

# **Perceptions of Migrants and their Impact on the Blanchardstown area: Local Views**

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# **Executive Summary**

## **Introduction**

Migration is part of a global process and Ireland's experience mirrors a pattern that is reflected across Europe and indeed the developed world. In the Irish case it is the pace and scale of the country's transformation to one of net immigration that is striking. The Blanchardstown area, Dublin 15 - situated 10km northwest of Dublin city centre - constitutes one of the fastest changing parts of the country from a demographic point of view. The area has been a particularly high recipient of migrants - almost 22% of its population is non-Irish nationals, double the national average. An exploratory, small-scale, qualitative study of Irish people's views of migrants and their impact on the Blanchardstown area (Ní Chonaill, 2006) revealed the need for more in-depth research regarding the views of Irish people towards migrants. Researchers – with some exceptions (Feldman, 2006, Kelly, 2005, Meade and O'Connell, 2008) – have focused primarily on ethnic minority communities, largely overlooking the majority ethnic group. Furthermore, the bulk of the studies investigating the views of Irish people towards migrants are quantitative, with surveys constituting the main research method. This research project thus intended to address the dearth of qualitative work on this topic, taking the views of both the majority and minority ethnic groups into consideration. Funded by the Irish Research Council in Humanities and Social Science (IRCHSS), this is a qualitative study of the views of local people – both Irish people and migrants themselves – on migrants, their impact on the Blanchardstown area and their contribution to redefining Irish identity.

## **Methodology**

Focus groups were combined with in-depth interviews as a research method for the study. Living in the Blanchardstown area was the common characteristic shared by all the groups, while the 'break characteristic', namely that which differentiated one group from another, was ethnic/national origin. The definition of Irish that was used for the study was people who have Irish nationality or define themselves as Irish, while migrants are those who do not have Irish nationality or who do not define themselves as Irish. Volunteers subsequently identified themselves as 'Irish' as opposed to 'migrant'. A small number of

focus group participants was also interviewed but a far greater number of interviewees was recruited in response to an advertisement placed in a local weekly newspaper, *The Community Voice* and flyers distributed throughout the area. In addition, background interviews were also conducted with local service providers, agencies, key informants in religious and educational organisations and politicians in order to further inform the research. The number of participants interviewed for the study, including the background interviewees, totalled 100 in all. A flexible model was employed as an analytic approach, informed by grounded theory, namely ‘theory that was derived from the data, was systematically gathered and analysed through the research process’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 12). Systematic coding via content analysis was used, so that all the data was coded using criteria to bring together extracts that were relevant to particular themes and these were then compared, contrasted and analysed in the context of the theories that emerged. Given what emerged from the data, a synthesis of two approaches was used for the theoretical framework of this study, akin to what Loyal and Allen (2006: 215) call a ‘cultural materialist framework’, taking both the cultural sphere, questions of identity and the Other, but also the economic and political perspectives into consideration.

## **Findings**

The main findings that emerged relate to three main thematic areas: issues regarding economics and resources, issues regarding culture and identity, and the issue of colour as a marker of difference. Unlike the smaller scale study conducted in 2006 (Ní Chonail), migrants were no longer considered as a temporary, but rather as a permanent feature of the Blanchardstown area. Both Irish and migrant participants identified economics as the main driving force attracting migrants to the area, which is in keeping with government policy. Migrant workers were not perceived as taking Irish jobs, rather occupying lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs the Irish do not want. The data was collected between March and July 2008, before the country technically entered recession, although the boom period was marked by inequality and polarisation. Migrant participants traced changes in attitudes towards themselves in wider Irish society, attributable partly to the changing economics. Migrants, who do not work, irrespective of the reason, were far less accepted in Irish society. In keeping with standard economic theory, only those in competition for

an insufficient supply of local authority houses and for welfare payments perceived migrants as a threat. The government, as opposed to migrants, was viewed as the root cause of the problem. Misinformation regarding entitlements and benefits was evident amongst both migrant and Irish participants. Among Irish participants, issues regarding schooling crossed all social classes where migrants were seen as contributing to the shortage of school places, as well as draining resources. The high proportion of newcomer children in schools in the Blanchardstown area was highlighted, in addition to the delay experienced between the rapid construction of houses in the area and the provision of services such as schools. The ‘migrant’ can serve as a useful scapegoat for politicians since the government’s failure to provide adequate school places and social housing explains the frustration regarding the shortage of resources.

As regards identity, evidence of boundaries drawn at a local level between migrants and the Irish ‘us’, that emanated from the data, included linguistic and cultural differences and differential treatment regarding resources. Language was considered as one means of differentiation, with examples cited of how language is creating a palpable divide between ‘them’ and ‘us’, of language as a barrier, as a means of inclusion and exclusion, a means of identifying members and non-members. Migration has impacted on families’ home language but it has also affected the vocabulary of the Irish ‘us’ and Irish participants spoke of the reluctance to speak out *‘for fear of being racist’*. Culture functions similarly as a factor of both unification and division, and stereotypes were reproduced regarding difference on the part of Irish and migrant participants. Migrants were perceived by some Irish participants as agents in the production of cultural change in Irish society. Boundaries however can be drawn and redrawn; they are not impermeable. Children were depicted in a positive light, by both migrant and Irish participants, as capable of breaking down barriers and overcoming difference. Lastly, on the issue of differential treatment regarding resources, as discussed by the lower skilled participants, once again in the construction of identity the local ‘us’ was frequently aligned to the national ‘us’. Throughout the analysis, the state’s role in the process, in striving for homogeneity and defining the ‘us’ and the Other, was acknowledged.

Finally, colour was widely recognised as a means of differentiation with numerous examples of ‘blackness’ as a marker of difference in the data, cited by both Irish and

black participants alike. Notions of black and white thus acted as signifiers of inclusion and exclusion. Stereotypes were cited regarding Africans, in particular Nigerians, being targeted. Personal examples of differential treatment provided by black participants are in keeping with the findings of research regarding discrimination. However, the issue of racism and discrimination was not limited solely to these participants but raised also by Irish participants who spoke of what they perceive as unfair treatment of white children in local school settings. The idea of a lack of voice was raised on both sides, on the Irish side the *'fear of being racist'* and on the migrant side a lack of forum for expression. Once again children were regarded as the positive way forward although some caution was expressed regarding how they are treated. The state has a role to play in fighting racial discrimination and the recent funding cut-backs in the Equality Authority budget and the complete erasure of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) do not bode well for the fight against racism, regarding which the government cannot afford to be complacent, in particular in light of the current economic climate.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In light of the findings outlined above, 10 recommendations were made in chapter 6. Without reciting the list here, it is clear that while jobs were not perceived as a scarce resource when the data was collected, economic conditions have deteriorated considerably since. There is a need to address the misinformation that was evident about the allocation of resources and the rights and entitlements of migrants that was found in the study. Proper planning and the provision of adequate services such as sufficient schools and language support are also necessary in the rapidly expanding Blanchardstown area in order to avoid migrants becoming the scapegoat for insufficient resources and services. While the integration of children was viewed in a positive light, there is a need to create opportunities at a local level for adults particularly, both from the host and migrant communities, to engage, interact and develop dialogue. Furthermore, the government has an important role to play in providing leadership regarding the integration process and the fight against racism. Given the emphasis placed on blackness as a marker of difference that was found in this study, there is an urgent need to challenge

the conflation of whiteness and Irishness and debate the question of the Irish 'we' in contemporary society. Finally, more research is required to further explore the views of Irish people towards migrants, particularly in light of the deteriorating economic circumstances.



## **Chapter 1 : Introduction**

Ireland is one of a number of peripheral European countries which, similarly to Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, has transformed relatively recently from having a long history of emigration, to becoming a recipient of substantial inward migration. Hickman warns of the ‘perils of monocultural imaginings’ (2007: 8) when acknowledging the widespread belief that Ireland was monocultural before the arrival of immigrants in the 1990s. Despite the country’s long tradition of emigration, Tracy (2000), Rolston and Shannon (2002) and Geraghty (2007) amongst others, have highlighted hybridity in the Irish historical context, arguing that in-migration is not a new phenomenon, and hence the presence of black people or Jewish people in Irish society is not something novel or recent. However, unlike the other European countries listed, the pace and sheer scale of the recent levels of inflows of migration that Ireland has witnessed have been remarkable (Mac Einrí, 2007: 215). The 2006 census figures reflect the high level of inward migration, with foreign nationals comprising 10% of the population (420,000 people), almost twice the 2002 figure of 5.8% (CSO, 2008: 8).

The radical economic change experienced by the country has been dramatic: a shift from high unemployment in the 1980s to a labour deficit, from emigration to immigration, from recession to boom although the full circle has been completed with a recent swing back to recession in the latter part of 2008. The era of unprecedented economic growth that Ireland experienced from the mid 1990s has to be considered in the wider context of global transformations. While globalisation attracted foreign investment into the country, the movement of capital and goods also brought a movement of people. Migration is part and parcel of a global process with immigrants described as ‘the visible faces of globalisation’ (Penninx et al, 2004: 4). Hence their presence here is one of the most apparent markers that Ireland has joined the modern day forces of globalisation. Within the context of globalisation, the impact of migration is but one of a whole plethora of socio-economic, political and cultural transformations that Ireland has experienced, albeit one whose repercussions have been wide reaching.

Migrations instigate economic and social transformations, in addition to engendering a new cultural diversity, which frequently calls the national identity into question (Castles

and Miller, 2003: 3). Ireland, to use Feldman's (2006) term, is the absolute 'diaspora nation', in terms of mobility of people. The arrival of new diasporas in Ireland has instigated, amongst other consequences, an increased concern with questions of identity and belonging in twentieth-first century Ireland. Multiple identities, as argued by Castles and Miller (2003), are a widespread characteristic of our post-modern world, not just specific to migrants. As will be argued in chapter 4, identity is neither 'fixed' nor singular' but rather 'multiple' (Brah, 1996); it is always 'in process', never complete (Hall, 1996: 2). In the face of rapid economic and social restructuring, what was formerly represented as closed and homogeneous is now being challenged. Garner, amongst others, criticises the accounts that emphasise Catholic, Gaelic, rural and indeed white norms of Irishness as if they were 'natural' and uncontested' (2004: 248). These traditional markers or often taken-for-granted aspects of Irish identity, which were reinforced by the state and the Church in the early years of the Irish Free State, are being called into question in the wake of increased diversity.

The constitution of the Irish nation has been a topic of increased debate since the late 1990s as the crisis of national identity is a phenomenon that has manifested itself across Western Europe (Delanty, 1996). In response to globalisation and increased migration is the marked tendency to define nationality in opposition to migrants. Hence, the question raised is whether nationality and citizenship can in fact be separated – with citizenship entailing 'membership of a polity', while identity involves 'the recognition of common ties' (Delanty, 1996: 1-2). In 2004 the Citizenship Referendum, passed by an overwhelming margin – 79.8% of voters – redefined how to acquire Irish citizenship. Hence the increased prominence attached to what it means to be Irish and how to become Irish in a rapidly transforming society. Building on Bauman's notion of 'liquid modernity' (2000), the experience of living in this changing Ireland has been likened to living in an 'in-between world, in-between cultures and identities', an experience of 'liminality' (Kuhling and Keohane, 2007: 14).

### **Emigration versus immigration**

Emigration characterised traditional Irish society to the extent that the country has been likened to an 'emigrant nursery' (MacLaughlin, 1994: 6), gaining recognition as a

diaspora nation. While emigration predated the Famine, outward flows accelerated in its aftermath: Ireland's population plummeted from 8.2 million in the 1840s to 4 million in 1946, almost halving (Courtney, 1995) - a demographic decrease which was unique in Western Europe. Migratory flows remained largely outward from the nineteenth century until the mid 1990s. The rapid and unprecedented economic recovery and growth experienced – one of the highest rates in Europe - instigated the flow of migrant labour in response to shortages in many sectors. The inflows were composed of roughly the same percentage of non-Irish immigrants and returning Irish emigrants at the outset. However, the pattern in relation to the origin of migrants altered during the late 1990s and into the twentieth-first century, with the economic opportunities attracting migrants from further afield, both from within and outside of the European Union (EU) (Barrett and Duffey, 2007: 4). Numbers of migrants arriving into the country reached a height of 110,000 in the twelve months to April 2007 (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008: 3). Hughes et al identify a third phase in the evolution of Irish migration, namely since 2004, 'a phase of more secure, stable and perhaps permanent immigration' (2007: 225). This is a consequence of EU enlargement in 2004 when the Irish government, similarly to the Swedish and British governments, gave members of the ten accession states free access to the labour market. Hence a notable feature of present immigration in Irish society is that it comes primarily from within the EU (Hughes et al, 2007: 219). Of the 420,000 non-Irish nationals recorded in the 2006 census, who represent 188 different countries (CSO, 2008), 276,000 are nationals of other EU countries while 144,000 come from outside the EU25<sup>1</sup> (CSO, 2007c).

### **Who is arriving?**

The migrant population in Ireland is diverse and heterogeneous. In keeping with Castles and Miller's (2003) definition of migration, the movement of people across political and administrative boundaries takes many forms. Hence the term 'migrant'<sup>2</sup>, employed in this study, is one which encompasses a diversification of migratory types and includes not

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<sup>1</sup> There were 25 EU member states at the time of the 2006 census as Romania and Bulgaria did not join the EU until January 1st 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Although the term 'migrant' was chosen for the study to cover a person who moves from one country to another, on either a temporary or a permanent basis, in this report the terms 'migrant' and 'immigrant' are employed interchangeably.

only workers – both highly-qualified and lower-skilled – but also those fleeing persecution such as asylum seekers and refugees<sup>3</sup>, as well as students and family members or dependents of previous migrants. In light of the government's market-driven strategy, workers comprise the largest category of migrants that have come into Ireland. In 2008 non-Irish nationals accounted for over 16.5% of the work force, which represents one of the highest rates in the EU (O'Connell and McGinity, 2008: 14). Indeed, the rise in foreign national workers in Ireland has been the swiftest witnessed throughout the OECD (McCormick, 2008: 2).

