else sees it except yourself... you don't want to be going out ... don't mix with people... don't want to go outside at all...I didn't want to anyway...you do a lot of covering up... hiding... you lose confidence and it's hard to build it up again... when I was on it I didn't go out at all...It takes a lot out of me to trust people... that's from the drugs... cos you don't trust a lot of people on drugs...

It's terrible seeing friends you have grown up with get on drugs... my friend would not come out with me anymore... I felt I was losing her...

The Road to Recovery...

When I was in rehab, the difference in my family! They used to visit...I had a brother who would not give me the time of day, but he visited every week... took my little one up and gave me money for

smokes and all... it was brilliant...it felt great...

It's great now to be able to dress up, go out for a few drinks, get chips on the way home, and chill out...great not to have to worry about drugs...

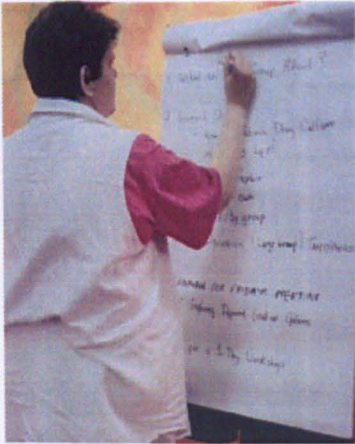
He was a lovely bloke really at the bottom of it... kind ... cared for everybody... I knew the type of person he was... all through it all I never left him... my whole family disowned me and I never took drugs in me life... I am so proud of the fact that he is after coming off drugs...still very proud of him...but I'd be so mad when he'd be talking to old friends... the fear ... it's always there!

It makes you a lot harder; you have to be hard to get through.



I went onto heroine myself and I don't know how I got out of it... I started going to raves and took ecstasy... then took it after the raves to bring me down .. the ecstasy led to it... yea... on heroine for six years...

I was brushing it off saying "Jaysus I'm not on anything ... I wouldn't touch anything like that..." I felt I would be OK... just leave me alone and I'll sort it... but no...



I was afraid to go on a programme in case people would find out... but people already knew...me supports in coming off were me mother, the Treatment Centre and the Rialto Drug Team... it was a relief and an embarrassment...

I have great will power now... I just think it's the people around you that has a lot to do with it... I had to change my friends... eventually I did my own thing ... said to meself "I don't believe in all that shit ... I'm telling you, you better get your head together" I think it's up to the person themselves ... if you want to come off drugs you'll come off them... I done it all meself...

Do you know what made me move on? It was the matron in the hospital, when I was coming out with my baby, she gave me roses and a box of chocolates and a big kiss and a hug and told me I was a great mother. I burst into tears ... she made me feel really happy.

I'd love to work with the homeless, young offenders, drug addicts... I'd be able to chat to them ... I have a lot of

experience. The only thing you can do really is give support... tell them they can get off it... tell them how important they are; they're not just another addict walking down the street....

I'd like to give something back to the community... support to someone on drugs... someone with kids... just to help to get their life back on track... no great miracles or anything...

A Mother's Pain

Of course she did go astray then and I couldn't believe it...cos of all me other relations ...looking at them I didn't think she would do anything wrong...I never noticed cos I was at work during the day... and she left school and started working ... she said to me "Ma do you know what it's like out there now?" I said "I do ... it was like that when I was growing up" ...



"Being called coward and all if you don't try this..." and I just said "Say no... all you do is say no!" ... "You can't, you can't..." she said ... "Of course you can" I said... There was murder nearly every other night...I threw her out and all a few times and it killed me.... I seen her going around and she was in bits and I'd take her back and she would promise me "I won't" but she'd start again ... I could have killed myself and all...but when I thought about it...why do that to myself...

Somebody else was going to be left with the problem... she's not anyone else's problem, only mine... ..

It was going on for years...I just couldn't cope... she was into everything ...robbing, handbags, everything...

