

# Kathleen Lynch

## What would 'Social Justice' look like in Ireland?

**Key Concepts:** Social Justice, Affective Equality, Impact of Neoliberalism, Educational inequality, New Managerialism.  
**Key Works:** *Equality and Power in Irish Schools (2002)*, *Affective Equality: Love, Care and Injustice (2009)*, *The Gendered Order of Caring (2008)*.  
 When You're done take the quiz on the website:  
<https://polsocpodcast.com/key-thinker-quizzes/>

***"Ireland has a warm private hand, but a cold public heart?"***

**Love, Care, and Solidarity** have not usually been placed at the centre of 'Political' discourse (discussions & writing), but Lynch puts these ideas front and centre. She says that we must recognize that "people are profoundly dependent and interdependent not only in the personal, but also the public sphere."  
 From Lynch's perspective, a 'Binary' (either one or the other) view of public and private is both unhelpful & false.

Lynch condemns the impact of **Neoliberalism** in Ireland. But what does that mean?

**Neoliberalism** is the idea that the best way to run any organization is through the principles of the '**market economy**'. The basic idea is that competitive markets generate the most efficient way of doing virtually anything, be it education, healthcare, or any other area of public policy. It was developed by economists such as *Friedrich Hayek & Milton Friedman*, and mainly introduced by politicians such as **Ronal Reagan** and **Margaret Thatcher**.

Lynch argues that this is now the '*Dominant ideology of contemporary Western Society*', but that this breaks down when dealing with the act of 'caring', which can't be broken down into bite-sized parcels, but which requires 'love labour' that you can't pay others to do for you.

These ideas of Neoliberalism include liberalizing economic policies such as:

- **Privatization** (selling off government services to private companies)
- **Austerity** (reducing government budget deficits through spending cuts & tax increases)
- **Deregulation** (the reduction of government power in any industry, usually enacted to create more competition)
- **Free Trade** (international trade left to its natural course without tariffs, quotas, etc. → no tariffs = lower prices for all)

The goal is the reduction in government spending to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society → "**Small Government**" (more like **Nozick** than any of our other thinkers)

Why should we care about this? Follow the logic of her argument...

Classical Economics and Sociology traditionally view their subjects (people they think and write about) as being the prototypical "**Self-sufficient, rational economic man**"  
 Lynch challenges this by arguing that....

Nobody can properly **function or flourish** without "Love, Care, and Solidarity" ...

Being denied "Love, Care, and Solidarity" is a serious **deprivation and injustice**...

"**Affective inequality**" happens when the **burdens and benefits** of care work are **unevenly distributed** → i.e. when those that provide the care are deprived of important human goods required to sustain "*an adequate livelihood and care itself.*"

This care work is very '**gendered**'. Men are the "**Care Commanders**" and Women are the "**Care Foot Soldiers**". Men have no/few obligations to undertake "everyday care" and are "Free Riders" on the care work of others (usually women).

This leads Lynch to conclude that, "*It is women's unwaged care and related domestic labour that frees men up to exercise control in the public sphere of politics, the economy and culture.*"  
 To resolve this care-related inequality, a new idea of '**masculinity**' is needed that is:  
**"care-full rather than care-less"**

Therefore, → "*The presumption of global capitalism that people are labour units, movable from one country to another as production requires, is an institutionalized form of **affective injustice.***"

# Social Justice: is the equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

Kathleen Lynch was the founder of the “School of Social Justice” in UCD. It was the first such university department of its kind in the world. Here is how UCD describes the activities of the school:

*Social Justice comprises the disciplines of **equality studies** and **women’s studies**. Our aim is to promote social justice both locally and globally, using interdisciplinary, feminist and egalitarian approaches to teaching and research.*

*Equality Studies is unique. Unlike other academic fields, it examines social justice and human rights issues that affect all social groups and arise in multiple contexts.*

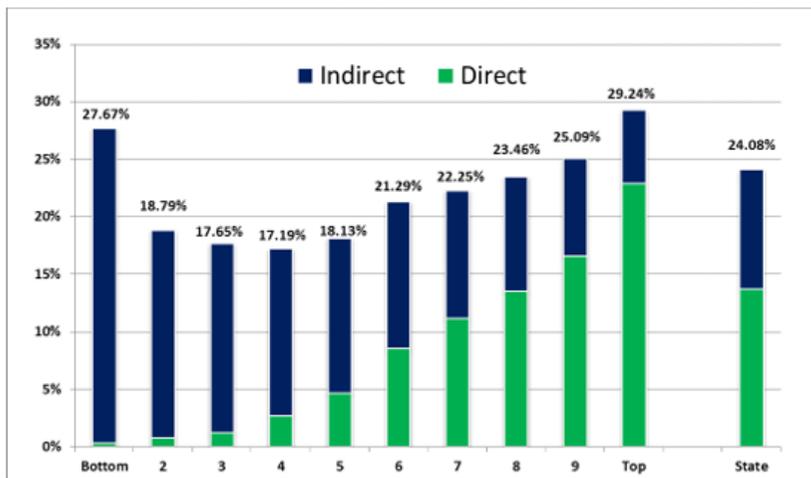
*Our teaching is inspired by **Paulo Freire**'s insight that education can work for liberation. We also believe that research cannot be neutral in the face of injustice. Because of this Equality Studies is devoted to linking theoretical perspectives on equality with the practice of change. We recognise also that change cannot be achieved through the production of knowledge in isolation from experience.*

Does this graph suggest that Ireland’s tax system is fair, equal, and progressive? Who shoulders the highest ‘Proportional’ burden?