Other categories include asylum seekers, whose numbers of applications fell to the lowest level in a decade in 2008 (3,866) and refugees: 7.6% of applicants to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) were accorded refugee status in 2008 (ORAC, 2008). Loyal (2003) argues that most of the work permit holders came from countries containing white, Christian populations, before 2004 when the government subsequently directed their recruitment drive towards the accession countries. These can be contrasted with the asylum seekers, the largest population of whom, when categorised by nationality, are Nigerians (ORAC, 2009). Therefore migrant workers racialised as 'white' have been sought preferentially by the state as opposed to those who are black or ethnically different (Joppke, 2005). Asylum seekers are perceived as devoid of an economic existence as they are not granted the right to work. Thus the system has rendered them dependent on social welfare and viewed as a 'cost' in terms of capital accumulation. They have consequently been characterised in an extremely negative fashion as 'spongers' and 'freeloaders', to cite Noel O'Flynn, a Fianna Fáil TD (Irish Times, 2002). Given the desire to limit the number of 'unproductive' asylum seekers (Garner and Moran, 2006: 105), it is clear that liberal policies are not applied equally across the different categories. Students also represent a substantial proportion of migratory flows. In 2005 the numbers of registered non-EAA students in Ireland totalled 27,000, in addition to 9,000 EU students registered as international students in higher

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<sup>3</sup> Generally asylum seekers make their application in Ireland to be recognised as a refugee under the terms of the 1951 United Nation's Geneva convention and the 1967 New York Protocol. These are known as convention refugees. A programme refugee, on the other hand, as defined in section 24 of the Refugee Act 1996, 'means a person to whom leave to enter and remain in the State for temporary protection or resettlement as part of a group of persons has been given by the Government'. An example of such a group was the Bosnians that arrived in the Blanchardstown area in the 1990s as a result of war in their own country.

education institutions (Nolan and Maître, 2008: 41). Lastly are family members and dependents and the number of dependents who accompany other migrants to Ireland is unknown.

The deteriorating economic circumstances during 2008 has subsequently slowed down the inward flow. The number of citizens from the new EU states who were granted Personal Public Service (PPS)<sup>4</sup> numbers for the second half of 2008 was 47% less than the same period in 2007, which indicates a significant abating in inward migration (Mac Cormaic, 2009). However, as the MCA (Migrant Careers and Aspirations project) argue, assumptions that migrants will go back home ‘when times are tough’, are misguided (2008). While some will undoubtedly depart in recessionary times, although data on PPS numbers do not reveal how many people leave the state, many more will not. Hence migration is not something temporary, but rather permanent, and Ireland will remain a multicultural society. As Mac Einrí affirms, ‘we may state with confidence that Ireland is no longer a country where immigration can be regarded as a short-term or transient issue. The country has definitely joined the European mainstream as a society where a population of mixed ethnic backgrounds is the norm’ (2007: 215).

Mac Einrí has also noted that the debate in new immigration societies like Ireland, which concentrated until recently on who gains entry into the country, has now shifted towards the topic of integration and the whole issue of what happens to people once they are in Ireland (2007: 215). Integration as a concept has recently acquired popularity but has also been contested (Loyal, 2007). The EU’s Common Basic Principles (CBP) on integration have underlined that integration is a ‘dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States’ (Commission of the European Communities: 2005). The Irish government, in keeping with literature in the area, has similarly described integration as a ‘two way process’ (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR), 1999: 9), ‘that places duties and obligations on both cultural and ethnic minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society’ (DJELR, 2005; 38). In the integration strategy produced by the Office of the Minister for Integration in May 2008, there is acknowledgement of the ‘leading role’ the government

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<sup>4</sup> Given the lack of official statistics, the applications for PPS numbers have been used to measure the number of migrants originating from these countries. A PPS number is necessary for tax and employment matters, as well as most dealings with government departments.

must play, but the roles of the host population and new communities are also clarified (DJELR, 2008: 17/18). These definitions have been criticised for a number of reasons including the essentialist thinking regarding identity, the assumption that there is a 'single, homogeneous host community' (Fanning et al, 2008: 2) into which migrants will integrate. In their study on the integration of four migrant communities in Ireland, Feldman et al identify the need for future research to 'address the experiences and attitudes of the host society' (2008: 4), since integration is bi-directional, affecting not only immigrants but also their hosts. Given the pace and scale of change undergone by Irish society, and the Blanchardstown area in particular, which will be outlined below, and the bi-directional nature of integration, there is a need to hear the views both of Irish people and also migrants themselves in order to inform policy and identify issues on the ground. For the purposes of this study, the term Irish, although encompassing huge internal diversity as regards age, gender, socio-economic status etc, is taken to include people who have Irish nationality or who describe themselves as Irish. Participants' definitions of what it means to be Irish will be covered in more detail in chapter 4.

### **Background and rationale of study**

Economics, mobility and racism are fundamentally intertwined (Garner, 2004). The experiences of many migrants in Irish society questions the myth of Ireland of the hundred thousand welcomes, which masks 'peculiarly naïve' and even 'particularly lurid brands of racism' (Bacik, 2004: 199). Given the lack of unanimity amongst social scientists in defining racism, McVeigh and Lentin's explanation whereby racism constitutes 'any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on "race", colour, descent, as well as national or ethnic origin, which inferioritises or excludes a collectivity using mechanisms of power' (2002: 8) will be employed here. Studies of experience of discrimination in Ireland show that twice as many non-Irish as opposed to Irish nationals feel they have been discriminated against (Russell et al, 2008), while amongst the non-Irish nationals, black respondents are identified as the group who experience the most discrimination (McGinnity et al, 2006; Russell et al, 2008).

### **An overview of studies on Irish attitudes towards migrants**

In his studies of intergroup prejudice and tolerance, in Dublin in 1972-73 and nation-wide in 1988, Mac Gréil (1996) used a methodology entitled the 'social distance scale'. Mac Gréil carried out research before Ireland became a country of in-migration, but discovered the existence of a latent prejudice against those constructed as strangers or foreigners (1996: 78). He found evidence of a decrease in racial prejudice - where racial referred to physical appearance of colour, size, facial features - between the two surveys, but evidence of an increasing 'defensive ethnocentrism' (1996: 433). Reasons for refusing members of certain categories into 'kinship' were changed from 'racial' to 'ethnic' or 'nationality' (1996: 92). In spite of the decline in the intensity and degree of racialism that his study revealed, Mac Gréil noted the presence of 'a very significant level of prejudice based on physical appearance' (1996: 132), with the highest levels recorded amongst those in the lower levels of education, occupational status and social class. Garner (2004) identified some broad trends in the surveys and opinion polls, produced by a range of sources including the European Commission Eurobarometer, the Pilgrim House Foundation, *The Irish Times*, *The Sunday Independent*, *The Star* (Landsdowne Market Research, 2004), and Amnesty International *Irish section*, despite the significant methodological differences and irregularities between them. These include a hardening of attitudes towards migrants and members of ethnic minority groups (Garner, 2004: 66). Watson et al's analysis of data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) on national identity revealed a considerable increase in anti-immigrant attitudes in Ireland between the 1995 and 2003 surveys, which was universally evident (2007). Notwithstanding the shortcomings of public opinion polls, carried out over a brief time period, which are susceptible to influence by some sensationalised media event or public campaign (Mac Gréil, 1996: 60), the September 2006 *Sunday Tribune*/Millward Brown IMS poll (2006) revealed the persistence of an anti-immigration climate, with 80% of respondents (54% strongly and 26% slightly) agreeing with the proposal that the government should restrict the number of non-nationals coming into the country (Rafter, 2006).

While the results of a national opinion poll commissioned by the steering group of the National Action Plan Against Racism indicated a softening in attitudes towards migrants

and a decrease in racism in 2006, concern was raised over future levels of immigration (O'Brien, 2006). Mac Cormaic (2007) argued that while surveys of Irish public opinion suggest the existence of some mixed feelings on immigration, there is relatively little evidence of a significant negative attitude, although, he warned this could be destined to change. An opinion poll conducted in September 2008 found generally positive attitudes towards immigration. However, as regards future policy, 66% favoured a tighter immigration policy in light of the economic forecast (Amárach Research, 2008).

To date researchers in Ireland have focused primarily on ethnic minority communities, largely overlooking the majority ethnic group, namely the Irish – some exceptions are Feldman (2006) and Kelly (2005). As outlined in the previous paragraph, the majority of studies investigating the views of Irish people towards migrants are quantitative, a few exceptions being Keogh's (2000) qualitative study of attitudes of Irish school children to asylum seekers and Meade and O'Connell's (2008) examination of the attitudes of Irish teenagers towards immigrants and minorities. This current research project aimed to address the dearth of qualitative work on this topic, taking the views of both the majority and minority ethnic groups into consideration. An exploratory, small-scale, qualitative study of Irish people's views of migrants and their impact on the Blanchardstown area, Dublin 15 (Ní Chonaill, 2006) revealed the need for more in-depth research in this field. This more comprehensive study, funded by the Irish Research Council in Humanities and Social Science (IRCHSS), focuses on the same geographical area, namely Blanchardstown. The central research questions of the study can be summarised as follows:

- How are migrants viewed in the Blanchardstown area?
- How are migrants impacting the local area ?
- How do migrants contribute to redefining Irishness ?

The aim of this study was firstly to carry out an analysis of local residents' views of migrants in Blanchardstown. Since integration takes place at a local level of neighbourhoods, worksites and schools, in the second instance the study aimed to examine participants' views of the impact of migrants' presence on the local area. Identity is a pivotal concept in present-day debates on migration (Anthias, 2008). This is evident in the Irish case and is part of the focus of this research since the third aim of the



study was to explore the impact of migrants on redefining Irish identity. While immigration has become a national topic of discussion, Thompson et al maintain that ‘much of the construction of ideas of national identity takes place at local level’ (1999: 54). In her study of attitudes towards asylum seekers, Lewis (2005) stresses the strong influence of locality - an individual’s immediate environment - on attitudes, hence the focus of this research.

### **Why Blanchardstown ?**

The Blanchardstown area - situated 10km northwest of Dublin city centre - constitutes one of the fastest changing parts of the country from a demographic point of view. Until the late 1960s, Blanchardstown, similarly to Castleknock, was a rural village on the outskirts of Dublin, but during the 1990s, the area witnessed the economic development experienced country-wide. Like Ireland in general, Blanchardstown, to cite the title of O’Connell’s work, ‘changed utterly’ (2001). Participants themselves in this current study referred to the ‘*remarkable change*’ (P25, DR Congo) that the area has experienced as outlined elsewhere (MacPoilin and Sobolewski, 2001), the transformation from a ‘*small village*’ in the countryside to a sprawling urban area : ‘*you wouldn’t think to look at it now - where the Blanchardstown Town Centre is were fields, where the bypass is were fields*’ (P11, Irl.).

Defining what actually constitutes the Blanchardstown area has proved open to interpretation. For statistical purposes, eight Electoral Districts (EDs) bear the title Blanchardstown, namely Abbotstown, Blakestown, Coolmine, Corduff, Delwood, Mulhuddart, Roselawn and Tyrrelstown. These constituted the catchment area of the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP)<sup>5</sup> until January 2008 when the organisation agreed to extend their boundaries to provide services to the whole of the Dublin 15 area (adding four other EDs – Castleknock-Knockmaroon, Castleknock–Park, the Ward and Lucan North). In the 2006 census Blanchardstown is recorded as the fastest growing area

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<sup>5</sup> BAP is the local development agency of Dublin 15, established in 1995 to address issues of disadvantage. BAP has a specific social inclusion focus. In more recent years BAP has launched initiatives targeting the immigrant community, such as the Meitheal project. The Meitheal Project ran from April 2006 to December 2007 was principally funded by the European Refugee Fund with the Blanchardstown Area Partnership (lead agency), Fingal County Council, IBM and Co. Dublin VEC contributing match funding. The aim of the project was ‘to facilitate the integration into Irish civil and cultural life of persons from new communities whose stay in Dublin 15 is of a lasting and stable nature’ (Murphy, 2007: i).

in the country as regards ED boundaries with its population reaching 63,120 persons - an increase of 63.47% in 10 years (Ryan, 2008: 9). The Blakestown ED, which recorded the largest population increase in the country in the 2006 census (a growth of 32% - from 24,404 to 32,288), now has a population in excess of that of the county of Leitrim (Bookle, 2007: 9). This and the seven other EDs have experienced changes as regards socio-economic composition and demographics, particularly in the last number of years.

Participants described the huge growth experienced in this outer Dublin suburb: *'It's a community that is growing very fast and I wanted to be part of that growth'* (P3, Nigeria); *'Blanchardstown isn't what it used to be. There is so much more to it now'* (P6, Irl.). Historically the centre of Blanchardstown was the Main Street in the heart of the village but the area has expanded out into townlands such as Parslickstown, Porters Gate, Castaheany, Littlepace, Ongar and Waterville (Ryan, 2008: 9). The mix of housing estates, both private and local authority, the large land banks available for construction, the changes in housing density made by Fingal County Council, and the property boom in general were major contributing factors in attracting both internal and external migrants into the area. Local Labour TD Joan Burton (2008) comments on the changing demographics,

*probably because of all the change it has gone through even the Irish community in Blanchardstown tends to be at the most ... first generation into Blanchardstown, the core of the people from the Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Dublin 7 area ... they are probably 20% of the population that are from that original core group. The rest are really newcomers from the rest of Ireland and newcomers from abroad.*

An African participant corroborates this view when describing his reason for moving to the area:

*it was new, it was developing rapidly, different cultures, different people living moving into the area ... everybody coming into Blanchardstown then were new and they would have grown up in the north side or the south side and because they needed somewhere of their own to buy they moved in. So everybody, irrespective of where they were from, was new in the area* (P66, Nigeria).