I said "I don't care ... every time I go into your room I find something else..." I used to have to keep searching in her room and find needles and tablets and everything... in her room...and then she went to a clinic...the best thing ever... went over herself and asked... the first morning she was up in Andrews Centre seeing a counsellor and they told her where to go.... she didn't know where it was and I said "I know and I'll go with you..."

She said "I'm serious this time..." so I brought her over the first morning... She was grand then...and since... working and all now.... she's great...

Hopes and Dreams

What we care most about is the children being safe ... not having to watch like a hawk... and the children's future ... that they get a good education and a job they are happy in, getting a nice house in the New Fatima, living free from drugs, being there for each other ...a great community... just a peaceful life...



INSECURE *Fatima*



Fatima and love songs...

We could do a love song. You know, Fatima years ago was good and then it went bad with drugs. It is getting knocked down now. That's like a relationship; like with a fella; started well, gone rocky because of drugs and wanting a new start again... the words of the song could mean both...

What's in a name?

INSECURE would be a good name for the band; for people like in Fatima who find it hard... or ENDLESS cos Fatima is never going to end, no matter what.

You know how some people are saying to change the name of Fatima...

No, keep the name; we are proud of Fatima... it's not going to end...

Even if they do change it I don't think anyone will use the new name...

What we've had to go through

I used to knock up to me friend in another block and you'd see them using and all and stuff like that and it would turn you off Fatima but then when you come down to this block...it's not like that...

Growing up it was normal to see it every day of the week... I just grew up that way like... I

haven't seen them for ages using, selling yea, but not using... I was afraid at first I'd say but then I got used to it...

To people who have never seen Fatima I'd tell them just what I think of it... I wouldn't go around telling them "Oh, yea, it's full of drugs" cos there's two sides to Fatima and like people think there is one side and that's the drugs but the people who are living in it know there are two sides... and we know the good side...the Clubs and Centres ... most people don't know nothing... I'd just tell them that... I would mention drugs but no go on about that for ages....

I remember...

Fatima was beautiful. I can remember the trees in the back garden, swings, a playground...



There were no railings or nothing; no gardens when we were young. You just walked straight out your hall door to the yard. There was much more space outside. But when the gardens came there was a place for the small children to play. We used to plant vegetables like in the garden, and one day we looked over the balcony to see all the cabbages all over the block ... when we were in the Sunflower Club.

Our dreams...

I dream of being a hairdresser or a beautician, and going to college...

Yea... a hairdresser or be famous I just want a career...

A good education, a good job, maybe get a house...To rear my kids in a good place... give them a good education and career and a good start in life...

No Words Can Tell

Verse 1

*The first time that I saw you
I knew you were the one
I never, never thought you'd notice me.*

*But my thoughts were wrong
All my friends kept telling me
He's not the one
And then, one night,
I called you on the phone,
You were not home.
So I got the feeling
You were with somebody else
I'm all alone, at home.*

Chorus

*No words can tell
No tears can express
The love, the loss and the tenderness.
There never came a moment
When I don't think of you
Or a day that passes by
That your face is not in view.*

Verse 2

*The last time that you kissed me
I did not want it to end
I didn't want to be apart from you
I can't let go
It's really hard for me and you to do...*

Chorus (Repeat)



The Spirit of Fatima

Our Lady of Fatima...

You have memories of when you were small ... well I always remember going down there and saying the rosary... yea, I remember that... loads used to go down, people out of the flats ... that's where you paid for flowers and all for it ... the kids and all understand "that's Our Lady of Fatima and it's not to be touched.



It should be left the way it is, cleaned up and lights put on it ... the lights used to be lovely around her head... it used to be lighting at night time... I want her with me, beside where I am... I don't know where I'm going to be... cos it's just me... a part of me growing up... the memory... it was with you all your life... Well I can't see how Our Lady's statue will go anywhere. It will have to stay where the people of Fatima stay. And I'll be here to see that statue does not go anywhere... even the small children, if they come out of the shop facing it, if they have coppers left, they just, over the railings and into the grotto, I call it. Last year ... we cleaned it all

up and put down a couple of rose bushes ... you'd want to see the pounds we took out of that...

