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## In Search of the Underclass: Marginalization, Poverty and Fatalism in the Republic of Ireland

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**IN SEARCH OF THE UNDERCLASS:  
MARGINALIZATION, POVERTY AND FATALISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF  
IRELAND**

**ABSTRACT:** The emergence of large scale long-term unemployment in the Republic of Ireland suggests that it might provide an interesting case in which to apply the concept of an 'underclass'. In this paper we explore the relationship between labour market marginality, social exclusion and fatalism. No evidence is found of the kind of interactions which would justify applying the term 'underclass' to the Irish case. Instead what we are confronted with is different types of working class marginalization. In relation to what we have termed 'pervasive marginalization' the costs of economic change have been borne disproportionately by those members of the younger cohorts originating in the lower working class rather than by those in particular locations. The evidence relating to the social and psychological consequences of labour market detachment, rather than providing support for the value of an underclass perspective, confirm the continued relevance of class analysis.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Between 1980 and 1987 in the Republic of Ireland the total at work fell by 76,000 and despite high levels of emigration the numbers unemployed soared to 232,000 or almost 18 per cent of the work force. The dramatic increase in the level of unemployment between 1980 and 1987 was accompanied by a steady increase in the proportion who were long-term unemployed. Statistics on the registered unemployed show that in April 1980 35 per cent of those on the live register had been registered continuously for over a year. by April 1987 this figure had reached 44 per cent. While the overall unemployment rate was well above average for those aged under 25, most of the long-term unemployed were aged over 25 or over and

80 per cent were men (compared with 72 per cent of the overall unemployed). The increasing importance of long-term unemployment was accompanied by a shift in the pattern of social welfare support. Whereas in 1980 47 per cent of those on the Live Register were in receipt of insurance based Unemployment Benefit, and 48 per cent received the means tested Unemployment Assistance, by 1987 only 37 per cent were on UB and the percentage on UA had risen to 58 per cent, (O'Connell, 1993; Kennedy, 1993).

Against this background it is hardly surprising the references to 'an underclass have come to be increasingly frequent in discussions of unemployment and poverty'. (Healy and Reynolds, 1992). While there is no generally shared view of what is implied by the concept at a very general level, definitions tend to share three common features:

"first an underclass is a social stratum that suffers from prolonged labour market marginality; second it experiences greater deprivation than even the manual working class and third it possesses its own sub-culture". (Gallie, forthcoming)

The concept of 'an underclass' has appeal for both left and right. The latter can focus on dependency culture while the former can point to manner in which macroeconomic change impacts on vulnerable groups (Peterson, 1991:3). What Gallie (forthcoming) refers to as the 'conservative' conception of the underclass is particularly associated with Murray (1984; 1990) for whom the underclass is a consequence of the perverse interventions of the welfare state that seduce in the short-term but have the long-term consequence of creating a dependency culture.<sup>1</sup> A good deal of the recent literature on the underclass concept in its conservative form has focused on establishing its long and undistinguished pedigree with its echoes of notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. (Dean, 1989; Lister 1991; Macnicol, 1987).

Our primary concern in this paper is with the radical conception and in particular with the hypotheses generated Wilson by (1987; 1991). The term 'underclass', Wilson (1991:4)

notes, was coined by Myrdal to describe those who have been driven to extreme economic marginality because of changes in what is now called post-industrial society. This development of the concept points to an interpretation which stresses that certain sectors of the population are prone to unemployment and poverty as a consequence of economic changes. While accepting the accuracy of anthropological descriptions of the urban underclass, he provides an explanation which focuses on unintended social consequences of the uneven impact of economic change. His central propositions are as follows (Peterson, 1991: 16).

1. Economic change leads to a demand for different forms of labour and is associated with significant institutional change in labour market arrangements.
2. These changes have a disproportionate effect on particular groups.
3. The major change involves weakening of attachment to labour market. Among such groups with a dramatic decline in the proportion in stable, reasonably well paid, jobs.
4. These effects are aggravated by outward migration.
5. The effects of economic change are compounded by social isolation. Marginalization has differential consequences in terms of the risks of persistent poverty depending on location.

"The issue is not simply that the underclass or 'ghetto poor' have a marginal position in the labour market similar to that of other disadvantaged groups, it is also that their economic position is uniquely reinforced by their milieu". (Wilson, 1991:12)

6. Joblessness especially prolonged joblessness is likely to be associated with or produce feelings of low perceived self efficacy. People come to seriously doubt that they can accomplish what is expected of them or, even where this is not

true, they may give up trying because they consider that their efforts will be futile given the environmental constraints within which they operate. It is hypothesized, furthermore, that such feelings of low self efficacy are reinforced by the feelings and values of others operating in the same social context producing what Bandura (1982) termed 'lower collective efficacy'. The psychological self-efficacy theory must be considered in the context of the structural problem of labour force attachment and the role played by cultural factors in the transmission of self and collective beliefs. A particular pattern of behaviour is explained by a combination of constraints, opportunities and social psychology.

In its most general form Wilson's model involves exogenous factors such as changes in the economy; exogenous determinants consequent on those exogenous factors; distribution of employment and income, migration, size of pool of marriageable men; and finally endogenous determinants including social isolation unique to the underclass such as neighbourhood resources and role models and cultural isolation from mainstream networks, Wilson (1991:12) stresses that his conceptual framework can be applied not only to all ethnic and racial groups but also to other societies. What is crucial is a combination of weak labour force attachment and social isolation which may exist without the same level of concentration inherent in the American Ghetto. Drawing out the implications of Wilson's model we would wish to restrict the application of the term underclass to those situations where evidence exists of milieu effects of a kind which through their impact on factors such as feelings of self-efficacy contribute to 'vicious circle' processes in terms of detachment from the labour market. (Ultee *et al.*, 1988).

If one holds to the view that distinctive ethnic or racial characteristics are a *sine qua*

*non* of an underclass the application of the term to the Irish case must be ruled out. Otherwise the possibility holds that the Irish case might provide particularly fertile ground for the application of a model such as Wilson's.

## **WORKING CLASS MARGINALIZATION**

As Gallie (forthcoming) notes, conceptions of the underclass differs in terms of whether they treat the individual or the household as the unit of analysis. Given the variety of issues raised by those employing the term there appears to be little point in adopting a dogmatic stance on this issue. Here, having decided to make the starting point of our analysis detachment from the labour market, the issue of stability of membership of the unemployed becomes central. If there was a large group of people out of work at any one time but no substantial group of people who are usually out of work then, as Smith (1992:5) emphasizes, there could be no underclass, merely a working class, some of whom are temporarily out of work.<sup>2</sup>

The approach adopted here is in accord with Smith's suggestion that we adopt a minimalist approach and view the idea of underclass as a counterpart to the idea of social class which acquires its meaning within the same framework of analysis. The requirement of relative stability provides the basis for focusing on the household as the unit of strategic action in terms of consumption and production. The choice of the household as the unit of analysis enables us to explore the consequences of the labour market detachment, in particular, the person considered by the household members to be the 'head of household' for ... "experiences of affluence or hardship, of economic security of insecurity, of prospects of continuing material advance, or of unyielding material constraints" (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992:236). Although in the case of married couples we take into account the labour market

situation of both parties, we have chosen not to pursue the 'dominance' approach in this case because of the probability that husband or wife is currently the one with the 'dominant' relationship to the labour market may itself reflect the scale of detachment from the labour market (Erikson, 1984). In class terms, we are faced with the issue of whether there is a class, which as a consequence of weak labour force attachment and social isolation, cannot be identified simply as a fraction of the working class. This approach contrasts with that which is based on the view that the underclass should be thought of as involving those who fall *outside* the class system. The differing competing approaches are based on rather different responses to the challenge raised for class analysis by long-term unemployment.

The major problem in pursuing empirical research in this area seems to arise, not from fundamentally new conceptual problems, but from the difficulties associated with defining the nature of the relationship to the labour market which is a prerequisite of the emergence of an underclass. While Smith's (1992:5) definition of the underclass as those family 'units having no stable relationship with legitimate gainful employment' conveys a clear sense of the phenomenon, it leaves the whole question of operationalisation open. However, taken together with a frame of reference which seeks to establish whether there is a class which needs to be thought of as other than a fraction of the working class, this approach allows for the identification of a *marginalized working class* group defined solely in terms of current class situation and labour market experience. The consequences of such marginalization in terms of poverty, defined as exclusion from the minimum acceptable way of life in the society, remains an empirical question, as does the extent of geographical concentration, or the existence of contextual effects.

The Survey of Poverty, Income Distribution and Usage of State Services involving a nationally representative sample of 3,294 households carried out by the Economic and

Social Research Institute, Dublin, in 1987, provides the database for our analysis.<sup>3</sup>

In pursuing a definition of the marginalized working class, since the emphasis is on relationship to the labour market rather than dependence on welfare benefits, households with a HOH aged 65 or over have been excluded, as have farm households. This leaves us with a sample of 2,571 households. Our focus is, as Buck (1992:11) puts it, on "stable absence of relationship to employment, on the one hand, and unstable relationship with employment on the other." The marginalized working class is not equated with those working class households who are in poverty. Arriving at a definition of the marginalized working class involves taking a number of criteria into account. Varying the cut-off points on any of these criteria will affect our estimates of the size of the group. In this paper, however, rather than examining in detail a variety of cut-off points, the analysis proceeds in terms of the preferred options while directing attention to some of the most important consequences of such options.

The first criterion relates to stability of membership of the unemployed; and here two years unemployment is chosen as the cut-off point. With regard to stable relationship to employment, use is made of a measure of proportion of potential labour market time spent unemployed. The denominator excludes time spent ill or disabled or in retirement. Any cut-off point is bound to be arbitrary. The option chosen is one of 20 per cent of potential labour market time with the additional conditions that the HOH must have been at least five years in the labour market. The choice has been made because the notion of marginalization implies severe problems in establishing connection with the labour market. In any event, varying the cut-off point does not have a dramatic effect in our results and such differences as do exist are further moderated by the requirement that the household satisfy other criteria.

Thus where the household head is currently in employment, and had not experienced a spell of unemployment in the previous twelve months, the household is excluded from the



marginalized working class. Furthermore, since concern is with family units having no stable relationship with legitimate gainful employment, those households in which the spouse is in employment are excluded. Finally, it is necessary for the household head to be a member of the working class. The definition of the working class is crucial in determining the final outcome of our procedures. There would appear to be no virtue in restricting attention to the lower working class because *a priori* we would expect that at least some significant section of the upper working class have been exposed to consequences of structural change which we see as the major factor contributing to the potential emergence of a marginalized working class. This view is supported by the results set out in Table 1 in which the labour market experience of heads of household is broken down by social class.