The problematic nature of defining this rapidly changing area was raised by participants during the research, influenced particularly by outsiders' perceptions of

Blanchardstown, especially as portrayed in the media. One Irish participant explains why she rejects placing a label on a very diverse area :

*You know traditionally Blanchardstown meant Main Street and the few roads off that and since that was the furthest out place Blanchardstown, Clonsilla village and from that we have areas Corduff, Hartstown stretching to Clonee with no breaks now with the housing. If there is any trouble in that whole area on the news you will hear there was a shooting, a stabbing in the Blanchardstown area. It's putting a label on a really huge area and sometimes I find that a bit inaccurate on reports when they say there was a shooting in Blanchardstown when really for me it was somewhere else (P21, Irl.).*

A participant who moved internally within the area echoes this by professing *'it is very difficult for you to differentiate Blanchardstown from Clonsilla, from you know say Huntstown from Castleknock because of the closeness ... you don't know where one starts and the other stops'* (P3, Nigeria). Despite one Irish participant likening Blanchardstown to one big housing estate (P12, Irl.), hence the confusion regarding boundaries, more long-term residents identified with belonging to a local area, but part of the bigger whole: *'I class myself from Corduff, Blanchardstown'* (P37, Irl.). The non-Irish participants on the whole identified with the wider term Blanchardstown, mentioning the Blanchardstown Town Centre, opened in 1996, and BAP. All means used to recruit participants, as outlined below, asked if people lived in the Blanchardstown area, thus participants identified themselves as doing so. For the purposes of this study, my definition, in keeping with that of the vast majority of participants, corresponds to the eight EDs bearing the name Blanchardstown<sup>6</sup>. However, to avoid confusion in the course of this work, I remain faithful to the terms employed by participants, even where Dublin 15 and Blanchardstown are used interchangeably.

One of the characteristics of Blanchardstown as an area is that it has been a particularly high recipient of migrants, given that almost 22% of its population are non-Irish nationals (Ryan 2008: 7), which is double the national average (CSO, 2007b). In his analysis of the census data, Ryan (2008: 7) notes that 65% of the increase of the area's population between 2002 and 2006 is due to residents who recorded a nationality other than Irish.

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<sup>6</sup> A small number of participants (2) reside in Tyrrelstown, which is actually not located in the Tyrrelstown ED but in the Ward, which was included in BAP's catchment area on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. How individuals identify with their local area and where they see themselves as residing does not always tie in with ED demarcations.

Participants, both Irish and migrant, spoke of the fact that *'lots of foreigners are in Blanchardstown'* (P5, Zimbabwe), or according to the sister of another participant, *'there are more foreign people here and blacks here in Blanchardstown than in Birmingham'* (P18, Irl.), reflecting these statistics. Both EU and non-EU workers were attracted to the area by the development of high-technology industry, in particular, the establishment of international companies such as IBM and E-Bay, specifically those with customer services divisions (Williams and Shiels, 2004: 42). These however are not the sole migrants residing in Blanchardstown. Kelly, in his reading of Dublin's spatial narrative, identified large clusters of children of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors in Blanchardstown (2005 : 214). In the early 1990s, a significant number of Bosnian programme refugees were settled in the area and subsequently many of them chose to stay. According to the 2006 census, Nigerians (1,822) comprise the largest group of non-Irish nationals in Blanchardstown, followed closely by Polish (1,261), Lithuanian (1045) and British (954) (Ryan, 2008: 25).

The migrant population is not equally dispersed throughout the area with Roselawn, an affluent area, recording the lowest percentage at just below 10%, while Mulhuddart and Abbotstown, with 33% and 36% respectively, registering the highest percentages. The highest numbers of foreign nationals are to be found in Blakestown which counts 2496 Black or Black Irish and 1157 Asian or Asian Irish amongst its residents (Ryan, 2008: 27). This information came from the question on ethnicity included in the 2006 census, supposedly not a 'race' question, as it asked respondents about their ethnic or cultural background. The four categories were White, Black or Black Irish, Asian or Asian Irish and Other including mixed background. However, the options listed underneath do include colour and meta-racial designators (King-O'Riain, 2006: 282). Hence there is a confusion of meta-racial categories such as black and white with Irish (nationality/ethnicity) and additional ethnic classifiers underneath.

Although Blanchardstown experienced the impact of the Celtic Tiger, witnessing an increase in employment and commercial development, some *'significant areas of continuing economic disadvantage'* (Burton, 2008) still persist. As one service provider outlined, despite *'being hit by the tail of the Tiger, some areas haven't seen as much'* (P70, Irl.). Internal divergences are evident regarding employment, despite the increase in

the local workforce witnessed by the area as a whole, with inequality and disadvantage characterising certain pockets of the Blanchardstown area. Tyrrelstown's double digit unemployment rate at 25.89%, Mulhuddart's and Coolmine's at almost 17% are significantly in excess of the area average of 11.13% (Ryan 2008: 24) and indeed the national average of 8.5% (CSO 2007a). Hence internal diversity reigns within the area from a socio-economic, but also from a demographic point of view.

### **Outline of the study**

The following chapter will outline the methodology used for this research, as well as the theoretical approach adopted and the subsequent theoretical framework employed. The main ideas that emerged from the data have been grouped under three broad thematic headings and constitute the topic of investigation of the following three chapters. Chapter 3 will focus primarily on the economic dimension, while taking the political perspective into account. The focus will shift in chapters 4 and 5 to the cultural realm where issues regarding identity will be examined. In chapter 4 language, cultural differences and differential treatment regarding resources will be analysed, while colour as a marker of difference will be the central concern of chapter 5. Finally, in chapter 6 conclusions will be drawn, based on the analysis of the data in light of the theoretical concepts gathered, and some recommendations made.

## **Chapter 2 : Methodology and Data Collection**

### **Methodology**

As was alluded to in the previous chapter, this research contributes to addressing the paucity of qualitative work investigating the views of Irish people towards migrants, taking both the majority and minority views into consideration. The aim of this research was to go beyond the survey as a quantitative objective method and examine a different dimension of the problem (Clarke, 2001: 34). A qualitative approach was thus employed, as the ‘micro’-level perspective of those being studied was of interest. Focus groups were used as a method, given their usefulness for eliciting a wide variety of different views and perspectives, and were combined with in-depth interviews. Triangulation allows two different methods to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and enrich knowledge as the interviews provided more detailed, richer data regarding any given participant.

### **Data collection**

As regards the groups, living in the Blanchardstown area was the common characteristic shared by all the groups while the ‘break characteristic’, namely that which differentiated one group from another was ethnic/national origin. Recruitment commenced within the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB), where an e-mail was circulated, outlining the topic of the research and the fact that both Irish and migrant participants were being sought. As alluded to in the previous chapter, the definition of Irish that was used was people who have Irish nationality or define themselves as Irish, while migrants are those who do not have Irish nationality or who do not define themselves as Irish. Volunteers subsequently identified themselves as ‘Irish’ as opposed to ‘migrant’. Adopting a ‘purposive’ or ‘theoretical’ sampling strategy (Morgan, 1997: 35), further groups were recruited as a result of liaising with local agencies and service providers<sup>7</sup>. The number of

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<sup>7</sup> Staff of Corduff and Blakestown Community Development Projects and of the ESOL section of the Blanchardstown Adult Education Service facilitated the recruitment of participants. Other local agencies and service providers interviewed as part of this study included the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Blanchardstown Youth Service, the Blanchardstown library, the sergeant in Blanchardstown Garda Station, local TDs, English language support teachers and Home School Liaison officers in the local schools,

groups run in total was seven (including a pilot group), involving 40 participants. The fact that Irish people were recruited more easily in natural groups than migrants in the area resulted in the number of Irish participants exceeding that of the migrants in the study. As regards gender, since three of the groups, a women's group, a mother and toddlers group and a plus 55 group were composed exclusively of females, more females than males participated in the research. However, given the qualitative nature of the study, the emphasis was placed on a contextual understanding of participants' views rather than the external validity of the research findings, namely the degree to which findings can be generalised across social settings (Bryman, 2004: 281).

### **Issues surrounding terminology**

Focus groups and interviews were both loosely semi-structured to ensure participants had an opportunity to elaborate on certain issues. While ethnic and racial categories need to be defined in order to do research, categories such as 'Irish' or 'migrant' are socially constructed. Thus, by naming them we risk reproducing them as essentialised categories that can reconstitute power relations (Gunaratnam, 2003). Conscious of the 'treacherous bind' (Radhakrishnan, 1996) of categories, the intention is to use them, as Hall (1996, 2000) suggests, 'under erasure' by deconstructing these catch-all terms which encompass internal diversity in the analysis. While choosing the term 'migrant', which includes a diverse range of migratory types to launch the discussion, in keeping with a qualitative approach, I commenced with two broad open-ended individual questions to seek what the term 'migrant' and 'Irish' signifies for all participants. By far the most popular term used across the board was *'foreigners'*, followed closely by *'immigrants'*. To avoid confusion in the course of this work, the terms employed by participants will be adhered to, but where clarification is necessary, the term 'migrant' will be used. One participant highlighted the catch-all nature of the term 'migrant' describing it as *'a common term for many things in one'* (P2, Poland). However, the non-Irish participants did not view the term negatively: *'it's like a definition, it's not derogatory'* (P3, Nigeria). Unlike those from the accession countries, neither a Spanish nor an Italian participant defined

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representatives from various religious denominations, the Dublin 15 Muslim Women's group and employees from the James Connolly Memorial hospital and from various sections of Fingal County Council.

themselves as migrants. The contentious nature of language is a theme to which we will return later in the study.

The two broad questions were followed with four more focused, but open-ended, questions, encouraging participants to talk about actual life experiences involving migrants, or as a migrant, in four main areas - the workplace, school, health and socially. Probes were used where necessary to encourage richer and more complete responses<sup>8</sup>. The discussion was led by participants, rather than a strict adherence to the order of the schedule of topics prepared. Having run the first group as a pilot, the wording of a question regarding identity, that required clarification, was subsequently modified. The advantage of focus group research is that participants raise issues related to the topic previously not considered: for example, the changing definition of the Blanchardstown area was raised in the case of the first group and could then be discussed in subsequent groups.

A small number of focus group participants was subsequently interviewed but a far greater number was recruited in response to an advertisement placed in a local weekly newspaper, *The Community Voice* and flyers distributed throughout the area. Interestingly, only migrant participants responded to the advertisement and 50% more were interviewed individually given the difficulties encountered in getting a group together due to constraints such as varying work schedules and home commitments. Purposive sampling was combined with snowballing (Arber, 2001: 63) in an attempt to recruit as diverse a range of people as possible from different parts of the Blanchardstown area and originating from the four corners of the globe. Five interviews were conducted through French, at the participants' request, to facilitate communication of their views. In addition to the interviews, local service providers, agencies, key informants in religious and educational organisations, politicians, the Gardaí, youth groups, local community development project managers, employees in James Connolly Memorial Hospital and the Blanchardstown Area Partnership and the local manager in the Citizens Information Centre were also interviewed in order to inform the research and gain a better understanding of what was happening on the ground. They provided information on how migrants were interacting with local services and they also created contacts with gate

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<sup>8</sup>The probes used were titles of newspaper articles relating to the question.



keepers which proved very helpful when recruiting groups. The number of participants for the interviews, including the background interviews, totalled 60 in all.

### **Ethical Issues**

The purpose and nature of the research was clearly explained to all participants before their involvement and the fact that their participation was voluntary. Once the steps taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity were described to participants, informed consent was sought from participants in writing. The ethical issues considered were in keeping with the feedback given by the ITB Ethics committee. In two cases referrals were necessary for participants who required more specialist knowledge or support as a result of issues raised during interviews. These participants were then put in contact with individuals within relevant agencies. Besides the interviews conducted in French, all participants had a sufficient mastery of English to express their views<sup>9</sup>.

### **Transcription**

Groups and interviews ran for one hour on average. All were recorded with the participants' permission (except one<sup>10</sup>), and were transcribed. Gray (2004: 14) raises the problem of representing oral speech. In keeping with this approach, hesitations such as 'ehms' were excluded and punctuation included where necessary in order to enhance the readability of the text, without hindering, to the best of my knowledge, the sense of what was being said. In a bid to ensure confidentiality, a numerical code was assigned to each participant, for example participant 1 = P1. The country of origin features after this code following the quotations cited throughout the study<sup>11</sup>.

### **Analysis and theoretical framework**

A flexible model was employed as an analytic approach, informed by grounded theory, namely 'theory that was derived from the data, was systematically gathered and analysed through the research process' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 12). Systematic coding via

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<sup>9</sup> Having reflected on Marshall and Rossman's (2006) comments on transcribing and translation, it was decided to leave all of the quotes, translated from the original French by the researcher, in English in the report to facilitate the reader.

<sup>10</sup> The participants expressed a preference not to be recorded so detailed notes were taken.

<sup>11</sup> Irl. is used as an abbreviation for Ireland

content analysis was used, so that all the the data was coded using criteria to bring together extracts that were relevant to particular themes. The codes were inputted on the data using the qualitative analysis software package ATLAS.ti, which sped up the process of sorting and searching through large volumes of qualitative data (Silverman, 2005). Using the package, codes were grouped together, and these were then compared, contrasted and analysed in the context of the theories that emerged.

Migration cannot be comprehended exclusively on the basis of economic criteria (Castles and Miller, 2003: 92). While greater economic hardship is commonly regarded as conducive to out-group hostility towards immigrants and foreigners, O'Connell's (2005) results suggest that the influence of economic factors is complicated and not unproblematic. He found that as economic deprivation decreased, non-economic factors come into play, influencing people's attitudes towards out-groups (2005: 79). O'Rourke and Sinnott's study (2004), which found that nationalist sentiment was an extremely strong determinant of individual attitudes towards immigrants, also highlights the insufficiency of the purely economic argument. While early conflict theories espoused a Marxist view, regarding the economic system as the determining factor in racism, later neo-Marxist theorists, such as Paul Gilroy and John Solomos, broadened the restricted view beyond economic forces, envisaging racism as a complex multifaceted phenomenon (Giddens, 2001: 255-6). Economic processes are also simultaneously political and cultural, with power relations impacting all three spheres.