We'll not forget Our Lady of Fatima either- she's coming with us.

The Drummer Boy

I heard the drums...the *Little Drummer Boy*... I think I was making puddings or something that Sunday... and I heard something and I pulled back the curtain and saw them arriving at the grotto, so I opened the window ... I didn't go out because it was cold ... I stood looking at what was going on ... I hadn't heard about it because I would have been prepared and I would have went out and walked down... it was lovely to see all them candles on the Christmas Tree... that's what I saw then ...

My one kind of worry would be that the community experience would change... that would be really sad... the community spirit is just unbelievable ... I've been in a lot of places and never experienced a community spirit like this... its brilliant... like, do you remember the Christmas Tree? I got shivers down me back, walking down that night and all ... all the kids and the *Little Drummer Boy*... it was just something else... I've never experienced that anywhere else...

We gathered together at the Christmas tree and remembered the people we had lost during the year. Remembering the people who are gone... who have died... and the hurt seems to be really important... it keeps coming up... let's take our past with us...

The Bon Fire

The bonfire that was over in the Canal a couple of year ago... and the boys were playing

in the band and I'll tell you they came from everywhere to look at it ... and last year at the end of the summer project they had a parade that they were talking about for months afterwards... they had all the little children dressed up as butterflies... there was even a man dressed up in a flower... the flat I live in I can see right to the football pitch and that's where all this goes on, so I have a ringside seat... just unbelievable to look at all the colourful costumes, the music... they have this bongo band, I do call it... they keep playing the drums...

It's like something you'd see on the television for a carnival.

All Soul's Night

All Soul's night... you always put out a glass of water... a bit of salt and dry bread, because your mother always told you that when the souls is rambling leave them out something to eat and drink... everyone knows that...

The Child of Prague

... And the Child of Prague... years ago when you got married you'd be delighted if you got a present of a Child of Prague... and if anyone is getting married and if you are going on holidays you'd put the Child of Prague out in the garden, the next day you'd have a lovely summer's day... and if you stuck a thrupenny bit under the Child of Prague, may you never want for money...

The Spirit of Fatima

Many Fatima groups and projects and groups gathered to celebrate *the Spirit of Fatima* in the Fatima Community Centre during the Halloween Festival, October 2000.

THE SPIRIT OF FATIMA

Fatima Prayer Group



The great mystery that stands
I wait for you in the night we



It's time for passage and the
the time that the power grows



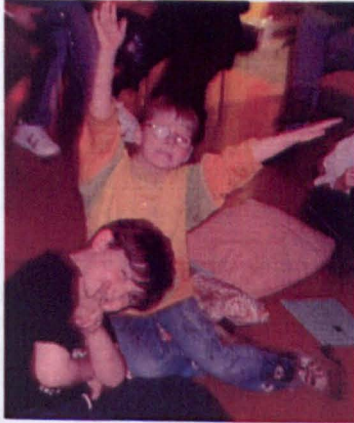
can't come off things and be



A CELEBRATION



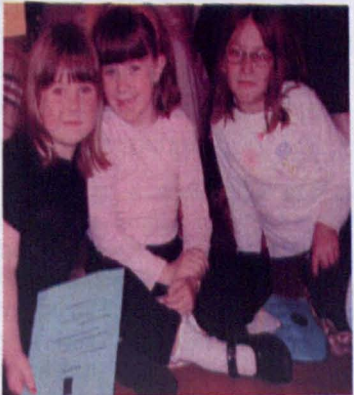
Have the vision of walking along



praying, you know that kind of a



and in the future and be very
disrupt stage how it should be



HALLOWEEN, 2000



THE FIG TREE – Fatima Prayer Group



It's All in a Name...