The classes of the CASMIN schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) have been aggregated as follows:

1. The salariat or service class [CASMIN classes I & II].
2. The intermediate non-manual and higher petit bourgeoisie which comprises
  - (a) higher grade routine white collar workers;
  - (b) technicians and supervisors of manual workers;
  - (c) self-employed with employees;
  - (d) farmers with more than fifty acres
 [CASMIN Classes IIIa, V, IVa, IVc (50 acres+)]
3. The upper working class and lower petit bourgeoisie
  - (a) skilled manual;
  - (b) semi-skilled manual;
  - (c) lower grade white collar;
  - (d) self-employed without employees;
  - (e) farmers with less than 50 acres.
 [CASMIN Classes VI, VIIa (semi-skilled), IIIb, IVb, IVc (less than 50 acres)]
4. The lower working class
  - (a) unskilled manual workers
  - (b) agricultural workers
 [CASMIN Classes VIIa (unskilled), VIIc]

Except in the case of class origins farmers do not figure in our analysis.

From Table 1 the scale of the labour market difficulties which have been experienced by lower working class households become clear. Over four out of the ten are currently unemployed. They had been unemployed for, on average, 19 weeks in the previous twelve months; for four years in their 'careers' and for 16 per cent of their potential time in the labour market. The situation of the upper working class, while a good deal more favourable, still provides a picture of substantial unemployment problems. Over one in five were unemployed. They had been unemployed for, on average, more than nine weeks in the previous year; for 1.5 years throughout their careers and for 7 per cent of their potential labour market time. The situation of those outside the working class is substantially more favourable.

Table 1: *Labour Market Experience of Head of Household by Social Class*

	<i>Percentage Unemployed</i>	<i>Number of Weeks Unemployed in Previous Twelve Months</i>	<i>Career Unemployment: Number of Years Unemployed</i>	<i>Career Unemployment: Proportion of Potential Labour Market Time Unemployed</i>
Salariat	0.8	0.81	0.21	0.01
Intermediate Non-Manual	5.7	2.49	0.66	0.03
Upper Working Class	21.1	9.28	1.51	0.07
Lower Working Class	41.6	19.33	4.00	0.16
Total	16.7	7.57	1.40	0.06

On the basis of these findings, in our analysis of marginalization 'working class' is defined as including both the upper and lower working class. The working definition of the marginalized working class is as follows.

1. The head of household is in the working class

AND

2. The head of household has been unemployed for 2 years or more or has spent 20% or more of his/her potential labour market time since leaving full-time education unemployed and has been in the labour market for at least five years.

AND

3. The spouse of the head of household is not in employment.

In addition

4. Where the head of household is currently employed and has not experienced a spell of unemployment in the previous 12 months the household is excluded

Such households constitute 11 per cent of non-farm households where the HOH is under 65.

Adopting a criterion of 15 per cent of potential labour market time as a cut-off point, figures rise to 12 per cent.

#### *Incidence of Working Class Marginalization*

In the subsequent analysis, in order to focus on key comparisons, the upper and middle classes have been combined in the case of current class position. The threefold distinction between the middle class, the working class and the marginalized working class will be referred to as 'class situation'.<sup>4</sup>

The substantive importance of the type of milieu effect postulated by Wilson depends both on the strength of the effect and the degree to which marginalization is concentrated in such locations. For this reason our initial focus is on the incidence of marginalization i.e. the percentage of all those marginalized who are to be found in particular categories. Incidence levels may be distinguished from the risk of marginalization facing a particular type of

household which is given by the percentage of households of that type found to be marginalized.

In Table 2 we show the distribution of the incidence of marginalization by location and housing tenure. In terms of location we distinguish between living in the main urban centres of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford and those residing elsewhere. These centres range in size from Dublin with a population of over one million to Waterford with just over 90,000 inhabitants. The major distinction in relation to tenure is between public sector housing which in Ireland is provided by the local authorities, and private sector housing; we do distinguish further, however, within the public sector between tenants and those purchasing their houses from the local authority. In addition to the figures relating to marginalization the final column of the table documents the distribution of non-marginalized working class households.

In addition to presenting results relating to incidence of overall marginalization, we have also provided comparable results for what we have termed *pervasive* and *restricted* working class marginalization. The former refers to a situation where the HOH has been unemployed for at least 20 per cent of his/her potential labour market time while the latter relates to the situation where this does hold but the conditions for marginalization are still fulfilled. As will become clear, this distinction emerges as a particularly important one. Just less than 8 per cent of non-agricultural households with a HOH aged under 65 fall into the pervasive category and just over 3 per cent into the restricted one.

There is no evidence of concentration of marginalization in the main urban centres. Almost two-thirds of the group are located outside these urban centres compared to just under sixty per cent of all non-farm households with a HOH aged under sixty five. If we were to restrict our attention to Dublin, these conclusions would be strengthened. One in five

marginalized working class households are located in Dublin compared to almost one in three non-farm households. The urban-rural breakdown is almost identical for pervasive and restricted marginalization.

Table 2: *Incidence of Working Class Marginalization by Housing Tenure and Location in a Main Urban Centre*

	Marginalization			Distribution of Non- Marginalized Working Class
	Overall	Restricted	Pervasive	
<i>Urban Centres</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	
	%	%	%	%
i) All Households	34.5	34.3	34.6	35.3
ii) Public Housing	23.9	20.9	25.2	16.4
a) Purchase Scheme	3.5	4.5	3.2	6.7
b) Tenant	20.4	16.4	22.0	9.7
iii) Private Housing	10.6	13.4	9.4	18.9
<i>Outside Urban Centres</i>				
i) All Households	65.5	65.7	65.4	64.7
ii) Public Housing	37.6	22.4	44.0	17.0
a) Purchase Scheme	5.8	4.5	5.7	6.5
b) Tenant	31.8	17.9	38.3	10.5
iii) Private Housing	27.9	43.3	21.4	47.7

It is housing tenure rather than location which turns out to be the crucial factor in relation to concentration of the marginalized. Over six out of ten of the marginalized working class are in public housing compared to one in three of the non-marginalized working class. The figures in relation to being a local authority tenant are even more striking and are,

respectively, over one in two and one in five. An interesting contrast emerges between the pervasive and restricted marginalization groups. Seventy per cent of the former are found in public sector housing and sixty per cent are tenants. For the latter group, the corresponding figures drop to just over four out of ten and one in three. Thus while a significant degree of concentration in private sector housing is observed in relation to both types of marginalization, the tendency is substantially stronger in regard to pervasive marginalization.

The manner in which tenure interacts with location defies conventional expectations. Approximately, one in six of the non-marginalized working class are located in public sector housing; with one in ten being tenants. Whether, or not a household is located in an urban centre or not is of no consequence. However, since there are almost twice as many households outside the main urban centres, it follows that striking urban - non-urban differences emerge in relation to the percentage of this group living in local authority housing. In urban centres the figures reaches 46 per cent but outside it drops to 24 per cent. For restricted working class marginalization, we observe a strikingly similar pattern; almost equal numbers, i.e. one in five, are found in public sector housing in, and outside, urban centres. Similarly, while in urban centres 61 per cent are found in public sector housing, this level drops to 34 per cent elsewhere.

In the case of pervasive marginalization we are presented with a rather different picture. Overall, just less than one in two of this group are found in public sector housing outside the urban centres; compared to one in four who are in urban public sector housing. Within each location little difference is observed in the percentage in public sector housing; the relevant figure for urban centres being 73 per cent compared to 67 per cent for all other locations. The foregoing results demonstrate there is significantly less differentiation in relation to tenure within the working class in urban centres.

The findings presented make it extremely implausible that the marginalized working class in urban centres are segregated, in any significant manner, from the non-marginalized working class. It would seem to require a quite remarkable degree of segregation of local authority tenants from those availing of the purchase scheme. In fact, such concentration of the marginalized working class, although distributed across substantial numbers of sites, seems much more likely to be the case outside the major urban centres. When, as in Table 3, we look at the full range of class situation, including distinctions in terms of employment status, within the non marginalized working class, we find further evidence that local authority housing is more heterogenous in terms of the range of class situations covered in urban areas. The main findings relating to those in public sector housing are as follows.

Table 3: *Composition of Local Authority Housing in Main Urban Centres and Elsewhere in Terms of Class Situation of Households*

	<i>Urban Centres</i>	<i>Elsewhere</i>
	%	%
<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>9.8</b>
<b>Non-Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>60.7</b>
i) In Employment etc.	50.0	38.8
ii) Unemployed	8.4	13.9
iii) HOH aged 50-64 and Retired or Ill/Disabled	5.7	8.0
<b>Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>29.4</b>
i) Restricted Marginalization	5.2	5.3
ii) Pervasive Marginalization	15.3	24.1

1. 29 per cent of households outside the urban centres are located in the marginalized working class compared to 21 per cent in the urban centres.
2. In the case of pervasive marginalization the respective percentages are 24 per cent and 15 per cent.
3. In urban locations 79 per cent of households are middle class or non-marginalized working class whereas the corresponding figure for rural situations is 71 per cent.
4. If we aggregate the marginalized working class and the non-marginalized working class who are unemployed we arrive at a figure of just less than 30 per cent in the urban centres but one which is over 40 per cent for households outside these centres.

These findings, however, are not inconsistent with the existence of urban areas with extreme levels of concentration of unemployment and deprivation. (Nolan, Whelan and Williams, 1994; Williams 1993). However, it follows that the remaining areas will necessarily be even more diverse in terms of class situation than our figures suggest.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Incidence of Marginalization by Age*

While marginalization is not concentrated in urban centres its incidence is strongly related to age. This is not the case, however in regard to overall marginalization because the impact of age operates in opposite directions for restricted and pervasive marginalization. The pattern of results is set out in Table 4. Pervasive marginalization is concentrated among those under forty; with over 70 per cent of the group falling into this category. The situation in relation to restricted marginalization is just the opposite with three quarters being aged over forty; indeed, more than one in two are over fifty.



Table 4: *Incidence of Working Class Marginalization by Age Group*

	<i>Overall Incidence %</i>	<i>Marginalization Pervasive Incidence %</i>	<i>Incidence %</i>	<i>Size of Age Group %</i>
18-29	19.2	25.4	4.6	14.4
30-39	38.8	46.9	19.9	33.7
40-49	13.0	9.3	21.9	21.9
50-64	28.9	18.4	53.7	30.0

The observed effects in relation to marginalization reflect different cohort experiences rather than age effects *per se*. The rather different early labour market experiences of the younger and older working class respondents are reflected in these differences. As a consequence of the substantial rise in unemployment levels since the 1970s, the younger group have been exposed to relatively high risks of unemployment throughout their labour market careers. The older group spent a great deal of time in the labour market at a time when the absence of employment opportunities was reflected in large-scale emigration rather than long-term unemployment. (Breen *et al* 1990). Declining opportunities outside Ireland for those without skills and qualification, and a reduction of the gap in the level of social welfare benefits, have ensured that the option of exporting the marginalized working class is no longer a practical one. (O'Connell and Rottman 1992).