In light of what emerged from the data, a synthesis of two approaches is proposed for the theoretical framework of this study: the 'differentialist' - 'seeking to make specific and perceived cultural differences the focus of study' and the 'materialist' - 'seeking to locate social identities within the framework of long-term, wide-scale change in the economic and political realms' (Garner, 2004: 225). This is akin to what Loyal and Allen (2006: 215) call a 'cultural materialist framework'. Hall has observed that 'the question is not whether men-in-general make perceptual distinctions between groups with different racial or ethnic characteristics, but rather, what are the specific conditions which make this form of distinction socially pertinent, historically active' (1980: 338). Mirroring Hall's view, the historical, economic and social conditions are taken into account, and merged with a consideration of the cultural sphere, questions of identity and the Other.

The political perspective, that is the role of the state, is an important dimension. This is particularly so in the context of the Irish state's struggle to restructure itself in the face of increased cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (King-O'Riain, 2006).

### **Feedback sessions**

Feedback sessions were offered to participants in December 2008 in which a summary of their views were presented in order to offer 'respondent validation' (Bryman, 2004: 274) but also to go some way towards developing what Byrne (2000: 147) terms a 'relational' research design. These sessions provided further insight into the findings, and participants also made some recommendations based on these which will be highlighted in chapter 6.

## Chapter 3: Economic Issues

### Summary

This chapter focuses on the findings that emerged from the data regarding economics and resources. Both Irish and migrant participants identified economics as the main driving force attracting migrants to the area. Migrant workers were not perceived as taking Irish jobs, rather occupying lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs the Irish do not want. The data was collected between March and July 2008, before the country technically entered recession, although, as is argued, the boom period was marked by inequality and polarisation. Migrant participants traced changes in attitudes towards themselves in wider Irish society, attributable partly to the changing economics. Migrants, who do not work, irrespective of the reason, were far less accepted in Irish society. In keeping with standard economic theory, only those in competition for an insufficient supply of local authority houses and for welfare payments perceived migrants as a threat. The government, as opposed to migrants, was viewed as the root cause of the problem. Misinformation regarding entitlements and benefits was evident amongst both migrant and Irish participants. Among Irish participants, issues regarding schooling crossed all social classes where migrants were seen as contributing to the shortage of school places, as well as draining resources. The high proportion of newcomer children in schools in the Blanchardstown area was highlighted, in addition to the delay experienced between the rapid construction of houses in the area and the provision of services such as schools. The ‘migrant’ can serve as a useful scapegoat for politicians since the government’s failure to provide adequate school places and social housing explains the frustration regarding the shortage of resources.

### Factors instigating migration

Despite the varying factors that instigate migration, as outlined in chapter 1, over the course of the last decade, economic necessity has been the main driving force behind Irish migration policy (Hughes et al, 2007: 224). Given the need for labour in certain sectors to sustain the rapid economic growth experienced during the 1990s, the Irish government pursued an active policy of encouraging migrant workers to locate to Ireland. However, Lentin, amongst others, has argued that economic migrants have been viewed as ‘economic commodities’ (2004: 4). While migration is often debated in purely economic terms, it cannot be restricted merely to labourers and workers. This chapter will focus on the perception of migrants in Blanchardstown from the economic perspective,

drawing on data from the focus groups and interviews. First, the changes in immigration patterns into Ireland will be traced, which are linked to access to the labour market. Resources were one of the key ways in which participants saw migrants impacting on the Blanchardstown area. These will then be discussed in relation to four main areas that were identified from the data, namely employment, welfare, housing and schools. Finally, the role that the state plays in the process will be acknowledged throughout the analysis.

Immigration patterns into Ireland have altered in recent years. As was outlined in chapter 1, while the number of returning Irish peaked in the 1990s, the number of non-Irish nationals subsequently increased. A two-tier system is in place: as a member of the EU, Ireland differentiates between workers from outside the EEA (European Economic Area)<sup>12</sup> and those within. The two main ways through which non-EEA workers gain temporary permission to work are through work permits and the green card scheme. The number of work permits issued to non-EEA migrants soared by more than 700%, from 5,750 in 1999 to 47,707 in 2003 (Ruhs, 2005: 15). Since 2004 when the government offered the citizens of the ten new accession countries (EU 10) free access to the labour market, Irish labour migration policy subsequently aimed to recruit low-skilled labour from within the enlarged EU (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008:5). This policy has impacted on the composition of migration flows and the bulk of migrants currently come from within the EU (Hughes et al, 2007: 220). In fact Ireland has a larger proportion of migrants from the EU10 than any other member state (Mac Cormaic, 2008b). While pursuing a liberal policy towards accession-state nationals, who were then expected to meet labour shortages, the government adopted a more interventionist approach with the introduction of the Employment Permits Act 2003, in order to restrict the access granted to non-EU workers, particularly to fill low-skilled jobs. The Employment Permits Act 2006 – since it came into force on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 - further limits access by imposing a minimum salary requirement and listing certain occupations as ineligible. There is also a move towards recruiting higher skilled migrants. This is now done through the green card system, which replaced the work visa or authorisation scheme, for deploying highly skilled workers in certain sectors facing a labour deficit.

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<sup>12</sup>The EEA includes the 25 states of the EU, plus the members of the European Free Trade Association, namely Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein.

The economic ‘pull’ factor was the most commonly cited factor in participants’ definitions of what ‘migrant’ signified for them: a good number of Irish participants, explicitly defined a migrant *‘specifically as a worker’* (P41, Irl.), *‘somebody who goes to another country to work and make a better living’* (P9, Irl.). Migrants themselves echoed this, defining the term as *‘when you are working’* (P57, Lithuania) and cited the booming economy and the availability of jobs in Blanchardstown as motivating factors: *‘probably a few came over and then they spread the word, oh there’s loads of jobs here and ... that’s how people got to know Ireland so they started to flock’* (P15, Romania). The fact that Ireland is able to provide a better life was also underlined: *‘you have to make some choices in life. I wouldn’t want to be there and have €100 a month to being here and basically being able to look after my family you know’* (P15, Romania). This concurred with the Irish viewpoint, *‘they make more money here than they would at home’* (P31, Irl.); *‘they come here to get a better life’* (P21, Irl.). Two participants who had refugee status also spoke of coming to Ireland *‘to get a better life’*, with *‘war’* or *‘the political stage in the country’* (P27, Bosnia) identified as the ‘push’ factors out of their country of origin. However, the findings were in keeping with Feldman et al who maintain that economic reasons, although not the sole reason, are the factor motivating the majority of migrants who come to Ireland (2008: 11).

Numerous organisations have been critical of the two-tiered nature of the legislation regarding employment permits, referred to above, particularly regarding family reunification (MRCI, 2006) and residency. While ‘green card holders’ can bring their spouses and families to join them in Ireland immediately, the same is not the case for ‘work permit holders’ who must be legally in the state for one year and with an income above a certain threshold before family reunification is accorded. Green card holders can apply for permanent residency after two years while work permit holders have to wait five years before they are eligible to apply. Furthermore, by granting temporary permission to work to non-EU workers, particularly prior to 2004, the Irish government expected them to return to their countries of origin once they were no longer required. This approach precludes the permanency of immigration. It mirrors the policies of the highly industrialised countries of Western Europe who sought labour temporarily between 1945 and 1973 (Castles and Miller, 2003). Indeed parallels have been drawn

between the Irish immigration policies and the German post-war regime with its ‘guest worker system’ where immigrants were viewed as an economic necessity, but the intention was to dissuade long-term integration (Kuhling and Keohane, 2007: 55).

However, since the accession states, like other EU members (except Bulgaria and Romania who joined in 2007 but face labour market restrictions in all western EU states except for Finland and Sweden) can freely move, work and reside here, the transient nature has given over to more permanency. While one or two defined their stay in Ireland as of a more temporary nature, *‘I don’t know. I stay a few years. My husband want to go home but in Romania is very bad with the jobs, money’* (P58, Romania), the majority of migrant participants who were interviewed planned to remain in Ireland in the foreseeable future at any rate, while those with Irish partners and children or here for a more prolonged period of time took a longer term view. As was emphasised in chapter 1, it is no longer possible to regard immigration in the Irish context as a short-term or transient phenomenon, rather it is a permanent feature of society. Unlike the 2006 study where participants emphasised the temporary nature of immigrants’ stay, the assumption that ‘they’ would return ‘home’ (Ní Chonaill, 2006), this study shows more of an acceptance of migrants in Irish society, specifically in the Blanchardstown area. The one factor perceived by one focus group as a ‘push’ factor out of Ireland was the current economic situation and the downturn which will be dealt with later: *‘personally it looks as if things are not very good and most of them are going to go home which is not going to be very good for us either’* (P50, Irl.). However, according to the NCCRI, ‘there is no evidence that there will be a large scale exodus of migrants from Ireland, with the possible exception of those in the construction industry unable to source alternative employment’ (2008b: 39).

### **Booming economy or booming inequality**

The economic argument has frequently been advanced as a contributory factor in hostility towards foreigners and immigrants, although not the sole factor (O’Connell, 2005). According to the frequently advanced argument, the connection between economic conditions and prejudice towards migrants is a consequence of ‘either blaming the

subordinate group for economic hardship (scapegoating) or [of] competition with the subordinate group for scarce resources' (Quillian, 1995: 590). Quillian (1995) and Scheepers et al (2002) contextualise their theorisation of competition for scarce resources in economic recession. Garner, however, analyses Irish racism in the twentieth-first century as increasing in a period of economic boom as opposed to economic downturn (2004: 33). He advances the possibility that rapid 'social change per se', as opposed to a 'boom or bust' situation, arouses feelings of insecurity that are expressed as racist (2004: 33). I want to argue that a boom, characterised by inequality and polarisation, marked the backdrop for the development of a racist agenda in Ireland. Some analyses such as Mac Sharry and White's (2000) cite the economic success story - Ireland as a 'role model' of successful adaptation to globalisation. Unlike others (e.g., Allen, 2000, Kirby, 2002, Keohane and Kuhling, 2007), they neglect to scrape at the surface to reveal the uneven impact of the development concealed by the label 'boom'. Fahey et al (2007) present more positive findings regarding the social effects of the Celtic Tiger. However, Whelan and Layte, in that same volume, argue that although overall inequality does not appear to have increased during the boom, existing large inequalities in Irish society have persisted, not lessened (2007: 69). Moreover, some income gaps did in fact widen during the period of economic prosperity, particularly between older people and people of working age, but also between the top and the bottom of income distribution. 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland 'diverged from the European pattern of increased welfare effort', as the ratio of social spending to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decreased significantly, in contrast to most European countries where it was kept steady or increased (Ó Riain and O'Connell, 2000: 331). The dramatic redistribution of resources during the 1990s from the poor to the rich through tax cuts significantly lessened the money available for social spending (Allen, 1999: 106). Thus, given the neo-liberal economic policies actively pursued in Ireland, O'Toole, amongst others, argues that throughout the boom years 'inequality has been maintained at relatively high levels' (2008). One focus group in particular referred to the uneven impact of the boom: *'none of us prospered in the Celtic Tiger. It was only the fat cats, the ones in the big companies that made the money and people that had three and four houses, they sold them before the recession hit'* (P53, Irl.), *'I don't think anyone on our level really came into the Celtic Tiger'* (P56, Irl.).



### **Changing economic circumstances**

Ireland's economic situation, while still favourable at the start of this study, subsequently started to decline. Groups and individuals that were interviewed later in the project reflected the changing position *'I think the economy is not doing as well as it was ten years ago, the economy is going down'* (P24, DR Congo), *'it's been bandied about a couple of times this recession, if it comes about the Irish will have a recession'* (P54, Irl.). A Nigerian participant spoke of the *'uncertainty that surrounds the work environment', 'ten years ago, eight years ago when the jobs are there for anybody to pick up but lately you see it is becoming a problem because the economy itself is not doing very well'* (P3, Nigeria). In its Quarterly Economic Commentary published on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2008, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) forecast that the economy would contract in size by 0.4% in 2008. They predicted a recession for the first time since 1983, a re-emergence of net emigration in 2009 and a rise in the number unemployed of 60,000 (60%) between 2007 and 2009 (Tansey, 2008). While the media continued to speak of the 'emerging', 'looming', 'threat of a recession' during the summer months of 2008, on September 25<sup>th</sup> data published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed the second successive quarter of contraction, thus Ireland technically entered a recession (Labanyi and O'Halloran, 2008).

The role of the state needs to be taken into consideration as through the implementation of budgetary policy and the management of the welfare state, the government influences income distribution. The welfare state has a pivotal role to play in the smooth running of a modern economy (Nolan and Maître, 2007: 38). As has been alluded to, budgetary policy during the 'Celtic Tiger' favoured the higher income groups, while those in the lower income groups lost out (O'Hearn, 2003: 35). An increase in the number of people competing for a dwindling number of scarce resources, must thus be considered in the Irish example. The blanket term 'resources' will be unpacked in order to see the particular resources for which the different groups of Irish people perceive themselves to be competing against migrants.

### **Employment: types of jobs occupied by migrants**

In response to the open-ended questions asked, as outlined in chapter 2, participants' discussion of their personal experiences of migrants in Blanchardstown focused primarily on the workplace, housing and school. Turning to employment, as underlined earlier, participants – both Irish and non-Irish - discerned economics as a driving factor in inward migration, although it is not the only factor. They also named the types of jobs that migrant workers occupy, *'in the construction industry or driving trucks, a lot of the women seem to end up working in the likes of Dunnes or for cleaning companies'* (P8, Irl.). The jobs the migrants fill were juxtaposed to those occupied by the Irish: *'you don't see Irish people working in petrol stations, McDonalds, Burger King, KFC'* (P3, Nigeria). In keeping with O'Connell and McGinnity's (2008: 14) analysis of sectors of employment where migrants are most heavily represented, namely hotels and restaurants, Irish participants identified the significant number of *'foreign'* workers in this industry. One Irish participant, speaking of her own experience, underlined this: *'we are a minority in our restaurant, completely and utterly a minority. There is about four of us left out of 400 workers'* (P54, Irl.). The types of jobs listed corroborate the findings of labour market studies (Barret and Duffy, 2007) that 'non-Irish nationals are more likely to be found in personal and protective services, craft and related occupations, sales and 'other' unspecified occupations' (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008; 28). These professions are not necessarily reflective of those of the migrant participants interviewed for the study: they came from a wide range of professions, from cleaners, and sales assistants, to health care workers, IT consultants and students.