**The poorest 10% in Ireland pay almost as much of their total income in tax as the richest 10%:**

The percentage of Gross Income spent on taxes by Irish households – from bottom to top groups (10%) Blue=indirect taxes; green= direct tax

Source: Micheál L. Collins (2014) Total Direct and Indirect Tax Contributions of Households in Ireland. Nevin Research Institute Dublin NERI WP 2014/No 18 (Page 17)



Lynch argues that one of the biggest threat to Social Justice is the rise of “**New Managerialism**”, which “represents the organizational form of neoliberalism”.

- *New Managerialism* involves “institutionalising market values, systems and processes in the governance of all types of organizations, including schools, colleges, the civil service and public sector bodies and NGOs”

**LANGUAGE MATTERS!!!** We can see the results of this process in the words government uses...

- “Public services” have changed from being places that **provide welfare**, (education, health, elder care etc.) based on human need and human rights to “**service-delivery operations**” with productivity targets
- Cultural shifts are symbolised in the use of market nomenclature (business-type words) within public services – ‘**customers**’ and ‘**clients**’ (Lynch notes that in 2018, the Dept of Social Protection website had 2,200 references to “Customers” – “**Unemployment Benefit**” is now called “**Jobseekers allowance**”)
- Ideas of “*concern, compassion, & care*” (all ideas that focus on other people) are peripheralised (pushed to the edges) through silence (i.e. by ignoring them)

**Data** is a key component in Lynch’s approach to Social Justice and Inequality. The *Irish Times* described her by saying that, “*When Lynch speaks in the media she lays on a thick layer of statistics and research that has been known to frustrate interviewers looking for a soundbyte.*” Look at the data below (Table 2) and see if you can use them to say whether Ireland is an equal or unequal society.

**Table 2: Poverty Levels Expressed in Numbers of People, 2006-2017**

	2006	2009	2012	2017
<b>Overall</b>	719,593	639,209	776,335	762,549
<b>Adults</b>				
At work	115,854	91,407	94,713	109,045
Unemployed	59,726	82,458	149,056	102,944
Students/school	107,939	93,325	110,240	139,546
On home duties	132,405	115,058	120,332	99,894
Retired	41,736	30,043	45,804	44,990
Ill/disability	57,567	40,909	56,672	68,629
Other	12,953	9,588	14,750	15,251
<b>Children</b>				
Children (under 16 yrs)	191,412	176,422	184,768	182,249
Children (under 18 yrs)	250,418	223,084	232,124	231,052

Source: Calculated using CSO SILC Reports (various years)

From these data, identify the groups:

- For whom poverty improved most?
- For whom has poverty rates have increased?
- Has the overall level of poverty increased or decreased between 2006-17?

What global/national events might explain these changes in poverty levels?

For more data like this, visit *Social Justice Ireland*'s website <https://www.socialjustice.ie/> In particular, be on the lookout for their very short (7-8 page) report called “**Poverty Focus 2019**” which explains all of the key concepts in accessible language and which has a section dedicated to different data sets and relevant graphs. There’s great exam data there!

## EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Lynch argues that we should be working towards “**Equality of Condition**” (not equality of outcome) in Education. She defines ‘equality of condition’ as “*the belief that people should be as equal as possible in relation to the central conditions of their lives*” In other words, “*equalizing what might be called people’s ‘real options’.*”

To achieve this, she argues, 4 interconnected issues must be addressed:

### 1. → “**Equality in Education and Related Resources**” by...

- Abandoning rigid grouping (streaming) policies
- Challenging the power of parents in relation to both selection and grouping
- Changing curricula & assessment systems to make them more inclusive of the wide range of human intelligence

### 2. → “**Equality of Respect and Recognition**” by respecting differences in...

- Organizational cultures
- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Assessment

### 3. → “**Equality of Power**” by....

- Democratizing the student-teacher relationships
- The extension of democratic principles to “*all areas of society, particularly the economy and the family.*”

### 4. → “**Equality of Love, Care and Solidarity**” by....

- Developing an appreciation of the intrinsic role of emotions in the process of Teaching and Learning
- Providing space for teachers and students to talk about feelings and concerns
- Devising Educational experience that allow students to develop emotional skills and personal intelligences as a human capability

But, this is made more difficult because equality in education can “*only be achieved if we recognize the deeply integrated relationship that exist between education and the economic, political, socio-cultural and affective systems in society.*”

## Lynch’s work on Educational Inequality has REAL-WORLD consequences.

Think about her positions on some of the areas of inequality in Irish education and see if you agree or disagree with her position. You **MUST** articulate **WHY** you agree or disagree...