One consequence of this is that almost two thirds of the pervasively marginalized working class households are located at the early family formation stages of the family cycle;

with children aged younger than five in the household. Consequently, as we can see from Table 5, these households are not characterised by within household 'intergenerational' transmission of unemployment. Taking as an indicator the percentage of households with at least one person unemployed other than the HOH and the spouse, we find no difference between the marginalized and non-marginalized working classes. Instead the groups with the highest risk

Table 5: Household Concentration of Unemployment by Class Situation

	<i>Percentage of Households with at least One person unemployed other than the HOH or Spouse</i>	<i>Distribution by Class Situation of the Unemployed Other than the HOH or Spouse</i>
<i>Middle Class</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>23.3</i>
<i>Non-Marginalized Working Class</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>63.3</i>
HOH in Employment etc.	11.2	44.6
HOH Unemployed	11.8	8.3
HOH aged 50-64 and retired or ill/disabled <sup>5</sup>	20.1	10.4
<i>Marginalized Working Class</i>	<i>11.8</i>	<i>13.4</i>
Restricted Marginalization	17.4	5.9
Pervasive Marginalization	9.4	7.5

are those where the HOH is aged 50-64 and retired or ill/disabled and the restricted marginalization group straddle this boundary. Age groups within the working class appear to be the key factor rather than marginalization. Indeed, 87 per cent of this unemployed group are drawn from outside marginalized working class households. It does appear inevitable though, given the pattern we have observed, that the level of intergenerational transmission of unemployment is likely to increase in the future.

*Risk of Working Class Marginalization*

It is apparent, from our discussion of the incidence figures, that location in an urban centre has no significant influence on risk of marginalization. Public sector housing does have a substantial influence. No causal relationship is assumed, however, since public and private sector residents are clearly selected, to a considerable extent, on the basis of the labour market histories of such households. Multivariate analysis confirms these conclusions and the fact that there is no evidence of a significant interaction between public sector housing and location in a major urban centre.

It is hardly surprising in view of the evidence for restricted social mobility in Ireland that class origin emerges as a powerful predictor of working class marginalization (Whelan *et al.*, 1992 Breen and Whelan 1992; Hout, 1989). Two aspects of the impact of class origin, however are of particular interest. The first relates to the manner in which the impact of class background varies depending upon type of marginalization. The second feature concerns the manner in which class origin interacts with education qualifications. Overall the class composition of the marginalized and non-marginalized working classes are very similar with, in each case, over 80 per cent being drawn from the working class. From Table 6, it is clear that in relation to restricted marginalization the major contrast is between those from service class all others. For the former the risk is less than one per cent; it rises up to 3 per cent for the intermediate non-manual and upper working class, and peaks among the lower working class at 4 per cent. In the case of pervasive marginalization the risk level for those originating in the salariat remains negligible. For both of the intermediate classes the risk level is, approximately, 6 per cent. However, in this case there is a sharp rise among those from lower working class backgrounds; with almost one in seven being found in this category.

Table 6: *The Risk of Working Class Marginalization by Class Origins*

Class Origins	Marginalization	
	<i>Restricted</i>	<i>Pervasive</i>
	%	%
Salariat	0.7	1.2
Intermediate Non-Manual and Higher Petit Bourgeoisie	3.0	5.7
Upper Working Class and Lower Petit Bourgeoisie	3.1	6.6
The Lower Working Class	4.4	14.1
Total	3.2	7.8
N	6.5	15.9

The second issue we wish to explore is whether class origin has any effect independently of its relationship to level of education. We also wish to examine the extent to which the impact of these variables is of an additive or interactive kind. The answers to these questions depends, once again, on the type of marginalization on which our attention is focused. This also turns out to be the case in relation to the influence of age. As a consequence, we have chosen to set out in Table 7 the factors differentiating the restricted and pervasively marginalized groups, respectively, from the middle class and the non-marginalized working class.

It is necessary to point out that the age variable is treated rather differently in equations (i) and (ii). In equation (i), relating to restricted marginalization, it is a continuous variable; while in equation (ii), referring to pervasive marginalization, it is a dichotomous variable distinguishing between those under forty and all others in line with our understanding that what is involved here is a cohort rather than an age effect. In relation to education the

crucial distinction that emerges is between those with no educational qualifications and all others. With regard to the class origins the crucial contrast is between those from lower working class background and all others.

For restricted marginalization the picture is a straightforward one. The absence of educational qualifications is the most powerful influence. Once this is taken into account, class background has no influence. Age also has a significant influence with households headed by older respondents being at greater risk. The processes contributing to pervasive marginalization are of a more complex kind. Age has a significant effect with the risk of marginalization being much higher where the household head is under forty. Both the absence of qualification and class origin have a significant impact but it is necessary to take into account the manner in which they interact. The absence of educational qualifications significantly increases the risk of pervasive marginalization for those with origins outside the lower working class but has substantially less influence for those with such a class background. Put another way, the significant interaction effect indicates that while class origin has a substantial impact on risk level for those with qualifications, it has much less influence among those lacking such qualifications.

We have explored the possibility that the differential returns to possessing an educational qualification might be a consequence of differences in type of qualification by class origin within the educationally qualified group but can find no evidence to support this hypothesis. The possibility remains that level of performance at each educational level varies by class background. However, since in this case the relevant group is those terminating their education at a particular level, this seems relatively unlikely to account for the effect we have observed. It seems more probable that in a situation of a substantial surplus of labour, where evidence exists of a process of qualification inflation, returns to education are influenced by

access to other resources. (Breen and Whelan, 1993).

Table 7: *Factors Differentiating the Pervasively and Restricted Marginalized Working Classes from the Middle Class and Non-Marginalized Working Class*

<i>Logistic Regressions</i>		
	<i>(i)</i> <i>Restricted Marginalization</i>	<i>(ii)</i> <i>Pervasive Marginalization</i>
Age	0.03*	1.54***
Absence of Educational Qualifications	1.83**	1.91***
Lower Working Class Origins	0.13	1.73***
Absence of Education* Lower Working Class Origins		-1.42*
Constant	-5.96	-4.74

\*p < .1 \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

The evidence, from both the ESRI survey and the Census, indicates that working class marginalization and unemployment are spatially pervasive phenomena. The marginalized are not clustered in the main urban centres in Ireland; nor in public sector housing in such centres. Rather than being a consequence of location, pervasive marginalization appears to be a hazard of lower working class origins; more likely to strike some rather than others, depending upon the historical circumstances affecting particular cohorts, including the implications of educational failure, but also subject to a variety of random influences (Heath 1981: 162-166).

It remains a legitimate question whether marginalization has different consequences either in terms of the experience of poverty, and/or its psychological consequences, depending

upon the context in which it is experienced. In order to explore these questions. We will proceed to examine.

1. the relationship between marginalization and exclusion; and the extent to which this relationship is affected by location in public sector housing in an urban centre.
2. the relationship between fatalism and marginalization; and the extent to which evidence exists for differential consequences arising from locations in public sector housing in an urban centre.

### ***MARGINALIZATION AND POVERTY***

The European Commission definition of poverty embodies the idea of exclusion in defining the poor as those 'excluded from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live (EC, 1987). The definition implies that poverty is to be defined in relative terms. The most commonly employed formulation of such a concept is Townsend's (1979:31) in which poverty is seen as *exclusion* arising from lack of resources. In assessing the impact of working class marginalization our findings confirm that it is necessary to distinguish between different types of exclusion and to identify a range of resources. The measures of resources available to us include

1. Equivalent disposable household income;
2. Deposits;
3. Net house value;

We also distinguish between the following dimensions of deprivation.<sup>6</sup>

1. Primary deprivation. Consisting of the *enforced* absence of items such as food, clothes and heat which the majority of our respondents considered to be necessities.

2. Secondary deprivation, which involves the *enforced* absence of items such as a car, telephone or participation in leisure activities.
3. Housing and household durables, consisting of the *enforced* absence of items relating to housing quality and facilities.

Poverty is then defined as involving scoring above zero on the primary deprivation scale *and* falling below the 60 per cent relative income line.

From Table 8, we can see the household income varies systematically across the categories of our classification ranging, in decile terms, from 7.59 for the middle class to 2.65 for the marginalized working class who have experienced persistent unemployment problems. The situation in relation to deposits is somewhat different. The groups with the lowest levels of deposits are those households within the non-marginalized working class with unemployed heads of household and those experiencing pervasive marginalization problems. Their respective deposit levels are £474 and £74. In the non-marginalized households where the HOH is in employment this rises to £1,660; and for the marginalized who have not experienced persistent unemployment reaches £791. The distinctive situation of the pervasive marginalization group problems is also shown by the fact that their figure for net house value of £5,673 is less than half that of the restricted marginalization group. They constitute a group who are characterised not only by a shortfall in current income but also by the erosion of, or failure to accumulate, longer term resources.

The consequences of this depletion of resources is captured best in the primary deprivation measure. For those households experiencing pervasive marginalization the primary deprivation score reaches 3.12 which is almost twice that for the restricted marginalization group; three times that of the non-marginalized not in employment and ten times that of the middle class. Pervasive marginalization is also associated with the highest observed levels of secondary and housing deprivation. However, in both cases the type of marginalization has



a more modest impact and, indeed, the range of variation within the working class as a whole is somewhat more restricted. As the final column makes clear, what is most distinctive about the marginalized working class, and particularly the pervasive marginalization group, is the extent to which they are exposed to poverty. Less than 4 per cent of middle class households fall below the poverty line. The figure rises to just over one in six of the non-marginalized working class; although among those not employed it is as high as three in ten. For the marginalized working as a whole, the level of risk reaches two out of three; with the respective figures for restricted and pervasive marginalization reaching one in two, and almost three out of four. The second element of Gallie's (forthcoming) definition of the underclass

Table 8: *Resources, Life-Style and Poverty by Working Class Situation*

	<i>Income Decile</i>	<i>Deposits</i>	<i>Net House Value</i>	<i>Primary Depriv- ation</i>	<i>Secondary Depriv- ation</i>	<i>Housing Depriv- ation</i>	<i>Percen- -tage Poor</i>
<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>7.59</b>	<b>2,925</b>	<b>26,215</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Non Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>5.49</b>	<b>1,491</b>	<b>17,249</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>17.5</b>
i) In Employment etc.	5.98	1,660	17,597	0.70	2.67	0.33	12.9
ii) Unemployed	3.94	474	14,485	1.04	3.75	0.37	30.7
iii) HOH 50-64 and Retired or Ill and Disabled <sup>(7)</sup>	3.74	1,497	18,316	1.10	3.63	0.74	30.9
<b>Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>2.65</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>7,800</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>66.7</b>
i) Restricted Marginalization	2.80	791	12,801	1.75	4.52	0.63	50.1
ii) Pervasive Marginalization	2.59	74	5,673	3.12	4.96	0.83	73.8
Percentage of Variance Explained	.320	.029	.100	.236	.253	.076	

is clearly met here; in that prolonged labour market marginality is associated with a level of deprivation significantly greater than that experienced by the remainder of the manual working class.