The real memory that stands out for me is the night we read the Bible passage of the Fig Tree. I had a lot of hang-ups about the past; a lot of things happened. It made me realize that you grip onto things that have happened- they are dead and you get nothing from them... you have to let them go... and that was the beginning of the new me ...it's from that passage that the Fig Tree that the prayer group got its name...

Prayer and Drugs...

I remember one night we didn't have a prayer meeting; we went to a drug meeting. The meeting was on that night and we were thinking maybe we should be over there so we went over and that was the night I realized for the first time that you just can't come off drugs and be 'normal'... listening to one of the girls saying "the problem isn't giving up the drugs but what you do with your time... I have no friends". It made me realize that you need to be counselled. There should be places for them to go to help them, where they can meet other girls and boys who are coming off... that they have friends that understand what they are going through... that is what came out of the night...

The God of the Fig Tree...

I would describe God as someone very gentle, very compassionate, no matter what I do I know he will forgive me and that is for everybody; if you think of, not the worst person, but a person who does the worst thing you could possibly do, I know he'll forgive... and they will be our equals when we go to Heaven; we'll be all the same... I have this vision of walking along a beach and wrapping my clothes about me and walking and chatting away... a lovely feeling... I feel that God is everywhere, in people more so than in material things... and if we look close enough we find it...

For me God is ... in nature and all around us... if we haven't got God we haven't got anything... I pray to God cos I'm nearer to God when I'm praying ... I feel more close to God when I'm praying, you know that kind of a way...

It think what was funny in the very beginning ... we were shy of all this ... thought God was great and wonderful and here we were, but I think we grew more comfortable and we could talk out then and the very fact that we could talk out to each other very plainly and with trust about what was in the Bible and be very confident about how it linked to our lives, changed our attitudes to God, ourselves and the Bible... we were not scared of speaking... that was a big change in people...

Yea, after a while you got to know the human part of God... he was a part of you kind of... I think a lot of people have this vision of God as someone behind you with a whip... if you do something wrong or step out of

place He'd come down on you... I did as a child now... the fear... but not now...

I have to say the one image I have is of the Agony in the Garden ... I have of him a picture lying on the rock with a royal blue cloak on him... a kind of white light coming over him... he's just lying on the rock with the cloak about him...

I think I'd have a big sheltering tree, yea, that would be it... but it's planted somewhere within the world... and we are sitting under it...

For me, a light going under *The Arch* and suddenly it just bursts through; a burst of colour, fabulous colour and light, like moonbeams and everything and you can hear people's voices talking and singing; just the whole thing of life... that's what I'd try and create to create God... In my picture he's really peaceful; quiet and peaceful...

I think I see a God with the sleeves rolled up ready to do ordinary things for us all...

The image that comes to me is of a circus and the surprise of it... and usual, ordinary characters in life doing all kinds of unusual things... surprising... life coming to life, no matter where...

Prayer Being Real...

It's like we have to give life to the Bible... or the story... one of the most important things that happened is... I would have had opportunities to go and learn about the Bible or you would hear priests talking about the meaning of the Gospel and that; to me it has always seemed to be one step removed from real life; you know it is only OK when you twist it and turn it and then talk about it... whereas here, the rawness of the situation in Fatima, often crazy and

sometimes wonderful. Is really the only thing and the Gospel speaks to that...and not to do something with that to make it acceptable or OK... if the Gospel does not speak to that there is something wrong. Somebody is manipulating the Gospel... for some other purpose...

It's as though you have to polish your life or put fancy words around it and then it's OK, rather than it being OK because it's life...

I can go on...

I

love that piece at the end of the meditation at the beginning of each meeting, when you say, "I can go on... I can go on..." I find that very powerful ... "I can go on"...

So do I! I always say that when I am really down ... "I can go on" ... and you will go on a little bit

more. You always do. And if you just keep repeating it if you are having a tough time... keep repeating it... in your head... it does calm you down ... "I can go on...!"