### **On bonus points for maths:**

“No matter how well-intentioned are those who wish to enhance interest in higher level mathematics, the increased social divisiveness of the bonus points entry criterion is a very good reason not to implement it. It will further advantage the already advantaged, which expressly contradicts Government policy.”

### **On the introduction of aptitude tests for medicine (HPAT):**

“Not alone are the tests of doubtful value, they are also a new barrier for lower-income students to higher educational entry. Proficiency on the tests requires practice and insider knowledge that is only available to those who can buy it.”

### **On streaming in schools:**

Lynch told a Combat Poverty Agency conference of a growing “normalisation” of poverty and inequality in the education system. She called for funding sanctions to be imposed on schools that “cherry-picked” students, for an end to “streaming” in schools. (How might this be viewed in light of the recent

### **On ‘Grinds’ and ‘Grind Schools’**

Upper-Middle Class parents spent 7 times more on ‘educational resources’ per annum per child in the ‘private market’ than the lowest socio-economic grouping. (Does this support her claim that, in education, the single biggest factor in educational outcome is “Parental Private income”?)

I Agree/Disagree with this position because...

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I Agree/Disagree with this position because...

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I Agree/Disagree with this position because...

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I Agree/Disagree with this position because...

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Using your knowledge of the Education system, identify two other specific aspects that Lynch might criticize.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Thinker's Background

- Born in Co Clare to a farming family
- She started her career as a **social worker** in the area of poverty and housing. What she witnessed on the ground "*lit a fire under her*"
- Her early academic work was in the area of education where she wrote *Equality and Power in Schools* (with Dr Anne Lodge of NUI Maynooth) a seminal work on the subject of education access and attainment
- She was one of the experts consulted during the "**Commission on the Status of People With Disabilities**" in the 1990s
- She has been at the cutting edge of University education in Ireland. She set up the "*UCD Equality Studies Centre*" in 1990 and the UCD "*School of Social Justice*" in 2005.
- She is a passionate critic of injustice, even criticizing her own employer, UCD. One colleague described her by saying "*There are many outspoken academics out there who would change the world as long as they can do it between breakfast and lunch. Kathleen is tireless. She really wants to make a difference.*"

Why not listen to Kathleen Lynch's interview with Grainne McKeever? You can search for it on [Scoilnet.ie](https://www.scoilnet.ie) or go straight to it here:

<https://www.scoilnet.ie/uploads/resources/29487/29223.mp3>

**A little 'Hook'...** If you want to get a handle on the idea of 'Gendered' care work, try watching Mimi Leder's 2018 Film "*On the Basis of Sex*" about the life of US Supreme Court Justice, **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**. Look out for the case involving the discrimination against a male 'care giver', and how that gets turned on its head!

## Personal Response

(A.) In what ways does Kathleen Lynch help us to "*evaluate the view that in a capitalist society, social class is an important way of categorising who has, and who has not, got power*"?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

(B.) In what way does Kathleen Lynch help us to evaluate whether or not "*Modern Irish Society is a Patriarchy*"?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Reading Tip:** If you want to get a flavour of how direct and persuasive Lynch's writing is, you could try reading "Affective Equality: Who Cares?" in the Journal called 'Development'. It's only 5 pages long but could be the basis for hours of group discussion and debate. Look at how many other authors she cites in 5 pages!!!! It's the perfect example of building on the ideas of others.

## Links to other aspects of the course

In some ways, Lynch is the Key Thinker who draws in most ideas from other parts of the course and builds on them to help her readers focus those ideas in to the Irish context.

1. **Appiah** – Lynch goes further than Appiah's view of *Cosmopolitanism* by saying that to be a real citizen of the world, we must start by "*appreciating and accepting difference rather than merely tolerating them.*"
2. **Walby** – Lynch's view of the gendered nature of care work draws heavily on Walby's view of the '*Patriarchy*'. She goes beyond Walby by arguing that we should see the public and private spheres as more interdependent.
3. **Freire** – Lynch's idea of *democratizing* the student-teacher power relationship comes straight from 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', which she quotes in numerous places. For her, schools are "*sites of Learning and Conscientization*"!!!!
4. **Marx** – Lynch is very interested in class structures and how society's structures help to oppress certain groups in society (particularly women). 'Nurturing Capital' and 'Affective Equality' aren't too far from the 'Marxist Feminist' idea of "productive" vs "reproductive" labour! She argues that Educational Inequality "*will only be eliminated in full when class systems themselves are eliminated.*"
5. **Locke** – Lynch does focus on civil and political rights, but does so "with less of a commitment to property rights" in a way that **Shiva** might recognize.
6. **Nussbaum** – "Equality of Condition" is drawn almost directly from the 'Capabilities Approach'

**Favourite Moment:** Do yourself a favour and search on YouTube for Lynch's lecture to the ASTI's annual conference in 2019. It is 25 minutes long, but covers virtually every topic that Lynch deals with elsewhere. The language is very accessible. She's not afraid to criticize the audience in front of her, that's for sure!