Earlier we noted, that while we could find little evidence for the existence of intergenerational transmission of unemployment, we suggested that it was likely to become more evident in the future. It is, therefore, of particular interest to compare the material conditions of those households from which the next generation of the marginalized working class are likely to be recruited with other households at the same stage of the family cycle. In Table 9 we restrict our analysis to 1,398 households containing children under fifteen and look at the extent of variation in the risk of poverty by class situation. The level of poverty

Table 9: *Poverty by Class Situation for Households with Children Under 15*

	<i>Percentage Poor</i>
Middle Class	2.9
Non-Marginalized Working Class	20.0
Marginalized Working Class	78.7

for middle class households is less than 3 per cent and is marginally lower than the overall one shown in Table 9. For the non-marginalized the risk level reaches 20 per cent - slightly higher than in the overall case. Among the marginalized working class, almost four out of five households fall below the poverty line; which compares with the overall figure of two out of three. Thus the environment in which the children in these households are being reared is one which involves not only labour market marginality but also, in the vast majority of cases, extreme deprivation.

Having established the impact of marginalization on poverty, we now seek to establish whether the impact of marginalization is greater for households located in public sector

housing in urban centres. In Table 10, using logistic regression, we look at the impact of marginalization and location, and the manner in which they interact on poverty which they interact while controlling for number of children and sex. Contrary to the expectation generated by Wilson's thesis, we find that the interaction term, rather than being significant and positive is actually negative. This conclusion holds even we restrict our attention to pervasive marginalization. The effect of marginalization varies little by location.

Table 10: *Logistic Regression of Factors Influencing the Risk of Household Poverty*

(Figures in parentheses relate to pervasive marginalization")		
Marginalization	2.98***	(2.93***)
Public Sector Housing in Urban Centre	1.32***	(1.24***)
Public Sector Housing in Urban Centre * Marginalization	-0.86*	(-0.28)
Number of Children	0.32***	(0.26***)
Sex	-1.11***	(-0.88***)
Constant	-1.85	-1.79

\*p < .1 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

### ***Marginalization and Fatalism***

The issue of the relationship between social class/socio-economic status and feelings of *powerlessness/fatalism* or alternatively *sense of control* is one to which a great deal of attention has been devoted by social scientists of varying disciplinary backgrounds (Mirowsky and Ross, 1990; Whelan, 1992a). In measuring fatalism, we have drawn on a set of items which have been fairly widely used in the literature (Pearlin *et al.*, 1981).

1. I can do just about anything I set my mind to.
2. I have little control over the things that happen to me.

3. What happens to me in the future depends on me.
4. I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.
5. Sometimes I feel I am being pushed around in life.
6. There is a lot I can do to change my life if I want to.
7. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.

Respondents were asked to react to each of the items on a four point scale running from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Scoring on the items has been carried out so as to take into account the direction of the items. The final scale has a very satisfactory level of reliability, and has a potential range of scores running from '4' indicating the highest possible level of fatalism to 1 indicating the lowest possible level of fatalism.

In Table 11 we show the impact of marginalization, location in public sector housing in an urban area and their interaction on fatalism. In Wilson's (1991) model location plays a crucial role in producing feeling of low self-efficacy; in that such feelings are reinforced by the feeling and values of others operating in the same social context. However, rather than observing a significant positive interaction, which would support his hypothesis, we instead find a significant negative interaction. The impact of marginalization on fatalism is greater in locations other than public sector housing in urban areas. This conclusion holds, with even greater strength, if we restrict our attention to pervasive marginalization.

Location in public sector housing in an urban centre, which clearly operates as a proxy for a variety of other unmeasured variables, has a significant influence on fatalism among these outside the marginalized working class but no significant impact given such marginalization. Whatever advantages are associated with being located outside public sector housing in a urban centre, they do not provide a buffer against the psychological consequences of marginalization; indeed the relative impact of marginalization is stronger leading to a situation where the fatalism levels of the marginalized are little affected by

location.

Table 11: *Multiple Regression of the Impact of Marginalization and Location on Fatalism*

	<i>Head of Household</i>	
Marginalization	0.31 ***	(0.33***)
Public Housing in Urban Centre	0.21***	(0.22***)
Public Housing in an Urban Centre * Marginalization	-0.17**	(-0.26***)
Constant	2.27	2.28
R <sup>2</sup>	.064	.056

\* p < .1 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

## CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of our analysis was the issue of whether, given the scale of long-term unemployment in Ireland, the concept of an 'underclass' might be fruitfully applied in this case. Following, Gallie (forthcoming) we have taken labour market marginality, extreme deprivation and a distinctive sub-culture as the crucial elements constituting an underclass. We would wish to restrict the term 'underclass' to these situations where evidence exists of milieu effects of the kind identified by Wilson (1991) which contribute to vicious circle processes.

Contrary to conventional expectations, the marginalized working class are not concentrated in public sector housing in major urban areas. The main factors contributing to increased risk of pervasive working class marginalization are lower working class origins, the

absence of educational qualifications and a household head aged under forty. For these younger poorly educated members of the working class emigration has become a much less attractive and realistic opportunity than for their earlier counterparts.

The marginalized working class are distinguished by extreme rates of poverty. The full extent of the impact of marginalization is made evident when we go beyond current income and focus on the erosion of resources, and exposure to extreme life-style deprivation.

In the light of our findings it is interesting to note that a variety of studies in the United States, aimed at testing Wilson's theory, have produced evidence that, whatever about the consequences of poverty, there is little evidence that the poor are more isolated than they have been in the past (Peterson, 1991-20). Wilson's (1991) response is that evidence relating to concentration of poverty in standard metropolitan areas is not relevant to his thesis because it does not identify ghetto neighbourhoods. Peterson (1991:22) notes that Wilson strengthens his theory by narrowing his focus to those neighbourhoods which are characterised by extreme economic marginality *and* extreme isolation but at the expense of narrowing its explanatory focus.

"At best the reformulated theory applies to only a small portion of the poverty population".

It remains a legitimate question, however, whether marginalization has different consequences either in terms of exposure to poverty or psychological consequences, depending upon the context in which it is experienced. In fact we could find no evidence that working class marginalization and location in public sector housing in an urban centre interact in a way which leads to a higher risk of poverty. In the case of fatalism the outcome was in the opposite direction to that hypothesised; with location having no impact on fatalism among the marginalized.

It remains possible to argue that the distinction between those in public sector housing in urban centres and all others involves the wrong contrast, or operates at too aggregated a level. In a situation where appropriate data of a macro kind were available it would be possible to pursue these issues through the application of multilevel modelling (Goldstein and Silver, 1989). However, apart from the conceptual and technical problems associated with such a solution (Hauser, 1970, 1974, Ringdal 1992) the evidence we have presented in relation to the Irish case does seem to suggest that an underclass identified in this manner, would either look very different from what might have been expected on theoretical grounds, or would constitute a subset of those households in public housing in urban centres sufficiently small that they would constitute a relatively trivial component of poor or marginalized working class households. Thus where the head of household is aged less than sixty five, marginalized households located in public sector housing in urban centres constitute 24 per cent of all marginalized working class household and 31 per cent of poor households.

The evidence relating to the social and psychological consequences of a high level of long term unemployment, rather than providing support for the value of an underclass perspective, provides support for Goldthorpe and Marshall's (1992:382) argument for the 'promising future of class analysis' understood as

".... a specific way of investigating interconnections ... between historically formed macro social structures, on the one hand, and, on the other, the everyday experience of individuals within their partial social milieu".

What we are confronted with in the Republic of Ireland is not the emergence of an underclass but different types of working class marginalization. In the case of what we have referred to as restricted working class marginalization the risk has spread rather evenly across all class origins other than the professional and managerial groups, but has been concentrated in older

age groups. The distribution of risks of pervasive working class marginalization show that the costs of economic change has been borne disproportionately by those members of younger cohorts originating from the lower working class rather than by those in particular locations. While intergenerational transmission of unemployment was not evident at the time our data was collected, it seems inevitable that it will become more common. It is also clear that the households from which the next generation of the marginalized working class are most likely to be drawn are experiencing a level of material deprivation which is extreme even in comparison with their working class counterparts. The combination of these factors means that we cannot rule out the possibility of the emergence of a fraction of the working class characterized by its own distinctive sub-culture.



**NOTES**

1. An accumulating body of evidence has tended to undermine the notion that unemployment, crime, single motherhood, poor education etc. are all causally related in a way that requires one overarching explanation rather than reference to a diversity of structural processes (Dilnot, 1992, Duncan and Hoffman; 1991; Morris and Irwin, 1992; Peterson 1991).
2. There is an obvious parallel here with the position maintained by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) that the rationale of class analysis requires that members of a class are associated with particular sets of positions over time and would be undermined if classes were to appear as highly unstable aggregates of such positions.
3. Full details of the sampling procedures and outcomes are provided in Whelan (1992b)
4. The term will also be used when more detailed schemes involving further distinctions within these groups are employed.
5. This conclusion regarding the absence of geographical concentration is consistent with the findings arising from an analysis based on the 1986 Census Small Area Statistics. The analysis was based on the 1986 Census Small Area Statistics. The analysis was focused on 159 'Rural Districts' (RD's) and used a quintile interval system in which these RDs were ranked from the one with the highest to the one with the lowest unemployment rate. The quintile with the highest unemployment rate contains 38 per cent of all those who were classified as unemployed in the 1986 Census compared with 29 per cent of all persons aged 15 years or over. The top 40 per cent of RDs in terms of unemployment rate contains two-thirds of all unemployed individuals, compared with 56 per cent of the labour force. Thirty per cent of the unemployed were contained in the five major cities compared with 24 per cent of the population aged 25 or over (Nolan, Whelan and Williams, 1994; Williams, 1993).
6. Full details of the procedures involved in identifying these dimensions of deprivation, evidence relating to reliability and a full discussion of the conceptual issues involved in constructing a combined income and life-style deprivation poverty line can be found in Callan *et al.*, (1993); and Whelan (1992; 1993).
7. This category has been distinguished because the extent to which an illness will cause a person to be unemployable and the extent of early retirement varies under different labour market conditions and the burden of increased risks is disproportionately borne by vulnerable groups (Bartley, 1987).