You can even say to yourself "I've been here before and I've come through it so I can go on... remember where you've been and where you've come to... you know..."

You have to get back up, but how you do it? You won't do it on your own; you couldn't do it on your own...

The Dream of the Fig Tree...

Well my dream for Fatima from the Fig Tree is that people will get what they want; get the houses they want... and if the children could only get their swimming pool and gardens for their flowers... that's really where I ... I feel God is in everything and I feel if they got what they are looking for, well you know... something better for

the children... people... I hope that sense of community is brought into what they want for Fatima...

The Sunflower Club...

I think we started dreaming long ago... asking what do we want to do in the community, to reach out a bit? That's where the idea of the Sunflower Club came.

Yea, it was to give the children a sense of what they could be and what they could do... to stop them thinking that well "I need to rob cos I have no money" ... by being in the Sunflower Club they could realize "well I could make a dress!" Or make a few things and sell them... and keep on the straight and narrow...to make them see what they could achieve in their own lives and how far they could bring themselves. And they loved it, I must say.

FATIMA PROVERBS

- ✦ What comes around goes around
- ✦ What's for you won't pass you by
- ✦ The proof of the pudding is in the eating
- ✦ Never throw water on a drowned rat
- ✦ Many hands make light work
- ✦ Too many cooks spoil the broth
- ✦ Them that are rearing should be sparing
- ✦ Live and let live
- ✦ Time waits for no man
- ✦ Blood is thicker than water
- ✦ Nearly never made the pot boil
- ✦ What comes around goes around
- ✦ What's for you won't pass you by
- ✦ The proof of the pudding is in the eating
- ✦ Blood is thicker than water
- ✦ Nearly never made the pot boil
- ✦ Many hands make light work
- ✦ Too many cooks spoil the broth
- ✦ Them that are rearing should be sparing
- ✦ Live and let live
- ✦ Time waits for no man

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APPENDIX H**Publications by the Irish Episcopal Conference (1969-2005)**

- 1969 *Christian Marriage*
- 1970 *Northern Ireland*
- 1972 *Change in the Church*
- 1973 *Development*
- 1973 *Prayer in the Home*
- 1975 *Human Life is Sacred*
- 1977 *The Work of Justice*
- 1979 *Ireland Awaits Pope John Paul II*
- 1980 *Handing on Faith in the Home*
- 1980 *Conscience and Morality*
- 1983 *Christian Faith in a Time of Economic Depression*
- 1983 *The Storm that Threatens*
- 1985 *The Young Church*
- 1985 *Love is for Life*
- 1986 *Marriage, the Family and Divorce: a Statement by the Irish Bishops*
- 1992 *Work is the Key*
- 1994 *Cherishing the Family*
- 1995 *Civil Law and the Right to Life: the Irish Bishops' Statement*
- 1996 *Irish Bishops' Conference Jubilee 2000 Letter*
- 1996 *Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response*
- 1997 *Breaking the Silence*
- 1998 *Tackling the Drugs Problem Together*
- 1998 *One Bread One Body*
- 1998 *Conscience*
- 1999 *The Temperate Way*
- 2000 *Prosperity with a Purpose*
- 2000 *Beyond Maintenance*
- 2000 *Assisted Human Reproduction: Facts and Ethical Issues*
- 2001 *Proclaiming the Gospel of Life*

Cont.

- 2001 *Building Peace, Shaping the Future*
- 2002 *An Opportunity Not to be Lost*
- 2002 *End of Life Care-Ethical and Pastoral Issues*
- 2003 *Life in all Its Fullness*
- 2004 *Notification on Recent Developments in Moral Theology and
Their Implications for the Church and Society*
- 2003 *The Wonder of Life*
- 2004 *Life is for Living: A Reflection on Suicide*
- 2005 *Towards Healing- Pastoral Reflections for Lent*
- 2005 *A Joint Submission by the Committee on the Family of the Irish Episcopal
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