The ambiguous effect of the boom can be seen in the types of work created. Loyal speaks of an occupation polarisation in Ireland's Celtic Tiger which 'juxtaposes secure, permanent, high-skilled and well paid jobs, on the one hand, with unskilled, low-paid, insecure jobs, on the other' (2003: 81). O'Connell and McGinnity illustrate the occupational penalty that non-Irish nationals suffer in the labour market since they are less likely than their Irish counterparts to secure the more privileged jobs in the occupational structures (2008: 29). Barrett and Duffy (2007) illustrate similar 'occupational gaps' which are highest for migrants from the new EU member states. Participants, both Irish and non-Irish echoed this, noting the fact that *'the majority of*

*migrants here are doing unskilled jobs, you know restaurants, shop work*' (P19, Irl.), *'they slotted into a lot of lower paid jobs and qualified jobs too, I don't mean to say that all migrants are doing lower paid jobs but I think a lot of people do come and take the lower paid job*' (P21, Irl.). One migrant participant, an entrepreneur, commented on the staff he recruits for *'more manual jobs, cleaning, working on the till*' adding *'that you would have a greater number of migrants in these jobs*' (P66, Nigeria). The qualifications of certain migrant participants, when compared with their current professional occupation, support the immigrant over-qualification pattern (Barrett et al, 2006). Migrant participants also perceived labour market segmentation patterns around them, even if they themselves were not directly implicated.

### **There are jobs**

Despite the economic downturn, predicted rather than a reality when the data was collected, participants still felt *'at the moment in Ireland if you want to work there is work for everybody*' (P22, Irl.), *'if you go to the internet site where there are job offers, there are a lot of them*' (P25, DR Congo). Jobs are available: *'even now, despite the fact that the economy is not doing very well there are still jobs to be taken. It depends on what you want*' (P3, Nigerian), albeit particular types of jobs. Unlike the previous study I conducted (Ní Chonail, 2006), jobs were not seen as a scarce resource in this study. Employment in Blanchardstown grew appreciably between 2002 and 2006 from 69.1% to 74.5% (Ryan, 2008: 20), which is far greater than the national average of 62.5% (CSO, 2007c). However, these figures mask internal divergences. Tyrrelstown recorded the lowest rate with 59.18%, in contrast to Blakestown (77.41%), which was not only the highest in Blanchardstown but indeed nationwide (Ryan, 2008: 20) According to figures from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (2009b), there was an increase of 7.4% between the figures for Dublin 15 on the live register between the third week of January 2007 and 2008, but an increase of 85% for the same time period between 2008 and 2009. Furthermore, when these statistics are broken down, the proportion of Irish to non-Irish nationals on the live register in the Dublin 15 area is 62% to 38%.

### **No displacement of Irish workers**

Despite the fact that migrant workers were employed to sustain the Celtic Tiger as referred to above, as Kuhling and Keohane observe, ‘the public discourse around migrant workers often expresses concern that they are “stealing our jobs”’ (2007: 56). Although the economic situation in Ireland deteriorated during the summer of 2008 and the unemployment figures have risen sharply since, participants unanimously disagreed with the comment that migrant workers are taking Irish peoples’ jobs across all groups: *‘I think that Irish people who aren’t working just don’t want to work or I think that’s just a lazy man’s excuse you know that they are taking our jobs’* (P54, Irl.). Another participant supported this: *‘I don’t think they are taking jobs. I think Irish people don’t want to do those jobs’* (P9, Irl.). The jobs going *‘at the bottom rung’*, perceived as *‘the jobs that the Irish people don’t want because they don’t pay sufficiently’* (P8, Irl.), are occupied mainly by migrants. Irish people commented on the change in Irish attitudes towards jobs during the boom period, *‘I think like with the Celtic Tiger a kind of snobbery has crept in about certain jobs and I’d say especially cleaning jobs’* (P11, Irl.); *‘I think the Irish people are willing to let their jobs slip because they think it’s below them, like for example in fast food restaurants. They would prefer to go on the dole rather than to earn their money in places like that’* (P28, Irl.). Migrants themselves also alluded to the same change in attitude, *‘it’s got to a point now where most of the Irish would prefer to work in a structural place like in insurance offices more like the office job ... the lowest jobs are being taken by immigrants’* (P66, Nigeria) while *‘the indigenous Irish are moving up the ladder’* (P66, Nigeria). This supports what McCormick acknowledges as a ‘replacement’ as opposed to a ‘displacement’ effect, where in the case of the hospitality sector, he argues that Irish people are less inclined to work due to ‘relatively low wages and irregular hours’ (2008: 8). These opinions also reflect Kuhling and Keohane’s view that ‘Ireland has demonstrated an opportunistic approach to immigrants, and has imported economic migrants to fill low-paid, low-status positions that Irish people no longer want, adopting a ‘guest-worker’ approach’ (2007: 55).

### **Displacement amongst migrant workers**

While there was no support for the view that Irish workers were being displaced, a number of migrant participants raised the issue of displacement occurring amongst migrants workers. One participant related how having secured a six month contract with a cleaning company he was let go after six weeks with no warning, he was told there was no more work – *'he let me go to take on Polish people'* (P60, Mauritius). Another participant spoke of her personal experience in a supermarket in Ongar where she signed a nine month contract and having been told that they would renew the contract, *'us black people, five of us [were] let go ... I think they were racist. Our contract finish. Romanian and Polish people started after us, they renewed their contract ... Right now even if I apply for a job they only take Polish and not us black'* (P20, Cameroon). The ESRI findings show that black respondents are most likely to report experiencing discrimination when looking for work and black immigrants are nine times more likely than Irish nationals to be unemployed (O'Connell and McGinity, 2008: 27). Another black participant, currently unemployed, reaffirmed this difficulty of finding work (P24, DR Congo). This issue of some migrants bearing the brunt of the impact of the government policy regarding the accession states in 2004, as alluded to earlier, was also raised by another participant who spoke, not only of Irish people, but of refugees complaining that in supermarkets and in all other domains, they no longer have access to the market as Polish came to *'flood the Irish market'* (P25, DR Congo).

### **Motivation on the part of migrants**

Unlike the Irish who are perceived by some to have become *'picky'* during the boom and subsequently unwilling to occupy certain jobs, immigrants, on the other hand, who *'will take whatever job they can get'* (P28, Irl.), have no such inhibitions, *'they would do anything'* (P3, Nigeria), they are *'chuffed basically for getting the job'* (P15, Romania). This gives rise to the immigrant over-qualification pattern, as alluded to previously: *'quite often you would find some of them are doctors or whatever in their own country, they are highly qualified but you find they are cleaning'* (P8, Irl.).

While there was praise for migrant workers even if they are employed at a level below their training, it did not apply across the board. As regards their work ethic, the Polish

were singled out on a number of occasions *'their work ethic is recognised'* (P21, Irl.), *'I believe that they are very hard workers and maybe more so than ourselves'* (P13, Irl.), *'we all think that the Polish are great workers'* (P6, Irl.). This can be compared with perceptions of other groups: *'I don't think that's the same for some of the African nations, I don't think they would be recognised for their work'* (P21, Irl.), an issue which will be further developed in chapter 5. In fact, on occasion migrants' willingness to work harder and longer hours – they work *'seven nights a week'* (P17, Irish), *'all through the night'* (P38, Irl.), originating, according to migrants themselves, out of a need to save money or *'to prove themselves'* (P66, Nigeria), or for lesser pay - could be open to criticism.

### **Differences regarding pay**

Migrants' willingness to work for less pay was a source of contention amongst some Irish participants. Migrants themselves bore witness to difference in pay in certain sectors *'they don't want to pay you like they pay the locals'* (P5: Zimbabwe) and cited personal experiences of themselves or others around them being paid below the minimum wage. Chomsky, speaking about the United States, explains that immigrants are willing to accept conditions abroad that they would never accept at home since their frame of reference is their much poorer home country. Hence, wages that appear exceedingly low are of far greater value there (2007, 16/17). This was born out in migrants' views *'because the immigrants are desperate where they come from, probably they left it because of poverty, so they accept the little they get'* (P5, Zimbabwe). Barrett and McCarthy's (2007) study illustrates the wage gap of 15% that exists between Irish and immigrant employees, which rises to 20% as regards immigrants from non-English speaking countries and to 32% among those from new EU Member States.

On the subject of perceived competition between immigrants and low-skilled citizens for the same job, Chomsky argues that it is not the *presence* of immigrants that lowers the wages, but rather, the decisions of government and corporations (2007: 28). The latter would certainly *want* that type of competition. Employers and companies were seen by some participants as responsible for the situation *'they come over and they get paid less and it is disingenuous of the companies'* (P34, Irl.), in reference to the construction sector. The fact that migrant and Irish workers are treated differently on occasion was

raised and several Irish participants expressed empathy as *'there are employers that exploit'* (P6, Irl.); *'as an Irish person, if you went to work abroad you'd expect the same conditions ... you wouldn't like to think an employer was going to take you for a ride the same way employers are here in this country ... they are not paying their minimum wage for a start'* (P8, Irl.). The *Prime Time* special broadcast in December 2008 vividly illustrated the exploitation of migrant workers in Ireland (RTÉ, 2008) while a number of studies carried out by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) (for example 2008) have similarly documented abuse suffered by migrants in the labour market. Migrants, described by some as *'more vulnerable'* (P2, Poland), *'scared in case they get deported'*, according to one participant, do not seem to question whether they are being paid enough or not, - *'they just accept'* (P5, Zimbabwe). In addition to Irish bosses taking on migrant workers because *'they can get them to do more'* (P66, Nigeria), *'it's an employer's decision to employ somebody for less money, it's good business for him'* (P15, Romania). Others held the government responsible: *'I don't blame the Poles, I blame the government'* (P32, Irl.), *'there was no planning, the government has been disingenuous'* (P34, Irl.).

### **Competition for jobs: a potential problem for the future**

While competition was not perceived as existing, it was not ruled out as a potential problem for the future. One Irish participant cited an example from the construction sector of a foreman able to *'get any amount of foreign workers who'll labour for €80 a day'* (P22, Irl.), well below the rate that the Irish would previously have been getting. This trend of taking on more foreign, cheaper labour, *'that's going to annoy a lot of traditional Irish workers who've made a lot of money but now see themselves squeezed out of the market'* (P22, Irl.). On the one hand, the view that was put forward was that *'the Irish demand too much'* (P28, Irl.), *'the Irish won't work for the money the foreigners' get'* (P42, Irl.). However, Kuhling and Keohane's profession that *'even when they are good they are bad: migrant workers are 'great workers', but at the same time we say that they work too hard or that they work for nothing, jeopardising our own jobs'* (2007, 69) was echoed by one group, which included participants with lower-skilled jobs. They put forward the view that migrants are taken on *'because they work for less money'*

(P36, Irl.), *'it's cheaper to employ them'* (P37, Irl.). The low-skilled nature of a large number of jobs occupied by migrants was outlined earlier.

Scheepers et al (2002) combined realistic conflict theory with social identity theory when theorising competition for scarce resources. They found ethnic exclusionism more prevalent among social categories of the dominant group in similar positions in terms of education, social class and income, compared to social categories of ethnic out-groups. In keeping with Scheepers et al's findings (2002), it is those in competition for these types of jobs that had an issue with pay and hours worked. While one participant perceived the wage inequalities as disadvantaging them: *'work for the same money as everybody else and give us a chance'* (P37, Irl.), the employers were once again held responsible as *'the employers are getting rid of their Irish staff'* (P36, Irl.). Working for less was seen and could be seen in the current economic climate as an advantage in the job market:

*I've heard people say in the event that we get an economic downturn that a lot of the foreign workers are better off and that they are more likely to retain their jobs than Irish workers in some circumstances. I haven't seen it happen but I've heard it and resentment and anger about that* (P23, Irl.).

A migrant participant commented on the fact that *'if the economy is doing well there is no problem'* (P24, DR Congo). Competition between locals and migrants, he says, will occur *'if the economy is not doing well'*. The fact that migrants have occupied certain job types means *'we've got into a point where those jobs are already filled so there's that friction of the Irish feeling that the migrants are taking their jobs now the country is going to be caught'* (P66, Nigeria). This is with reference to the economic downturn and rising unemployment.

### **Changes in attitudes towards migrants**

Linked to this, is the perception on the part of migrants of a change in attitudes towards them. While some attributed the change in attitude to the sheer scale of migration to Ireland, *'maybe it's because there are so many foreign people here and maybe the attitude starts to change'* (P2, Poland), others linked it to the changing economic climate: *'you see you live in society, you are comfortable, people are very welcoming, people are very receptive, people are very positive and suddenly people are changing towards you*



*with the economy you know*' (P3, Nigeria). This concurs with the findings of Feldman et al's study where many interviewees identified a decrease in the level of acceptance of migrants in Irish society, an increase in an 'anti-migrant or anti-foreigner sentiment that does not differentiate between national, ethnic and cultural differences' (2008: 19). However, this was not a view universally held by migrant participants in this study; one participant remarked that *'people have a different way of seeing foreigners now'*, the fact that *'they have got used to the massive arrival of foreigners'* (P25, DR Congo).

The change in the attitude of the Irish people that was linked to a fear of *'the uncertainty that surrounds the work environment'* led people to *'change their mindset'*, *'the transformation from being welcoming to being hostile'* (P3, Nigeria). In the feedback session organised for participants in December this was reiterated more forcibly –

*lately there is a shift in attitude in Ireland towards immigration. When you look at commentary there are increased attacks on immigrants. Why are they here? They should go back home. You can see the generality of the population moving in that direction. The recession it's a global thing, not an Irish thing. Rather immigration seen as a cause of the problem* (P3, Nigeria).

One Irish group corroborated this, citing some people who *'blame them for most of the stuff that is going wrong'*, (P7, Irl.), namely the migrant becomes a scapegoat in more difficult times. In his explanation of the upsurge of racism in France in the 1980s, Balibar proposes the concept of 'crisis racism'. He theorises it as crossing the class divide with hostility towards foreigners being a characteristic shared by all. An 'immigration complex' is constructed where all social problems, be they schooling, unemployment, health or accommodation, are reduced to a single cause – the presence of immigrants or their presence is seen as aggravating social problems (Balibar, 1991: 219/220). However, unlike Balibar's 'crisis racism', throughout the discussions Irish participants did not see the incoming 'others' as the root of problems in the jobs market – rather employers take advantage and the government is also seen as being responsible for changes or for not tackling inequalities regarding pay.