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100-1000

**IN SEARCH OF THE UNDERCLASS:  
MARGINALIZATION, POVERTY AND FATALISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF  
IRELAND**

**ABSTRACT:** The emergence of large scale long-term unemployment in the Republic of Ireland suggests that it might provide an interesting case in which to apply the concept of an 'underclass'. In this paper we explore the relationship between labour market marginality, social exclusion and fatalism. No evidence is found of the kind of interactions which would justify applying the term 'underclass' to the Irish case. Instead what we are confronted with is different types of working class marginalization. In relation to what we have termed 'pervasive marginalization' the costs of economic change have been borne disproportionately by those members of the younger cohorts originating in the lower working class rather than by those in particular locations. The evidence relating to the social and psychological consequences of labour market detachment, rather than providing support for the value of an underclass perspective, confirm the continued relevance of class analysis.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Between 1980 and 1987 in the Republic of Ireland the total at work fell by 76,000 and despite high levels of emigration the numbers unemployed soared to 232,000 or almost 18 per cent of the work force. The dramatic increase in the level of unemployment between 1980 and 1987 was accompanied by a steady increase in the proportion who were long-term unemployed. Statistics on the registered unemployed show that in April 1980 35 per cent of those on the live register had been registered continuously for over a year. by April 1987 this figure had reached 44 per cent. While the overall unemployment rate was well above average for those aged under 25, most of the long-term unemployed were aged over 25 or over and

80 per cent were men (compared with 72 per cent of the overall unemployed). The increasing importance of long-term unemployment was accompanied by a shift in the pattern of social welfare support. Whereas in 1980 47 per cent of those on the Live Register were in receipt of insurance based Unemployment Benefit, and 48 per cent received the means tested Unemployment Assistance, by 1987 only 37 per cent were on UB and the percentage on UA had risen to 58 per cent, (O'Connell, 1993; Kennedy, 1993).

Against this background it is hardly surprising the references to 'an underclass have come to be increasingly frequent in discussions of unemployment and poverty'. (Healy and Reynolds, 1992). While there is no generally shared view of what is implied by the concept at a very general level, definitions tend to share three common features:

"first an underclass is a social stratum that suffers from prolonged labour market marginality; second it experiences greater deprivation than even the manual working class and third it possesses its own sub-culture". (Gallie, forthcoming)

The concept of 'an underclass' has appeal for both left and right. The latter can focus on dependency culture while the former can point to manner in which macroeconomic change impacts on vulnerable groups (Peterson, 1991:3). What Gallie (forthcoming) refers to as the 'conservative' conception of the underclass is particularly associated with Murray (1984; 1990) for whom the underclass is a consequence of the perverse interventions of the welfare state that seduce in the short-term but have the long-term consequence of creating a dependency culture.<sup>1</sup> A good deal of the recent literature on the underclass concept in its conservative form has focused on establishing its long and undistinguished pedigree with its echoes of notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. (Dean, 1989; Lister 1991; Macnicol, 1987).

Our primary concern in this paper is with the radical conception and in particular with the hypotheses generated Wilson by (1987; 1991). The term 'underclass', Wilson (1991:4)

notes, was coined by Myrdal to describe those who have been driven to extreme economic marginality because of changes in what is now called post-industrial society. This development of the concept points to an interpretation which stresses that certain sectors of the population are prone to unemployment and poverty as a consequence of economic changes. While accepting the accuracy of anthropological descriptions of the urban underclass, he provides an explanation which focuses on unintended social consequences of the uneven impact of economic change. His central propositions are as follows (Peterson, 1991: 16).

1. Economic change leads to a demand for different forms of labour and is associated with significant institutional change in labour market arrangements.
2. These changes have a disproportionate effect on particular groups.
3. The major change involves weakening of attachment to labour market. Among such groups with a dramatic decline in the proportion in stable, reasonably well paid, jobs.
4. These effects are aggravated by outward migration.
5. The effects of economic change are compounded by social isolation. Marginalization has differential consequences in terms of the risks of persistent poverty depending on location.

"The issue is not simply that the underclass or 'ghetto poor' have a marginal position in the labour market similar to that of other disadvantaged groups, it is also that their economic position is uniquely reinforced by their milieu". (Wilson, 1991:12)

6. Joblessness especially prolonged joblessness is likely to be associated with or produce feelings of low perceived self efficacy. People come to seriously doubt that they can accomplish what is expected of them or, even where this is not



true, they may give up trying because they consider that their efforts will be futile given the environmental constraints within which they operate. It is hypothesized, furthermore, that such feelings of low self efficacy are reinforced by the feelings and values of others operating in the same social context producing what Bandura (1982) termed 'lower collective efficacy'. The psychological self-efficacy theory must be considered in the context of the structural problem of labour force attachment and the role played by cultural factors in the transmission of self and collective beliefs. A particular pattern of behaviour is explained by a combination of constraints, opportunities and social psychology.

In its most general form Wilson's model involves exogenous factors such as changes in the economy; exogenous determinants consequent on those exogenous factors; distribution of employment and income, migration, size of pool of marriageable men; and finally endogenous determinants including social isolation unique to the underclass such as neighbourhood resources and role models and cultural isolation from mainstream networks, Wilson (1991:12) stresses that his conceptual framework can be applied not only to all ethnic and racial groups but also to other societies. What is crucial is a combination of weak labour force attachment and social isolation which may exist without the same level of concentration inherent in the American Ghetto. Drawing out the implications of Wilson's model we would wish to restrict the application of the term underclass to those situations where evidence exists of milieu effects of a kind which through their impact on factors such as feelings of self-efficacy contribute to 'vicious circle' processes in terms of detachment from the labour market. (Ultee *et al.*, 1988).

If one holds to the view that distinctive ethnic or racial characteristics are a *sine qua*

*non* of an underclass the application of the term to the Irish case must be ruled out. Otherwise the possibility holds that the Irish case might provide particularly fertile ground for the application of a model such as Wilson's.

## **WORKING CLASS MARGINALIZATION**

As Gallie (forthcoming) notes, conceptions of the underclass differs in terms of whether they treat the individual or the household as the unit of analysis. Given the variety of issues raised by those employing the term there appears to be little point in adopting a dogmatic stance on this issue. Here, having decided to make the starting point of our analysis detachment from the labour market, the issue of stability of membership of the unemployed becomes central. If there was a large group of people out of work at any one time but no substantial group of people who are usually out of work then, as Smith (1992:5) emphasizes, there could be no underclass, merely a working class, some of whom are temporarily out of work.<sup>2</sup>

The approach adopted here is in accord with Smith's suggestion that we adopt a minimalist approach and view the idea of underclass as a counterpart to the idea of social class which acquires its meaning within the same framework of analysis. The requirement of relative stability provides the basis for focusing on the household as the unit of strategic action in terms of consumption and production. The choice of the household as the unit of analysis enables us to explore the consequences of the labour market detachment, in particular, the person considered by the household members to be the 'head of household' for ... "experiences of affluence or hardship, of economic security or insecurity, of prospects of continuing material advance, or of unyielding material constraints" (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992:236). Although in the case of married couples we take into account the labour market

situation of both parties, we have chosen not to pursue the 'dominance' approach in this case because of the probability that husband or wife is currently the one with the 'dominant' relationship to the labour market may itself reflect the scale of detachment from the labour market (Erikson, 1984). In class terms, we are faced with the issue of whether there is a class, which as a consequence of weak labour force attachment and social isolation, cannot be identified simply as a fraction of the working class. This approach contrasts with that which is based on the view that the underclass should be thought of as involving those who fall *outside* the class system. The differing competing approaches are based on rather different responses to the challenge raised for class analysis by long-term unemployment.

The major problem in pursuing empirical research in this area seems to arise, not from fundamentally new conceptual problems, but from the difficulties associated with defining the nature of the relationship to the labour market which is a prerequisite of the emergence of an underclass. While Smith's (1992:5) definition of the underclass as those family 'units having no stable relationship with legitimate gainful employment' conveys a clear sense of the phenomenon, it leaves the whole question of operationalisation open. However, taken together with a frame of reference which seeks to establish whether there is a class which needs to be thought of as other than a fraction of the working class, this approach allows for the identification of a *marginalized working class* group defined solely in terms of current class situation and labour market experience. The consequences of such marginalization in terms of poverty, defined as exclusion from the minimum acceptable way of life in the society, remains an empirical question, as does the extent of geographical concentration, or the existence of contextual effects.

The Survey of Poverty, Income Distribution and Usage of State Services involving a nationally representative sample of 3,294 households carried out by the Economic and

Social Research Institute, Dublin, in 1987, provides the database for our analysis.<sup>3</sup>

In pursuing a definition of the marginalized working class, since the emphasis is on relationship to the labour market rather than dependence on welfare benefits, households with a HOH aged 65 or over have been excluded, as have farm households. This leaves us with a sample of 2,571 households. Our focus is, as Buck (1992:11) puts it, on "stable absence of relationship to employment, on the one hand, and unstable relationship with employment on the other." The marginalized working class is not equated with those working class households who are in poverty. Arriving at a definition of the marginalized working class involves taking a number of criteria into account. Varying the cut-off points on any of these criteria will affect our estimates of the size of the group. In this paper, however, rather than examining in detail a variety of cut-off points, the analysis proceeds in terms of the preferred options while directing attention to some of the most important consequences of such options.

The first criterion relates to stability of membership of the unemployed; and here two years unemployment is chosen as the cut-off point. With regard to stable relationship to employment, use is made of a measure of proportion of potential labour market time spent unemployed. The denominator excludes time spent ill or disabled or in retirement. Any cut-off point is bound to be arbitrary. The option chosen is one of 20 per cent of potential labour market time with the additional conditions that the HOH must have been at least five years in the labour market. The choice has been made because the notion of marginalization implies severe problems in establishing connection with the labour market. In any event, varying the cut-off point does not have a dramatic effect in our results and such differences as do exist are further moderated by the requirement that the household satisfy other criteria.

Thus where the household head is currently in employment, and had not experienced a spell of unemployment in the previous twelve months, the household is excluded from the

marginalized working class. Furthermore, since concern is with family units having no stable relationship with legitimate gainful employment, those households in which the spouse is in employment are excluded. Finally, it is necessary for the household head to be a member of the working class. The definition of the working class is crucial in determining the final outcome of our procedures. There would appear to be no virtue in restricting attention to the lower working class because *a priori* we would expect that at least some significant section of the upper working class have been exposed to consequences of structural change which we see as the major factor contributing to the potential emergence of a marginalized working class. This view is supported by the results set out in Table 1 in which the labour market experience of heads of household is broken down by social class.

The classes of the CASMIN schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) have been aggregated as follows:

1. The salariat or service class [CASMIN classes I & II].
2. The intermediate non-manual and higher petit bourgeoisie which comprises
  - (a) higher grade routine white collar workers;
  - (b) technicians and supervisors of manual workers;
  - (c) self-employed with employees;
  - (d) farmers with more than fifty acres
 [CASMIN Classes IIIa, V, IVa, IVc (50 acres+)]
3. The upper working class and lower petit bourgeoisie
  - (a) skilled manual;
  - (b) semi-skilled manual;
  - (c) lower grade white collar;
  - (d) self-employed without employees;
  - (e) farmers with less than 50 acres.
 [CASMIN Classes VI, VIIa (semi-skilled), IIIb, IVb, IVc (less than 50 acres)]
4. The lower working class
  - (a) unskilled manual workers
  - (b) agricultural workers
 [CASMIN Classes VIIa (unskilled), VIIc]

Except in the case of class origins farmers do not figure in our analysis.

From Table 1 the scale of the labour market difficulties which have been experienced by lower working class households become clear. Over four out of the ten are currently unemployed. They had been unemployed for, on average, 19 weeks in the previous twelve months; for four years in their 'careers' and for 16 per cent of their potential time in the labour market. The situation of the upper working class, while a good deal more favourable, still provides a picture of substantial unemployment problems. Over one in five were unemployed. They had been unemployed for, on average, more than nine weeks in the previous year; for 1.5 years throughout their careers and for 7 per cent of their potential labour market time. The situation of those outside the working class is substantially more favourable.

Table 1: *Labour Market Experience of Head of Household by Social Class*

	<i>Percentage Unemployed</i>	<i>Number of Weeks Unemployed in Previous Twelve Months</i>	<i>Career Unemployment: Number of Years Unemployed</i>	<i>Career Unemployment: Proportion of Potential Labour Market Time Unemployed</i>
Salariat	0.8	0.81	0.21	0.01
Intermediate Non-Manual	5.7	2.49	0.66	0.03
Upper Working Class	21.1	9.28	1.51	0.07
Lower Working Class	41.6	19.33	4.00	0.16
Total	16.7	7.57	1.40	0.06

On the basis of these findings, in our analysis of marginalization 'working class' is defined as including both the upper and lower working class. The working definition of the marginalized working class is as follows.

1. The head of household is in the working class

AND

2. The head of household has been unemployed for 2 years or more or has spent 20% or more of his/her potential labour market time since leaving full-time education unemployed and has been in the labour market for at least five years.

AND

3. The spouse of the head of household is not in employment.

In addition

4. Where the head of household is currently employed and has not experienced a spell of unemployment in the previous 12 months the household is excluded

Such households constitute 11 per cent of non-farm households where the HOH is under 65.

Adopting a criterion of 15 per cent of potential labour market time as a cut-off point, figures rise to 12 per cent.

#### *Incidence of Working Class Marginalization*

In the subsequent analysis, in order to focus on key comparisons, the upper and middle classes have been combined in the case of current class position. The threefold distinction between the middle class, the working class and the marginalized working class will be referred to as 'class situation'.<sup>4</sup>

The substantive importance of the type of milieu effect postulated by Wilson depends both on the strength of the effect and the degree to which marginalization is concentrated in such locations. For this reason our initial focus is on the incidence of marginalization i.e. the percentage of all those marginalized who are to be found in particular categories. Incidence levels may be distinguished from the risk of marginalization facing a particular type of

household which is given by the percentage of households of that type found to be marginalized.

In Table 2 we show the distribution of the incidence of marginalization by location and housing tenure. In terms of location we distinguish between living in the main urban centres of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford and those residing elsewhere. These centres range in size from Dublin with a population of over one million to Waterford with just over 90,000 inhabitants. The major distinction in relation to tenure is between public sector housing which in Ireland is provided by the local authorities, and private sector housing; we do distinguish further, however, within the public sector between tenants and those purchasing their houses from the local authority. In addition to the figures relating to marginalization the final column of the table documents the distribution of non-marginalized working class households.

In addition to presenting results relating to incidence of overall marginalization, we have also provided comparable results for what we have termed *pervasive* and *restricted* working class marginalization. The former refers to a situation where the HOH has been unemployed for at least 20 per cent of his/her potential labour market time while the latter relates to the situation where this does hold but the conditions for marginalization are still fulfilled. As will become clear, this distinction emerges as a particularly important one. Just less than 8 per cent of non-agricultural households with a HOH aged under 65 fall into the pervasive category and just over 3 per cent into the restricted one.

There is no evidence of concentration of marginalization in the main urban centres. Almost two-thirds of the group are located outside these urban centres compared to just under sixty per cent of all non-farm households with a HOH aged under sixty five. If we were to restrict our attention to Dublin, these conclusions would be strengthened. One in five



marginalized working class households are located in Dublin compared to almost one in three non-farm households. The urban-rural breakdown is almost identical for pervasive and restricted marginalization.

Table 2: *Incidence of Working Class Marginalization by Housing Tenure and Location in a Main Urban Centre*

	Marginalization			Distribution of Non- Marginalized Working Class
	Overall	Restricted	Pervasive	
<i>Urban Centres</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	<i>Incidence</i>	
	%	%	%	%
i) All Households	34.5	34.3	34.6	35.3
ii) Public Housing	23.9	20.9	25.2	16.4
a) Purchase Scheme	3.5	4.5	3.2	6.7
b) Tenant	20.4	16.4	22.0	9.7
iii) Private Housing	10.6	13.4	9.4	18.9
<i>Outside Urban Centres</i>				
i) All Households	65.5	65.7	65.4	64.7
ii) Public Housing	37.6	22.4	44.0	17.0
a) Purchase Scheme	5.8	4.5	5.7	6.5
b) Tenant	31.8	17.9	38.3	10.5
iii) Private Housing	27.9	43.3	21.4	47.7

It is housing tenure rather than location which turns out to be the crucial factor in relation to concentration of the marginalized. Over six out of ten of the marginalized working class are in public housing compared to one in three of the non-marginalized working class. The figures in relation to being a local authority tenant are even more striking and are,

respectively, over one in two and one in five. An interesting contrast emerges between the pervasive and restricted marginalization groups. Seventy per cent of the former are found in public sector housing and sixty per cent are tenants. For the latter group, the corresponding figures drop to just over four out of ten and one in three. Thus while a significant degree of concentration in private sector housing is observed in relation to both types of marginalization, the tendency is substantially stronger in regard to pervasive marginalization.

The manner in which tenure interacts with location defies conventional expectations. Approximately, one in six of the non-marginalized working class are located in public sector housing; with one in ten being tenants. Whether, or not a household is located in an urban centre or not is of no consequence. However, since there are almost twice as many households outside the main urban centres, it follows that striking urban - non-urban differences emerge in relation to the percentage of this group living in local authority housing. In urban centres the figures reaches 46 per cent but outside it drops to 24 per cent. For restricted working class marginalization, we observe a strikingly similar pattern; almost equal numbers, i.e. one in five, are found in public sector housing in, and outside, urban centres. Similarly, while in urban centres 61 per cent are found in public sector housing, this level drops to 34 per cent elsewhere.

In the case of pervasive marginalization we are presented with a rather different picture. Overall, just less than one in two of this group are found in public sector housing outside the urban centres; compared to one in four who are in urban public sector housing. Within each location little difference is observed in the percentage in public sector housing; the relevant figure for urban centres being 73 per cent compared to 67 per cent for all other locations. The foregoing results demonstrate there is significantly less differentiation in relation to tenure within the working class in urban centres.

The findings presented make it extremely implausible that the marginalized working class in urban centres are segregated, in any significant manner, from the non-marginalized working class. It would seem to require a quite remarkable degree of segregation of local authority tenants from those availing of the purchase scheme. In fact, such concentration of the marginalized working class, although distributed across substantial numbers of sites, seems much more likely to be the case outside the major urban centres. When, as in Table 3, we look at the full range of class situation, including distinctions in terms of employment status, within the non marginalized working class, we find further evidence that local authority housing is more heterogenous in terms of the range of class situations covered in urban areas. The main findings relating to those in public sector housing are as follows.

Table 3: *Composition of Local Authority Housing in Main Urban Centres and Elsewhere in Terms of Class Situation of Households*

	<i>Urban Centres</i>	<i>Elsewhere</i>
	%	%
<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>9.8</b>
<b>Non-Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>60.7</b>
i) In Employment etc.	50.0	38.8
ii) Unemployed	8.4	13.9
iii) HOH aged 50-64 and Retired or Ill/Disabled	5.7	8.0
<b>Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>29.4</b>
i) Restricted Marginalization	5.2	5.3
ii) Pervasive Marginalization	15.3	24.1

1. 29 per cent of households outside the urban centres are located in the marginalized working class compared to 21 per cent in the urban centres.
2. In the case of pervasive marginalization the respective percentages are 24 per cent and 15 per cent.
3. In urban locations 79 per cent of households are middle class or non-marginalized working class whereas the corresponding figure for rural situations is 71 per cent.
4. If we aggregate the marginalized working class and the non-marginalized working class who are unemployed we arrive at a figure of just less than 30 per cent in the urban centres but one which is over 40 per cent for households outside these centres.

These findings, however, are not inconsistent with the existence of urban areas with extreme levels of concentration of unemployment and deprivation. (Nolan, Whelan and Williams, 1994; Williams 1993). However, it follows that the remaining areas will necessarily be even more diverse in terms of class situation than our figures suggest.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Incidence of Marginalization by Age*

While marginalization is not concentrated in urban centres its incidence is strongly related to age. This is not the case, however in regard to overall marginalization because the impact of age operates in opposite directions for restricted and pervasive marginalization. The pattern of results is set out in Table 4. Pervasive marginalization is concentrated among those under forty; with over 70 per cent of the group falling into this category. The situation in relation to restricted marginalization is just the opposite with three quarters being aged over forty; indeed, more than one in two are over fifty.

Table 4: *Incidence of Working Class Marginalization by Age Group*

	<i>Overall Incidence %</i>	<i>Marginalization Pervasive Incidence %</i>	<i>Incidence %</i>	<i>Size of Age Group %</i>
18-29	19.2	25.4	4.6	14.4
30-39	38.8	46.9	19.9	33.7
40-49	13.0	9.3	21.9	21.9
50-64	28.9	18.4	53.7	30.0

The observed effects in relation to marginalization reflect different cohort experiences rather than age effects *per se*. The rather different early labour market experiences of the younger and older working class respondents are reflected in these differences. As a consequence of the substantial rise in unemployment levels since the 1970s, the younger group have been exposed to relatively high risks of unemployment throughout their labour market careers. The older group spent a great deal of time in the labour market at a time when the absence of employment opportunities was reflected in large-scale emigration rather than long-term unemployment. (Breen *et al* 1990). Declining opportunities outside Ireland for those without skills and qualification, and a reduction of the gap in the level of social welfare benefits, have ensured that the option of exporting the marginalized working class is no longer a practical one. (O'Connell and Rottman 1992).