### **Those who do not work**

Finally, throughout the discussions a common theme emerged regarding the acceptance of migrants who work: *'I think most Irish people would be of, well I certainly am anyway,*

*if they are here working, earning their own way and paying the taxes like the rest of them what's the problem?'* (P8, Irl.). Another Irish participant echoed this same view, professing: *'I've no problem with it just as long as they come into this country, seen to be not sponging. But I think a lot of that is false myths too that is sent out' ... 'but if they are genuinely here to work and to pay taxes then I've no problem with that at all'* (P22, Irl.), raising the issue of those who do not or cannot work. A black participant, who is having difficulty getting employment despite his qualifications, also corroborated this: *'the perception of the local people, they will think that they (migrants) are coming to work for this country. I think there is no problem if they (migrants) are working, they are being paid, there is no problem'* (P24, DR Congo). In brief, this Irish participant captures the commonly held view: *'I don't agree that people should be coming into the country and not working'* (P32, Irl.). This echoes Brandi's argument that migrant workers who arrive documented and play a part in Ireland's economic success are the sole category of migrant really welcomed (2007: 17).

Loyal (2003: 84) observes that the government classification of individuals into legal and administrative categories such as 'asylum seeker', 'refugee' and 'economic migrant' are 'important social statuses' which bestow differing rights and entitlements upon recipients regarding social, political and economic provision. This state classification has had significant material impact on the migrants themselves, in terms of capital accumulation, and has also influenced the attitude of the local population to them (Loyal and Allen, 2006: 221). Confusion reigned regarding the differences between state legal and administrative categories which was similar to that identified by Lewis (2005) around different categories of migrant in her study conducted in the UK. While the Polish, as referred to earlier, are considered industrious, the same is not true of the Africans: *'I know that people say that the Africans are lazy like and they all get handed everything'* (P6, Irl.). African participants, including the better educated in paid employment, feel that they bear the brunt of this perception: *'People seem to think every black person is a refugee and they are on this allowance you know. I don't know this allowance they talk about, they seem to think we take their money'* (P5, Zimbabwe). Saeed echoes this same viewpoint where respondents in his study 'agreed that if they were not white they were regarded as asylum seekers' (2008: 120). Lewis (2005) had similar findings. Indeed the

terms ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ were frequently used interchangeably by participants. A Nigerian participant gave further voice to the stereotypes associated with black people in Ireland, not limited only to asylum seekers who are not allowed to work: *‘because people have this one mindset, when they are black they are immigrants, when they are black they are freeloaders, they are here to take our money, take our job, they don’t work, they are not even educated’* (P3, Nigeria). Blackness as a marker of differentiation will be dealt with in more depth in chapter 5.

In addition to confusion around categories, misinformation regarding entitlements was apparent amongst migrants, as was alluded to in the previous paragraph, as well as amongst Irish participants. One participant explained when she was fundraising for Gorta that *‘a group of these locals said blacks are driving these ten year old cars, they are being given €200 by our government ... I don’t know whether it is true, whether they are being given it or not’* (P5, Zimbabwe). While some questioned the lack of information, *‘I don’t think we are being properly informed as to what they (migrants) are entitled to’* (P56, Irl.), others portrayed an incorrect lengthy list of entitlements:

*if someone said to you at the end of the day you go to England, you get a job, you get a car, you get so much socialising money, your children are educated free and you get a clothing allowance and if you’ve nothing here you are going to pack up and go over. It would be better for yourself or a better education for your children growing up* (P17, Irl.).

While connections were drawn a number of times between the experience of people arriving in Ireland to work and the long-standing Irish tradition of emigration, shared experiences were not always allowed to coalesce: *‘it was always no Irish no dogs - that’s what it was like back in England in the 1930s and 1950s. But we built all the roads. Anywhere we went we worked because if we didn’t work we didn’t eat and it was the same everywhere’* (P53, Irl.).

### **Competition over scarce resources: welfare**

Nolan and Maître define a ‘welfare regime’ as ‘the constellation of socio-economic institutions, policies and programmes which countries have adopted to promote their

citizens' welfare' (2007: 37)<sup>13</sup>. They classify Ireland as an example of a 'liberal welfare regime' where priority is given to the market, while the state has only a 'residual welfare role': social benefits are generally means-tested and aimed at those who are unsuccessful in the labour market. State policy towards asylum seekers, discussed earlier, has constructed them as welfare dependent given their lack of access to employment while awaiting a decision on their application. This inadvertently reinforces negative stereotypes towards them. No asylum seekers were interviewed for this study as there are no direct provision centres located in the area. However, those awaiting a decision from their Irish Born Child (IBC)/05 case are in a similar position<sup>14</sup>. One participant, who is unable to work while the decision regarding his IBC/05 case is still under review, expressed his desire to *'go into the system and actually start contributing'* (P14, Nigeria), a right to which he is currently denied. *'I believe it is the state that is losing right now because I should have been able to contribute to the economy'*, he adds. These groups are unfavourably characterised, in particular when they are perceived to gain privileges over and above the local Irish. In contrast, although refugees possess the right to work, qualitative research in the area suggests that they encounter severe difficulties gaining a foothold in the labour market (O'Brien, 2004). Participants included both programme refugees and convention refugees and one convention refugee would have experienced these difficulties.

Two Irish focus groups, comprising lower-skilled individuals with lower levels of education, viewed social welfare as a limited resource, from which migrants were perceived as unfairly benefiting: *'naturally you're going to be sore if you're struggling and you've worked all your life and you're told oh no you don't have enough stamps and the person in front of you has come out with a cheque for hundreds of euros. I'd be livid myself'* (P56, Irl.). These two groups in particular stressed their own work ethic and felt that migrants were getting away without working: *'but why should they get what they get*

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<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of this research the term welfare is going to be used to cover social welfare payments and services which are means tested.

<sup>14</sup> The IBC/05 scheme was an administrative scheme introduced by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform allowing parents of Irish citizen children born in Ireland before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 to apply between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 for permission to remain in the country on the grounds of having an Irish citizen child. Of the 17,917 applications made, 16,693 applicants were granted leave to remain under this scheme and 1,119 were refused (Carolan, 2007). Two participants were amongst the applicants refused whose cases are still under review.

*from our government when we don't get it. I mean we work for our money why can't they?'* (P37, Irl.). A politician expressing unfounded fears about welfare tourism and 'spongers' of the system, following the arrival of migrants in a country, was cited in chapter 1 and, as will be argued in the following chapter, the media has also put forward such views. In the survey on attitudes to integration in Ireland conducted in 2008, a small number of respondents put forward the opinion that there are 'too many foreign nationals coming in and living off state benefits' (Amárach Research, 2008). This is despite the fact that a large proportion of the migrant population in Ireland are workers who pay tax, followed by third level students paying fees or indeed asylum seekers who, under the policies of dispersal and direct provision introduced in 2000, are only entitled to €19.10 a week, in addition to their bed and board (Kuhling and Keohane, 2007: 57). Despite perceptions of migrants as a burden on services, a fear that has arisen in countries other than Ireland, evidence shows that 'immigrants give as much to the public coffers as they take, contributing at least as much in taxes as they consume in welfare benefits' (Stalker 1994, p.56). As regards Ireland, Barrett and McCarthy's (2006) research found that on average migrants avail of welfare services less intensively than the Irish workers. It is important to note that the Irish government, mirroring the British government policy, introduced a 'habitual residency condition' (HRC) as part of the Social Welfare Bill 2004. Anyone seeking to qualify for social assistance payments, child benefits and access to key state services must now prove that they have been a 'habitual resident in Ireland' for a reasonable length of time and prove that Ireland is their centre of interest (Department of Social and Family Affairs, 2009a). Due to the HRC, many migrants are not entitled to, or have only restricted access to social welfare protection. Asylum seekers are not considered resident in Ireland during the period when their asylum claim is being examined and hence they are not entitled to any other welfare payment outside of their €19.10 a week per adult and €9.60 per child. This is the only welfare payment which has not been increased since its introduction (Lynch, 2008). The government, perceived as signing the cheques, was seen as being responsible for the unfair situation created: *'at the end of the day I blame the government not the foreigner'* (P40, Irl.). Unlike Balibar's concept of 'crisis racism', here the government, not the immigrant, is seen as a source of racism.

## Housing

While often debated in economic terms, migration is not solely restricted to labourers and workers. Rather it has an impact on other services, including housing, where competition for scarce resources was more apparent. Housing constitutes a fundamental mechanism of cultural, social and economic integration (NCCRI, 2008a: 32). As was stated previously, the Blanchardstown-Blakestown electoral division and its surrounding divisions ‘have grown beyond recognition in recent years’ (Downes, 2006). The expanding immigrant community in Blanchardstown has significantly contributed to the demographic increase experienced by the area, as reflected in the 2006 census figures. Thus, it is not just a perception that *‘lots of foreigners are in Blanchardstown’* (P5, Zimbabwe), that *‘Dublin 15 is in all Ireland the largest concentration of immigrants’* (P67, South Africa) and housing is one of the crisis points that the changing demographics have thrown up.

While the area as a whole - composed of a mix of private and large local authority housing estates - houses a large proportion of non-Irish nationals, certain parts in particular were identified as having a particularly high concentration. These include *‘more of the new areas like Ongar, Clonee’* (P30, Irl.), where large housing estates have been built. Ongar was identified as an area where a large proportion of black people reside (P13, Irl., P55, Poland), and one black participant corroborated this, estimating that about 18 to 20 houses in his park of 45 are occupied by *‘people from my area, black community’* (P14, Nigeria). Another area mentioned was Tyrrelstown where *‘everybody there is black so I’m the only white person on the block ... I’m the foreign national up there’* (P38, Irl.) and Waterville which is a new development – *‘the whole of Waterville is full of non-nationals’* (P37, Irl.). One Irish participant went so far as to say: *‘there are ghettos. I have seen big changes in my estate, people living in a lot of rental housing so people are moving in and out’* (P33, Irl.). Both Quillian (1995) and Scheepers et al (2002) identified out-group size as a factor that increased the threat felt by the dominant group, which ties in with certain participants’ views. However, while participants in the 2006 study had spoken of an ‘explosion’ and the speed at which it happened (Ní Chonail, 2006), by 2008, as alluded to previously, there was a more general acceptance of the presence of migrants in the area as a whole.

Possible reasons suggested for the concentration of migrants in Blanchardstown include more affordable accommodation and the availability of more rental accommodation as a result of the construction boom in the private housing supply. Housing was listed as an additional ‘pull’ factor attracting people to Blanchardstown, both Irish and non-Irish, as *‘that’s where we could afford to buy a house’* (P5, Zimbabwe), *‘we see it as kind of affordable’* (P3, Nigeria). A trend in the housing sector, which is visible in Blanchardstown, is the preeminence of private sector construction, a characteristic that predates the Celtic Tiger (Fahey and Duffy, 2007: 125). Housing is available in the area not just for owner occupier, but also for the private rental sector. The aforementioned newer areas such as Ongar *‘have the reputation of a lot of investment property. People have let their houses to the council you know and bought during the boom and a lot of people not living in the property they own’* (P21, Irl.), or Tyrrelstown where *‘a lot of the houses were bought to be rented out’* (P9, Irl.). A reversal of the Irish-English tenant-landlord relationship is visible with Irish speculators renting houses to *‘foreign nationals’*. This theme of Irish people buying property as investment featured repeatedly: one migrant, an owner occupier, professed *‘I don’t think that the local people would really come and buy a house in these estates. They would just buy them to rent them out I think’* (P5, Zimbabwe).

While a number of migrant participants were owner occupiers, others were in rented accommodation and a few in local authority housing. A local Community Development Project (CDP) manager cited the housing policy as another reason that was attracting non-Irish into the area *‘the fact that these people arrive in Ireland, they need somewhere to live, and they are living mainly in Fingal and in south county Dublin where all the new estates are being built. It’s the private rental sector and they go on the housing list. To get private rental sector you have to be on the housing list’* (P36, Irl.). Ryan (2007: 12) corroborates this, outlining the scarcity of land available to build on in Dun Laoighre/Rathdown County Council and South Dublin County Council areas. Given the extensive land banks available for building more houses, particularly in Abbotstown and parts of Blakestown, the expected consequence would be a significant increase in residents arriving in the area over the coming years (Ryan, 2008: 12). This was seen to be

*'disproportionately impact[ing] on working class people'* (P36, Irl.) in certain parts of Blanchardstown.

Direct competition for local authority housing was causing some bad feeling in three groups with migrants seen as getting 'too much'. Irish friends were cited as *'struggling to pay their mortgage'* while migrants are *'living in mortgage free houses'* (P53, Irl.), or getting an apartment *'with the social welfare paying for it'* (P37, Irl.). One group felt that *'foreign nationals'* were being housed quicker: *'but there are people coming off the boats and getting houses up the back of me with one child'* (P17, Irl.), while another group put forward the view that there was competition for housing: *'they (local Irish) can't get anywhere to live like council houses and stuff like on the corporation list. They're finding that the migrants are getting them beforehand so they're being left last'* (P30, Irl.). Housing was identified as a *'huge issue'* (P70, Irl.) by local CDP managers. Unlike Dublin City Council which operates a points based system, the system used in Fingal is 'date in need', namely the date when you put your name down. The NCCRI report found that in the future it is likely that minority ethnic households will constitute a larger percentage of social housing tenants and 'it is only now that significant numbers of minority ethnic applicants are rising to the top of the lists' (2008a: 17). Indeed the same could be argued for the Fingal area. A representative of Fingal County Council Housing Allocation Section explained that *'non-Irish are coming up on the list in bigger numbers at the moment'* (P85, Irl.).