One consequence of this is that almost two thirds of the pervasively marginalized working class households are located at the early family formation stages of the family cycle;

with children aged younger than five in the household. Consequently, as we can see from Table 5, these households are not characterised by within household 'intergenerational' transmission of unemployment. Taking as an indicator the percentage of households with at least one person unemployed other than the HOH and the spouse, we find no difference between the marginalized and non-marginalized working classes. Instead the groups with the highest risk

Table 5: Household Concentration of Unemployment by Class Situation

	<i>Percentage of Households with at least One person unemployed other than the HOH or Spouse</i>	<i>Distribution by Class Situation of the Unemployed Other than the HOH or Spouse</i>
<i>Middle Class</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>23.3</i>
<i>Non-Marginalized Working Class</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>63.3</i>
HOH in Employment etc.	11.2	44.6
HOH Unemployed	11.8	8.3
HOH aged 50-64 and retired or ill/disabled <sup>5</sup>	20.1	10.4
<i>Marginalized Working Class</i>	<i>11.8</i>	<i>13.4</i>
Restricted Marginalization	17.4	5.9
Pervasive Marginalization	9.4	7.5

are those where the HOH is aged 50-64 and retired or ill/disabled and the restricted marginalization group straddle this boundary. Age groups within the working class appear to be the key factor rather than marginalization. Indeed, 87 per cent of this unemployed group are drawn from outside marginalized working class households. It does appear inevitable though, given the pattern we have observed, that the level of intergenerational transmission of unemployment is likely to increase in the future.

*Risk of Working Class Marginalization*

It is apparent, from our discussion of the incidence figures, that location in an urban centre has no significant influence on risk of marginalization. Public sector housing does have a substantial influence. No causal relationship is assumed, however, since public and private sector residents are clearly selected, to a considerable extent, on the basis of the labour market histories of such households. Multivariate analysis confirms these conclusions and the fact that there is no evidence of a significant interaction between public sector housing and location in a major urban centre.

It is hardly surprising in view of the evidence for restricted social mobility in Ireland that class origin emerges as a powerful predictor of working class marginalization (Whelan *et al.*, 1992 Breen and Whelan 1992; Hout, 1989). Two aspects of the impact of class origin, however are of particular interest. The first relates to the manner in which the impact of class background varies depending upon type of marginalization. The second feature concerns the manner in which class origin interacts with education qualifications. Overall the class composition of the marginalized and non-marginalized working classes are very similar with, in each case, over 80 per cent being drawn from the working class. From Table 6, it is clear that in relation to restricted marginalization the major contrast is between those from service class all others. For the former the risk is less than one per cent; it rises up to 3 per cent for the intermediate non-manual and upper working class, and peaks among the lower working class at 4 per cent. In the case of pervasive marginalization the risk level for those originating in the salariat remains negligible. For both of the intermediate classes the risk level is, approximately, 6 per cent. However, in this case there is a sharp rise among those from lower working class backgrounds; with almost one in seven being found in this category.

Table 6: *The Risk of Working Class Marginalization by Class Origins*

Class Origins	Marginalization	
	<i>Restricted</i>	<i>Pervasive</i>
	%	%
Salariat	0.7	1.2
Intermediate Non-Manual and Higher Petit Bourgeoisie	3.0	5.7
Upper Working Class and Lower Petit Bourgeoisie	3.1	6.6
The Lower Working Class	4.4	14.1
Total	3.2	7.8
N	6.5	15.9

The second issue we wish to explore is whether class origin has any effect independently of its relationship to level of education. We also wish to examine the extent to which the impact of these variables is of an additive or interactive kind. The answers to these questions depends, once again, on the type of marginalization on which our attention is focused. This also turns out to be the case in relation to the influence of age. As a consequence, we have chosen to set out in Table 7 the factors differentiating the restricted and pervasively marginalized groups, respectively, from the middle class and the non-marginalized working class.

It is necessary to point out that the age variable is treated rather differently in equations (i) and (ii). In equation (i), relating to restricted marginalization, it is a continuous variable; while in equation (ii), referring to pervasive marginalization, it is a dichotomous variable distinguishing between those under forty and all others in line with our understanding that what is involved here is a cohort rather than an age effect. In relation to education the



crucial distinction that emerges is between those with no educational qualifications and all others. With regard to the class origins the crucial contrast is between those from lower working class background and all others.

For restricted marginalization the picture is a straightforward one. The absence of educational qualifications is the most powerful influence. Once this is taken into account, class background has no influence. Age also has a significant influence with households headed by older respondents being at greater risk. The processes contributing to pervasive marginalization are of a more complex kind. Age has a significant effect with the risk of marginalization being much higher where the household head is under forty. Both the absence of qualification and class origin have a significant impact but it is necessary to take into account the manner in which they interact. The absence of educational qualifications significantly increases the risk of pervasive marginalization for those with origins outside the lower working class but has substantially less influence for those with such a class background. Put another way, the significant interaction effect indicates that while class origin has a substantial impact on risk level for those with qualifications, it has much less influence among those lacking such qualifications.

We have explored the possibility that the differential returns to possessing an educational qualification might be a consequence of differences in type of qualification by class origin within the educationally qualified group but can find no evidence to support this hypothesis. The possibility remains that level of performance at each educational level varies by class background. However, since in this case the relevant group is those terminating their education at a particular level, this seems relatively unlikely to account for the effect we have observed. It seems more probable that in a situation of a substantial surplus of labour, where evidence exists of a process of qualification inflation, returns to education are influenced by

access to other resources. (Breen and Whelan, 1993).

Table 7: *Factors Differentiating the Pervasively and Restricted Marginalized Working Classes from the Middle Class and Non-Marginalized Working Class*

<i>Logistic Regressions</i>		
	<i>(i)</i> <i>Restricted Marginalization</i>	<i>(ii)</i> <i>Pervasive Marginalization</i>
Age	0.03*	1.54***
Absence of Educational Qualifications	1.83**	1.91***
Lower Working Class Origins	0.13	1.73***
Absence of Education* Lower Working Class Origins		-1.42*
Constant	-5.96	-4.74

\*p < .1 \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

The evidence, from both the ESRI survey and the Census, indicates that working class marginalization and unemployment are spatially pervasive phenomena. The marginalized are not clustered in the main urban centres in Ireland; nor in public sector housing in such centres. Rather than being a consequence of location, pervasive marginalization appears to be a hazard of lower working class origins; more likely to strike some rather than others, depending upon the historical circumstances affecting particular cohorts, including the implications of educational failure, but also subject to a variety of random influences (Heath 1981: 162-166).

It remains a legitimate question whether marginalization has different consequences either in terms of the experience of poverty, and/or its psychological consequences, depending

upon the context in which it is experienced. In order to explore these questions. We will proceed to examine.

1. the relationship between marginalization and exclusion; and the extent to which this relationship is affected by location in public sector housing in an urban centre.
2. the relationship between fatalism and marginalization; and the extent to which evidence exists for differential consequences arising from locations in public sector housing in an urban centre.

### ***MARGINALIZATION AND POVERTY***

The European Commission definition of poverty embodies the idea of exclusion in defining the poor as those 'excluded from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live (EC, 1987). The definition implies that poverty is to be defined in relative terms. The most commonly employed formulation of such a concept is Townsend's (1979:31) in which poverty is seen as *exclusion* arising from lack of resources. In assessing the impact of working class marginalization our findings confirm that it is necessary to distinguish between different types of exclusion and to identify a range of resources. The measures of resources available to us include

1. Equivalent disposable household income;
2. Deposits;
3. Net house value;

We also distinguish between the following dimensions of deprivation.<sup>6</sup>

1. Primary deprivation. Consisting of the *enforced* absence of items such as food, clothes and heat which the majority of our respondents considered to be necessities.

2. Secondary deprivation, which involves the *enforced* absence of items such as a car, telephone or participation in leisure activities.
3. Housing and household durables, consisting of the *enforced* absence of items relating to housing quality and facilities.

Poverty is then defined as involving scoring above zero on the primary deprivation scale *and* falling below the 60 per cent relative income line.

From Table 8, we can see the household income varies systematically across the categories of our classification ranging, in decile terms, from 7.59 for the middle class to 2.65 for the marginalized working class who have experienced persistent unemployment problems. The situation in relation to deposits is somewhat different. The groups with the lowest levels of deposits are those households within the non-marginalized working class with unemployed heads of household and those experiencing pervasive marginalization problems. Their respective deposit levels are £474 and £74. In the non-marginalized households where the HOH is in employment this rises to £1,660; and for the marginalized who have not experienced persistent unemployment reaches £791. The distinctive situation of the pervasive marginalization group problems is also shown by the fact that their figure for net house value of £5,673 is less than half that of the restricted marginalization group. They constitute a group who are characterised not only by a shortfall in current income but also by the erosion of, or failure to accumulate, longer term resources.

The consequences of this depletion of resources is captured best in the primary deprivation measure. For those households experiencing pervasive marginalization the primary deprivation score reaches 3.12 which is almost twice that for the restricted marginalization group; three times that of the non-marginalized not in employment and ten times that of the middle class. Pervasive marginalization is also associated with the highest observed levels of secondary and housing deprivation. However, in both cases the type of marginalization has

a more modest impact and, indeed, the range of variation within the working class as a whole is somewhat more restricted. As the final column makes clear, what is most distinctive about the marginalized working class, and particularly the pervasive marginalization group, is the extent to which they are exposed to poverty. Less than 4 per cent of middle class households fall below the poverty line. The figure rises to just over one in six of the non-marginalized working class; although among those not employed it is as high as three in ten. For the marginalized working as a whole, the level of risk reaches two out of three; with the respective figures for restricted and pervasive marginalization reaching one in two, and almost three out of four. The second element of Gallie's (forthcoming) definition of the underclass

Table 8: *Resources, Life-Style and Poverty by Working Class Situation*

	<i>Income Decile</i>	<i>Deposits</i>	<i>Net House Value</i>	<i>Primary Depriv- ation</i>	<i>Secondary Depriv- ation</i>	<i>Housing Depriv- ation</i>	<i>Percen- -tage Poor</i>
<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>7.59</b>	<b>2,925</b>	<b>26,215</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Non Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>5.49</b>	<b>1,491</b>	<b>17,249</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>17.5</b>
i) In Employment etc.	5.98	1,660	17,597	0.70	2.67	0.33	12.9
ii) Unemployed	3.94	474	14,485	1.04	3.75	0.37	30.7
iii) HOH 50-64 and Retired or Ill and Disabled <sup>(7)</sup>	3.74	1,497	18,316	1.10	3.63	0.74	30.9
<b>Marginalized Working Class</b>	<b>2.65</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>7,800</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>66.7</b>
i) Restricted Marginalization	2.80	791	12,801	1.75	4.52	0.63	50.1
ii) Pervasive Marginalization	2.59	74	5,673	3.12	4.96	0.83	73.8
Percentage of Variance Explained	.320	.029	.100	.236	.253	.076	

is clearly met here; in that prolonged labour market marginality is associated with a level of deprivation significantly greater than that experienced by the remainder of the manual working class.

Earlier we noted, that while we could find little evidence for the existence of intergenerational transmission of unemployment, we suggested that it was likely to become more evident in the future. It is, therefore, of particular interest to compare the material conditions of those households from which the next generation of the marginalized working class are likely to be recruited with other households at the same stage of the family cycle. In Table 9 we restrict our analysis to 1,398 households containing children under fifteen and look at the extent of variation in the risk of poverty by class situation. The level of poverty

Table 9: *Poverty by Class Situation for Households with Children Under 15*

	<i>Percentage Poor</i>
Middle Class	2.9
Non-Marginalized Working Class	20.0
Marginalized Working Class	78.7

for middle class households is less than 3 per cent and is marginally lower than the overall one shown in Table 9. For the non-marginalized the risk level reaches 20 per cent - slightly higher than in the overall case. Among the marginalized working class, almost four out of five households fall below the poverty line; which compares with the overall figure of two out of three. Thus the environment in which the children in these households are being reared is one which involves not only labour market marginality but also, in the vast majority of cases, extreme deprivation.

Having established the impact of marginalization on poverty, we now seek to establish whether the impact of marginalization is greater for households located in public sector

housing in urban centres. In Table 10, using logistic regression, we look at the impact of marginalization and location, and the manner in which they interact on poverty which they interact while controlling for number of children and sex. Contrary to the expectation generated by Wilson's thesis, we find that the interaction term, rather than being significant and positive is actually negative. This conclusion holds even we restrict our attention to pervasive marginalization. The effect of marginalization varies little by location.

Table 10: *Logistic Regression of Factors Influencing the Risk of Household Poverty*

(Figures in parentheses relate to pervasive marginalization")		
Marginalization	2.98***	(2.93***)
Public Sector Housing in Urban Centre	1.32***	(1.24***)
Public Sector Housing in Urban Centre * Marginalization	-0.86*	(-0.28)
Number of Children	0.32***	(0.26***)
Sex	-1.11***	(-0.88***)
Constant	-1.85	-1.79

\*p < .1    \*\* p < .01    \*\*\* p < .001

### ***Marginalization and Fatalism***

The issue of the relationship between social class/socio-economic status and feelings of *powerlessness/fatalism* or alternatively *sense of control* is one to which a great deal of attention has been devoted by social scientists of varying disciplinary backgrounds (Mirowsky and Ross, 1990; Whelan, 1992a). In measuring fatalism, we have drawn on a set of items which have been fairly widely used in the literature (Pearlin *et al.*, 1981).

1. I can do just about anything I set my mind to.
2. I have little control over the things that happen to me.

3. What happens to me in the future depends on me.
4. I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.
5. Sometimes I feel I am being pushed around in life.
6. There is a lot I can do to change my life if I want to.
7. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.

Respondents were asked to react to each of the items on a four point scale running from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Scoring on the items has been carried out so as to take into account the direction of the items. The final scale has a very satisfactory level of reliability, and has a potential range of scores running from '4' indicating the highest possible level of fatalism to 1 indicating the lowest possible level of fatalism.

In Table 11 we show the impact of marginalization, location in public sector housing in an urban area and their interaction on fatalism. In Wilson's (1991) model location plays a crucial role in producing feeling of low self-efficacy; in that such feelings are reinforced by the feeling and values of others operating in the same social context. However, rather than observing a significant positive interaction, which would support his hypothesis, we instead find a significant negative interaction. The impact of marginalization on fatalism is greater in locations other than public sector housing in urban areas. This conclusion holds, with even greater strength, if we restrict our attention to pervasive marginalization.

Location in public sector housing in an urban centre, which clearly operates as a proxy for a variety of other unmeasured variables, has a significant influence on fatalism among these outside the marginalized working class but no significant impact given such marginalization. Whatever advantages are associated with being located outside public sector housing in a urban centre, they do not provide a buffer against the psychological consequences of marginalization; indeed the relative impact of marginalization is stronger leading to a situation where the fatalism levels of the marginalized are little affected by



location.

Table 11: *Multiple Regression of the Impact of Marginalization and Location on Fatalism*

	<i>Head of Household</i>	
Marginalization	0.31 ***	(0.33***)
Public Housing in Urban Centre	0.21***	(0.22***)
Public Housing in an Urban Centre * Marginalization	-0.17**	(-0.26***)
Constant	2.27	2.28
R <sup>2</sup>	.064	.056

\* p < .1 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

## CONCLUSIONS

The starting point of our analysis was the issue of whether, given the scale of long-term unemployment in Ireland, the concept of an 'underclass' might be fruitfully applied in this case. Following, Gallie (forthcoming) we have taken labour market marginality, extreme deprivation and a distinctive sub-culture as the crucial elements constituting an underclass. We would wish to restrict the term 'underclass' to these situations where evidence exists of milieu effects of the kind identified by Wilson (1991) which contribute to vicious circle processes.

Contrary to conventional expectations, the marginalized working class are not concentrated in public sector housing in major urban areas. The main factors contributing to increased risk of pervasive working class marginalization are lower working class origins, the

absence of educational qualifications and a household head aged under forty. For these younger poorly educated members of the working class emigration has become a much less attractive and realistic opportunity than for their earlier counterparts.

The marginalized working class are distinguished by extreme rates of poverty. The full extent of the impact of marginalization is made evident when we go beyond current income and focus on the erosion of resources, and exposure to extreme life-style deprivation.

In the light of our findings it is interesting to note that a variety of studies in the United States, aimed at testing Wilson's theory, have produced evidence that, whatever about the consequences of poverty, there is little evidence that the poor are more isolated than they have been in the past (Peterson, 1991-20). Wilson's (1991) response is that evidence relating to concentration of poverty in standard metropolitan areas is not relevant to his thesis because it does not identify ghetto neighbourhoods. Peterson (1991:22) notes that Wilson strengthens his theory by narrowing his focus to those neighbourhoods which are characterised by extreme economic marginality *and* extreme isolation but at the expense of narrowing its explanatory focus.

"At best the reformulated theory applies to only a small portion of the poverty population".

It remains a legitimate question, however, whether marginalization has different consequences either in terms of exposure to poverty or psychological consequences, depending upon the context in which it is experienced. In fact we could find no evidence that working class marginalization and location in public sector housing in an urban centre interact in a way which leads to a higher risk of poverty. In the case of fatalism the outcome was in the opposite direction to that hypothesised; with location having no impact on fatalism among the marginalized.

It remains possible to argue that the distinction between those in public sector housing in urban centres and all others involves the wrong contrast, or operates at too aggregated a level. In a situation where appropriate data of a macro kind were available it would be possible to pursue these issues through the application of multilevel modelling (Goldstein and Silver, 1989). However, apart from the conceptual and technical problems associated with such a solution (Hauser, 1970, 1974, Ringdal 1992) the evidence we have presented in relation to the Irish case does seem to suggest that an underclass identified in this manner, would either look very different from what might have been expected on theoretical grounds, or would constitute a subset of those households in public housing in urban centres sufficiently small that they would constitute a relatively trivial component of poor or marginalized working class households. Thus where the head of household is aged less than sixty five, marginalized households located in public sector housing in urban centres constitute 24 per cent of all marginalized working class household and 31 per cent of poor households.

The evidence relating to the social and psychological consequences of a high level of long term unemployment, rather than providing support for the value of an underclass perspective, provides support for Goldthorpe and Marshall's (1992:382) argument for the 'promising future of class analysis' understood as

".... a specific way of investigating interconnections ... between historically formed macro social structures, on the one hand, and, on the other, the everyday experience of individuals within their partial social milieu".

What we are confronted with in the Republic of Ireland is not the emergence of an underclass but different types of working class marginalization. In the case of what we have referred to as restricted working class marginalization the risk has spread rather evenly across all class origins other than the professional and managerial groups, but has been concentrated in older

age groups. The distribution of risks of pervasive working class marginalization show that the costs of economic change has been borne disproportionately by those members of younger cohorts originating from the lower working class rather than by those in particular locations. While intergenerational transmission of unemployment was not evident at the time our data was collected, it seems inevitable that it will become more common. It is also clear that the households from which the next generation of the marginalized working class are most likely to be drawn are experiencing a level of material deprivation which is extreme even in comparison with their working class counterparts. The combination of these factors means that we cannot rule out the possibility of the emergence of a fraction of the working class characterized by its own distinctive sub-culture.

**NOTES**

1. An accumulating body of evidence has tended to undermine the notion that unemployment, crime, single motherhood, poor education etc. are all causally related in a way that requires one overarching explanation rather than reference to a diversity of structural processes (Dilnot, 1992, Duncan and Hoffman; 1991; Morris and Irwin, 1992; Peterson 1991).
2. There is an obvious parallel here with the position maintained by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) that the rationale of class analysis requires that members of a class are associated with particular sets of positions over time and would be undermined if classes were to appear as highly unstable aggregates of such positions.
3. Full details of the sampling procedures and outcomes are provided in Whelan (1992b)
4. The term will also be used when more detailed schemes involving further distinctions within these groups are employed.
5. This conclusion regarding the absence of geographical concentration is consistent with the findings arising from an analysis based on the 1986 Census Small Area Statistics. The analysis was based on the 1986 Census Small Area Statistics. The analysis was focused on 159 'Rural Districts' (RD's) and used a quintile interval system in which these RDs were ranked from the one with the highest to the one with the lowest unemployment rate. The quintile with the highest unemployment rate contains 38 per cent of all those who were classified as unemployed in the 1986 Census compared with 29 per cent of all persons aged 15 years or over. The top 40 per cent of RDs in terms of unemployment rate contains two-thirds of all unemployed individuals, compared with 56 per cent of the labour force. Thirty per cent of the unemployed were contained in the five major cities compared with 24 per cent of the population aged 25 or over (Nolan, Whelan and Williams, 1994; Williams, 1993).
6. Full details of the procedures involved in identifying these dimensions of deprivation, evidence relating to reliability and a full discussion of the conceptual issues involved in constructing a combined income and life-style deprivation poverty line can be found in Callan *et al.*, (1993); and Whelan (1992; 1993).
7. This category has been distinguished because the extent to which an illness will cause a person to be unemployable and the extent of early retirement varies under different labour market conditions and the burden of increased risks is disproportionately borne by vulnerable groups (Bartley, 1987).

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