Some categories of migrants are excluded from social housing and from affordable housing schemes. Migrant workers on work permits are not entitled to put their name on the waiting list for local authority housing as an individual is only eligible to apply for housing if s/he has a Stamp 4<sup>15</sup>. Studies show that respondents of black and 'other' ethnicity are far more likely to feel discriminated against than white respondents when accessing housing/accommodation (Russell et al, 2008: 22) and this discrimination is on the increase (Lynch, 2006: 15).

Specifically in relation to local authority housing, there was also a view voiced very strongly in one group that migrants get treated differently to Irish people by the council:

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<sup>15</sup> Stamp 4 indicates that the person is entitled to work without a work permit. It is issued to people with work visas/authorisations and also to spouses of Irish and EU citizens, refugees, people with Irish Born Child residency, and people with long term residency status.



*the thing that bugs me seriously is a stupid thing like a wall, a back wall. Every single one of us had to build our own back walls. She (a migrant) wasn't six months in there and she went up. I need a wall, she got a wall. I want this done, she gets every single thing she wants done and they won't even come out and fix a lock on my bathroom door (P35, Irl.).*

Although the group did not agree with black residents being harassed in the local estate, getting their windows put through, their cars slashed or their houses damaged, what was regarded as unjust was the fact that *'they were provided with another, if you are black you will get provided with another one no problem'* (P36, Irl.), namely they are transferred to another house. The same is not perceived as being true regarding the Irish, on the other hand. Black participants residing in local authority housing corroborated these incidents of harassment (P24, DR Congo, P25, DR Congo), having windows broken, and cars stolen for example. However they did not agree that the motivating factor behind such acts is their skin colour – while one did feel his family was targeted *'because we are black'* (P24), the other participant cited other Irish people living around who are attacked (P25, DR Congo). Although the levels varied, racially motivated anti-social behaviour was found as an issue by the NCCRI study in both local authority housing and private housing developments, especially in low-income areas (2008a: 95). This is in-keeping with participants' experiences, particularly those residing in the more disadvantaged parts of Blanchardstown.

Although all migrants are not then necessarily vying for social housing given those that are excluded, competition for housing does exist since the supply of council and affordable housing outstrips demand. One of the consequences of the government economic policy was a decrease in state spending on social programmes (Allen, 1999: 106). There was a decrease of 50% in the number of new local authority houses built between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s (Bacon, 1998), leading to the 'breakdown' of a 'populist social housing regime' (O'Hearn, 2003: 49). Social housing now only plays a 'modest' part in the overall housing supply, thus the traditional supply of housing for low-income families decreased as the economy boomed. Fahey and Duffy (2007: 136/137) acknowledge the partial compensation provided by the significant enlargement of the rent allowance scheme, noting however the overall inadequacy of the total supply of low-income housing. This situation has created difficulties. There are currently 5,500

people on the waiting list in Fingal and based on a very broad average it will take 4 years and 3 months from when you apply to when you get housed (P85, Irl.). The so-called 'boom' which polarised society left the 'have-nots' even more vulnerable. Participants did name the government, or more locally Fingal County Council as the root cause of the injustice and hence their feelings towards migrants.

The views expressed above are in keeping with Loyal and Allen's argument that 'for many disempowered sections of the population, racist discourses often constitute a description of, and an explanation for, the world they experience on a day-to-day basis' (2006: 227), for example why people have to wait on a housing list, why migrants get housed more quickly than Irish people. While blame is cast on the government, one would have to question if this is due to the government's liberal policy on migrants or to its failure to provide basic services. The focus on '*foreign nationals*' detracts attention from the government's inadequacies. Allen (1999: 106) argues that the refugees provided a convenient scapegoat for Irish politicians, deflecting attention from the wider social problems and increased inequalities resulting from the decrease in social spending. In the case of the housing shortage, politicians and the press have been handed a scapegoat, not just in the form of refugees (Allen, 1999: 106), but in the form of migrants in general, and this emerges somewhat in the discussion. Participants felt that they are not being housed because '*foreign nationals*' are also in competition, despite the restrictions on asylum seekers and work permit holders to access social housing. While attention was drawn to lack of planning regarding the larger migration issue, on a local level the government was not criticised for restricting the building of social housing, the origin of the housing crisis. Bad feeling is generated as a result, particularly among those competing for scarce resources. People feel that they are treated unfairly and unequally, '*I don't think it's right*' (P19, Irl.) said one participant, while another concluded: '*I'm not racist myself but I tell you I'm sick of it myself at this stage*' (P40, Irl.).

## **Education**

The other knock-on effect of '*a lot of foreigners in Blanchardstown*' was the schooling issue which was raised a number of times. When questioned regarding the impact on

resources, participants spoke of *'the schools, there's not enough places in the schools'* (P53, Irl.). According to the local Labour Party TD Joan Burton, the area witnessed 'at least' five school places crises in 2005/6 (Downes, 2006). School places were still perceived as an issue in the area despite the opening of four new schools in Dublin 15 since 2006. Participants mentioned a number of local schools, located in both advantaged and disadvantaged parts of the area. Foreign nationals are thus perceived as taking up places and forcing local Irish children to go to school outside of the community, *'children in this area, their parents have to send them in buses out to other areas because there's no room for their sister or brother where it used to always be'* (P38, Irl.). On the other side of the coin, it is an issue that impacts migrant parents as well as Irish parents: as one Muslim participant remarked *'my son couldn't get into the school around the corner as it is a Catholic school'* (P67, South Africa), referring to the exemption under the Equal Status Act that schools can give preference to children *'to maintain the ethos of the school'* (Equality Authority, 2004: 10). Two Irish participants discussing another local school in the area that *'is overcrowded basically'* spoke of the numbers and that *'people are trying to get their kids into school and they could be saying to themselves like oh they (migrants) come over here'* (P6, Irl.), the unstated being that migrants' children take up school places. A participant who resides in a different part of Blanchardstown where *'the topic of conversation all of the time is about getting the child into school, every parent I know'* (P23, Irl.), explains that services have not been developed in line with housing. Hence, *'they are bussing out children and every morning on the bus are all of the non-national children and people are concerned about that'* (P23, Irl.). Participants acknowledged the fact that there was no planning for the increasing demographics (P34, Irl.). Charlie Kurtz, Public Relations of the Dublin 15 community council, explains that planning permission was accorded to developers to build on land they had reserved in the area, without obliging them to provide necessary facilities such as schools in return (Downes, 2006). So again competition for resources is real as opposed to perceived. The rapid growth and huge construction witnessed in Blanchardstown has put pressure on services. The participants portrayed *'foreign people'* as the only group migrating to the area. However Irish people from other parts of the country, as was outlined in chapter 2, have also come to live in Blanchardstown.

### Language resources in schools

In addition to a scarcity of places, a knock-on effect on children in the area was discussed - the issue of children entering school without English. Given the fundamental importance of education for individuals to participate effectively in society and the necessity of a competency in English in order to participate in the Irish education system, language competency constitutes 'an essential prerequisite of integration' (NESC, 2006: 190). Hence, the main state response has been the investment in English language support provided at primary and post primary level with almost 2000 language support teachers employed in 2008 (Department of Education and Science, 2008). In light of the diversity that characterises schools in the Blanchardstown area, as highlighted by Mc Gorman and Sugrue (2007), and underlined by participants – *'the high numbers of children who do not speak English in local schools'* (P31, Irl.) - this is perceived as impacting resources. Additional resources provided were alluded to: the use of translators when registering children at school and language support in place in local schools, *'obviously they are going to need extra rooms, they are going to need to pay the person that's teaching them with those translators'* (P7, Irl.). Rooms in schools was an issue linked to the increasing demographics also, *'well this school here they've lost their crèche haven't they and they've lost the playroom because of non-nationals coming in there is no space and as well as that they've had to add prefabs'* (P40, Irl.). The non-nationals are named in this case as causing the problem. Furthermore, schooling as an issue crossed all groups irrespective of education/occupation, although mainly those directly concerned or with children themselves discussed its impact. Hence this is nearer to Balibar's concept of 'crisis racism'.

Language is perceived as a big issue by those with school going children. Empathy was expressed with the children *'but if they can't speak English ... they're going to find it hard'* (P30, Irl.), *'but I'd say it's hard for them ... if they don't know the language straight away they are almost immediately at a disadvantage'* (P11, Irl.). While many Irish participants regarded language support as positive, *'it will give the kids a chance so that it will be easier for them'* (P28, Irl.), those directly implicated or with children, spoke of its repercussions. In one local school the numbers of children in junior infants who *'have to go out of the class to do special English that's fine'* is such (15 out of a class of

27) that *'the standard of education is dropping a little bit but these children have to be looked after'* (P13, Irl.). Another participant re-echoed this: *'I was told in school X if the children can't speak English it is holding up the whole class and the Irish kids are falling back with their studies because they are trying to teach English'* (P53, Irl.). Resources are perceived as being allocated to language support at the expense of other needs: *'the remedial teacher, they are being designated to teach English'* (P54, Irl.), *'the special needs of the Irish people and of course of the other people are being ignored because the resources have to go to teaching these children English'* (P54, Irl.). A number of teachers interviewed reported that, despite schools receiving additional resources for language support, some parents query the allocation of resources to English support and fear that they are impinging on other resources or that their children are losing out. *'Irish parents are finding it hard to cope with, we are getting more resources, Irish parents don't see that, they see what they are not getting'* (P68, Irl.) explained one local teacher who spoke of the *'huge resentment'* created. The budget introduced in October set to replace a cap on language support teachers at two per school, although it has been added that the government will look on a case by case basis at schools with larger numbers of international children. Local principals are currently uncertain as regards this decision and many will be directly implicated if the proposal becomes reality. One local principal, who, like many others in the Dublin 15 area, has over 50% of pupils attending language support, said that although parents had not questioned the allocation of resources in the school, it is the *'type of thing that might raise its head if they (the international children) start turning up in learning support'* (P90, Irl.), an inevitable consequence of a reduction in the number of language support teachers.

Nonetheless, regarding schools with a high percentage of *'children who can't speak English'*, an Irish parent, speaking about her own child, and voicing concerns about children being *'held back'*, declared: *'I'm not sending him to school X because there's not enough teachers to teach English'* (P53, Irl.). Teachers were quoted as acknowledging the impact of the large volume of non-native speakers of English, *'it does make it harder for the teachers teaching them in school'* (P8, Irl.), although when interviewed, many spoke of the academic achievements of some of the children of migrants in their schools. As one teacher explained, it is a *'language barrier'* as opposed

to an *'academic barrier'*: *'you know you do have to slow down that bit more but we have an integrated system'* (P21, Irl.).

## **Conclusion**

On a national level the inward migration into Ireland has made additional demands on public service provision. Changes in Irish demographics in the past decade, particularly in the Blanchardstown area, have augmented demands for public services such as education and housing, with services struggling to keep up. Although migrant workers were attracted into the country by the Irish government, no planning analysis was carried out regarding their access to housing, education or civil and political rights. An unpublished report for the government predicted that the influx of migrants, necessary for the economy, *'would exacerbate housing and transport problems and place additional pressures on educational, health and social services'* (Kirby, 2002: 55). In this chapter Ireland's economic growth, which instigated migration, was acknowledged, while underlining the resulting inequalities and polarisation that ensued as perceived by participants. In the area of work, there was no evidence presented of displacement of Irish workers occurring, although displacement amongst migrants was raised. Differences regarding pay between migrant and Irish workers were highlighted and subsequently competition for jobs was not ruled out as a potential problem for the future, particularly given the deteriorating economic circumstances. While migrants perceived a change in attitude towards them in the changing economic climate, those who do not work, irrespective of the reason, were far less accepted in Irish society. In addition to a lot of misinformation regarding entitlements, social welfare benefits and housing were viewed by the lower-skilled participants as a limited resource and migrants perceived as a threat, particularly by those in direct competition for these resources. The lack of government intervention to address these issues, which have given rise to feelings of frustration, was highlighted. Characteristics of *'crisis racism'* surfaced in relation to education as *'foreigners'* were held responsible for issues which in fact pre-dated their arrival. While trying to avoid the label *'racist'*, participants, particularly those from the more disadvantaged groups, used migrants as an explanation for their everyday experience. While the state was criticised for lack of planning regarding the migration issue on a

macro-level, the government was not held responsible for its failure to provide adequate resources at a local level, particularly regarding the building of social housing and adequate sized schools. Hence the scapegoat to some extent remains the 'foreigner', constructed, as will be illustrated in the next chapter, as the Other, as opposed to the national 'we' who are entitled to such resources.

## Chapter 4: Issues regarding Identity

### Summary

This chapter focuses on issues regarding identity that emanated from the data. Evidence of boundaries drawn at a local level between migrants and the Irish 'us' found included linguistic and cultural differences and differential treatment regarding resources. Language was considered as one means of differentiation, with examples cited of how language is creating a palpable divide between 'them' and 'us', of language as a barrier, as a means of inclusion and exclusion, a means of identifying members and non-members. Migration has impacted on families' home language but it has also affected the vocabulary of the Irish 'us' and Irish participants spoke of the reluctance to speak out *'for fear of being racist'*. Culture functions similarly as a factor of both unification and division, and stereotypes were reproduced regarding difference on the part of Irish and migrant participants. Migrants were perceived by some as agents in the production of cultural change in Irish society. Boundaries which are socially drawn may however be redrawn and children were portrayed as breaking down barriers and overcoming differences. Lastly, on the issue of differential treatment regarding resources, as discussed by the lower socioeconomic groups, once again in the construction of identity the local 'us' was frequently aligned to the national 'us'. Throughout the analysis, the state's role in the process, in striving for homogeneity and defining the 'us' and the Other, was acknowledged.

### Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the rapid transformation that the Irish economy witnessed, the growth of the 'Celtic Tiger' within the context of globalisation and the impact on resources of the resulting inward economic migration that ensued. As Holton (1998) underlines, globalisation is not merely an economic phenomenon. Thus the focus will now shift to the cultural sphere. The repercussions in Ireland of the economic and social restructuring and the increased inward migration that has resulted are apparent in Blanchardstown, as indeed elsewhere. The pace of the change, discussed earlier, has arguably engendered notable dislocations of collective and personal identity. Home and belonging have become increasingly salient issues, a struggle to cultivate a place within a world/nation that is rapidly metamorphosing. Greater prominence is simultaneously being attached to the question of Irish identity and to what it means to be Irish in a rapidly changing society. In this chapter the construction of 'identity' will first be discussed, before examining the nation as a form of collective identity within the context of globalisation. Then participants' definitions of 'the Irish' or national 'us' will be provided and the role of the state in constructing national identity will also be explored. This will



be followed by a justification of the rationale behind exploring belonging within the local context of everyday life before turning to the data to examine the boundaries drawn between 'them' and 'us'. Three examples of how the Irish 'we' are different from 'them' emanate from the data, namely language differences, cultural differences and differential treatment regarding resources, which will be analysed in succession.

### **The construction of identity**

Identity - a much discussed and analysed concept - has come to supply something of an anchor amid the turbulent waters of globalisation (Gilroy, 2000: 107). The post-modern world has witnessed the fragmentation of the cultural landscape of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and nationality which provided us with firm locations as individuals. It has been argued that we are consequently 'post' any fixed or essentialist conception of identity (Hall, 1992: 275). In this contemporary era, characterised by fluidity and uncertainty, there is a natural tendency to seek out groups to which people can belong. However, Brah notes that 'identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity' (1996: 123). Constructed within the play of power, all identities, according to Hall, operate through difference and 'exclusion' (2000: 234). It is principally through the process of 'othering', through the relation to what it is not, 'the Other' (Hall, 1996: 4), that identity is formed. To share an identity is supposedly to be united on the most basic levels, be they national, 'racial', ethnic, regional or local. Identity, however, is always 'bounded' and 'particular', concerned as much with difference as with shared belonging (Gilroy, 1997: 301). It serves to delineate divisions and subsets in our social lives, facilitating us in fixing the boundaries between our uneven, local attempts to make sense of the world (Gilroy, 2000: 98). Hall's discursive approach sees identification as a construction, always 'in process', never complete (1996: 2).

### **The idea of nation and defining the Irish**

While nation as a concept has proved difficult to define, scholars have recognised its power or indeed pre-eminence as a form of collective identity over class, gender or 'race'

(Hutchinson and Smith, 1994: 4). The etymological origins of the word nation can be traced back to the Latin root *natio* from *nascor*, to be born. When the term was first coined it had associations of common blood ties (Connor, 1994: 38), a community in which people were born, lived and died. When defining what it means to be Irish, only two participants referred explicitly to the idea of nation: one from Nigeria echoed the sense of group identity, affirming *'I think Irish is a nation, you know, is a community of people that share the same background ... the same cultural way of life and every other thing that binds them together'* (P3, Nigeria). *'I am proud to be Irish. We are a small nation but when you go abroad we are globally recognised'* (P33, Irl.) declared the second participant, capturing the view of the Other in a global context. The etymology of the word was reflected in participants' definitions, when the majority equated being Irish to *'being born in Ireland'* (P11, Irl., P8, Irl., P25, DR Congo). While one Irish participant evoked the notion of community, referred to above, maintaining *'you're being part of something'* (P7, Irl.), a nation is not an 'objective community' but in Anderson's terms 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (1991: 6).

In the 'new world disorder' (Bauman, 1998: 57), the relationship between globalisation and the nation-state continues to be contested: while some predict the demise of the nation-state, 'withering away' (Bauman, 1998: 56), other theorists view the 'declinist' argument as premature (Mc Grew, 1992: 94). One consequence of globalisation, the mass movement of people across territorial boundaries, in particular since decolonisation, has, among other effects, pluralised national cultures and national identities, instigating, in turn, their contestation. According to Gilroy, the 'tell-tale anxiety over national identity' in Britain derives from 'excessive and unwelcome immigration' (2008: 49/50). What was formerly represented as closed and homogeneous is now challenged by difference. This creates contradictory results. In a bid to restore former unity and purity, some identities are strengthened by resistance to globalisation, with cultural barriers defensively re-erected. The narrative of the nation is being retold and the state contributes to the process, striving for homogeneity as demonstrated below. However, the other effect of globalisation on national identity is the existence of new forms of cultural identity. These 'cultures of hybridity' are the outcome of the new diasporas generated by post-colonial

migrants (Hall, 1992: 310). Identity thus formed oscillates between the global and the local.

Given the conflation of nation and state, the role that the state plays in defining the nation and national identity needs to be acknowledged. States have an interest in striving for uniformity, uniting the 'us' into the one 'imagined community'. They possess the power to manage issues within their boundaries, to include and exclude from their protection, to categorise and hierarchise (Goldberg, 2002: 9). For most of the twentieth century, Ireland functioned as an 'ethnically homogeneous state with an official monoculture' (Mac Éinrí, 2004: 89), which left little room for the Other. Balibar employs the term 'fictive ethnicity' (2002: 223) to describe the community created by the nation-state. Sinha acknowledges the conflation of Irish ethnicity, the Irish state and the Irish nation (1998: 22), whose constitution has been disputed over the last decade. As a result of a Supreme Court decision in 2003, foreign-born parents of Irish-born children lost the right to residency and the referendum organised by the government in mid-2004 focused on the children themselves and the removal of the automatic right to citizenship (*jus solis*). Prompted by what Michael Mc Dowell, then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, termed 'citizenship shopping' as a result of the 'loophole' created by the Good Friday Agreement (Mac Éinrí, 2004: 103), the Citizenship Referendum created a two-tier racialised system. Lentin and McVeigh (2006) describe it as a means for the state to control the population, to retain so-called homogeneity and manage the ethnic diversity of the Irish nation. The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) acknowledges the Irish diaspora, children of Irish ancestry, and up to third generation's entitlement to citizenship, while children now born in the country to non-Irish parents are denied that right. Hence the criteria most commonly cited by participants of being Irish, namely being born in Ireland, no longer holds, as automatic entitlement to Irish citizenship is based on the *jus sanguinis* or 'race' criterion (King-O'Riain, 2006: 284), a link back to the original blood ties associated with the term 'nation'.

The propensity to conflate nation and state (Connor, 1994: 38) manifests itself amongst participants, both Irish and migrants : *'everyone has their own nationality so everyone is part of like a different country'* (P7, Irl.), *'Irish just like any other nationality, Romanian, Irish ... basically somebody who belongs to a certain country'* (P15, Romania). Here

identification is formed in relation to difference, to other countries, as well as shared belonging. The sole Irish participant who made reference to citizenship in the definition of what it is to be Irish, illustrated the tendency to use '*nationality*' and '*citizenship*' interchangeably, affirming *'I'd say it's being born in Ireland and having the national having citizenship'* (P11, Irl.). Gilbertson, commenting on the trend, draws a distinction between the two terms: '*nationality* is often used to signify membership in a community on the basis of common cultural characteristics while *citizenship* refers to membership conferred by a state' (2006). While ideas of heritage, history and traditions resonate amongst Irish participants, reflecting the idea of nationality, migrant participants, who themselves or through their children equate being Irish with acquiring citizenship, namely becoming Irish: *'well the term Irish to me it's like the citizens of the Republic of Ireland in Ireland, people that are born in Ireland or people that acquire citizenship, either through other means of getting in there, by therefore a long stay or other national relations'* (P14, Nigeria). The third item mentioned in reference to being Irish, the '*long stay*' in the country, reflects the necessary conditions for naturalisation, residence in the state and also one of the grounds on which a child born in the country can acquire citizenship (when one of the two parents are legally resident for 3 out of the 4 years preceding the birth).

Peillon describes citizenship as the 'wall, the barrier which protects an abstract national community. Citizenship grants privileges to those who belong at the very same time as it denies them to the non-citizen' (2000: 11). Thus the state has the power not only to include or exclude, namely citizens and non-citizens, but also to categorise as Others through the legal and administrative categories used, as argued in the previous chapter. Residency in the state, just referred to, was an issue which concerned two migrant participants, still awaiting a decision on their Irish Born Child (IBC/05) cases which have gone *'on and on and on ... since 2005 adjourned, adjourned, adjourned'* (P14, Nigeria). The right to remain in the state is thus one which they are still contesting.

### **Identity at a local level**

Globalisation, and the inward migration accompanying it, challenge traditional, fixed notions of culture and identity at a national level. The 'local' has figured prominently

within the debate on globalisation, in addition to analyses of ‘community’ and connected definitions of ‘belonging’ which Thompson et al argue are closely linked to ideas of national identity (1999: 49). Community can function on a local level as well as a national level and indeed integration is similarly both local and national. Brah (1996: 93) outlines that our first sense of community is developed within a neighbourhood, but then extended to the wider ‘imagined communities’, imagined in Anderson’s sense in that we never get to meet all these people but learn to identify with them. Hickman calls for an examination of the ‘dynamics of social integration in localities and communities’ and an exploration of ‘how inclusions and exclusions are negotiated at the local level’ (2007: 8). Hence the way in which the lived experiences of individuals in ‘local’ social contexts inform their understanding of the nation and national identity will now be investigated since ‘much of the construction of ideas of national identity takes place at a local level, as people engage in drawing boundaries – real and symbolic – around their particular communities’ (Thompson et al, 1999: 64-5). Drawing boundaries involves the everyday process of delineating how ‘we’ are different from ‘them’. Three examples of boundaries, namely language, cultural difference and differential treatment as regards resources will now be examined.

### **Language: an introduction**

Issues regarding language emerged as a major theme from the data in this research. Language is not just a means of communication, but also a marker of identity. Language is an example of what Armstrong (1982, cited by Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 33) terms ‘symbolic border-guards’, which keeps and reproduces the mythical unity of the group, the imagined community of ‘us’ as opposed to ‘them’. Furthermore, it is a prerequisite for integration in Irish society, although as migrant participants argue, mastering English does not suffice for integration. Language can also be a dividing factor, a barrier to migrants getting on in Irish society, a way in which they are differentiated from the Irish ‘us’. Finally, language is one domain where the reciprocal influence of the host community on migrants and vice versa manifests itself.

### **Language as a unifying factor**

Language can be a unifying factor for ‘us’ or for ‘them’, for identifying members and non-members of a group: *‘what’s real evident in our area is Saturday night barbecues - all the Poles have their barbecue, the Kenyans have their barbecue and they have all their friends round. They have their own language, the Irish do the same’* (P23, Irl.). Despite that, language can overcome groupings and function as a means of inclusion – something the wider we, in a multicultural and multilingual Irish society, have in common, as one Romanian participant explained regarding her work context: *‘I speak with women, we speak English’* (P58, Romania).

### **Language as a dividing factor**

Nonetheless, language also acts as a dividing factor between ‘us’ and ‘them’, a means of exclusion and differentiation, perceived by both migrants and Irish alike. Irish participants cited language as one of the factors that renders migrants *‘different’*, providing examples of the *‘language barrier’* evident particularly in the service industry: *‘you take restaurants where language can be a problem and the tourists are not getting a real Irish welcome’* (P12, Irl.), *‘there is a dilution of Irishness’* (P33, Irl.). A number of Irish participants represented language as a means of exclusion: *‘there’s a few that choose to sit and they’d sit in the canteen and they’d speak Polish or Lithuanian or whatever to each other and not include you’* (P30, Irl.) and felt that *‘it is quite intimidating when they are speaking in their own language’* (P54, Irl.) in restaurants and shops, for example. This is reflective of Sniderman and Hagendoorn’s case of a woman who does not mind when people in the Netherlands speak Turkish amongst themselves but who complained that she is made to feel a foreigner in her own country when personnel in a shop spoke Turkish when she was there (2007: 72). Commenting on a similar situation at work, another Irish participant added *‘that’s kind of exclusion as well but then they’re probably facing it every day as well’* (P7, Irl.), recognising how language can isolate as well as bind. A male participant corroborated that *‘discrimination works both ways’*, namely the Irish against ‘them’: *‘but then there’s lots of Polish people that would like for example ... they’d rather sit on the phone talking all break than talk to you and they can speak English. They’d have perfect English’* (P29, Irl.). The perceived

unwillingness to interact in this instance is not due to language deficiency. A migrant participant explained this phenomenon, namely the fact that *'it is easier to express yourself in your first language so mainly ... you tend to socialise with people from your area'* (P16, Italy). It is, to cite another participant, *'human nature to have a preference to be with your own, you can't help it, you are part of a group'* (P3, Nigeria) and language is thus one unifying but also dividing factor.

### **Language and integration**

While language was perceived as a barrier to 'us' understanding 'them', it was also perceived as barrier for 'them' to function in Irish society: *'language is a huge barrier; it is a huge barrier people not having the right words'* (P8, Irl.). Migrants concurred with this: *'here is very difficult, language is a lot of problems in school for my daughter, it is very difficult'* (P57, Lithuania). There was empathy for the difficulty school children, whose first language is not English, face: *'can you imagine the strain'* (P7, Irl.), *'I don't know how they cope'* (P6, Irl.). The importance of mastering language is acknowledged as *'if they don't know the language straight away they are almost immediately at a disadvantage'* (P7, Irl.). A migrant participant echoed this same point: *'over here if you don't speak English you are left behind ... it is natural. There is nothing about racism, simply we need to get on that's all'* (P16, Italy). The ESRI study (O'Connell and McGinnity, 2008) on immigrants at work highlighted the importance of language skills. They found no variance between migrants from English speaking countries and Irish nationals regarding their risk of unemployment (2008: ix). In addition, they detected that English language skills are positively linked to earnings (2008: x), and that non-Irish nationals from non-English speaking backgrounds are subjected to an occupational gap, whereas this is not the case for those from English-speaking backgrounds.

Furthermore, as Feldman et al's study found, language is not just 'a means of communication', but also 'a precondition for integration' (2008: 141). The Immigration Residence and Protection Bill 2008, currently awaiting consideration for reporting stage in the *Dáil*, stipulates 'a reasonable competence for communicating in the Irish or English language' (Section 36 (4)cii), as one of the criteria to be met for long term residency, similarly to the UK and France. 'A basic knowledge of the host society's language' is

part of one of the European Common Basic Principles on Integration and ‘enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration’ (Commission of the European Communities: 2005). This underlines the importance of the provision of training in English language skills for new immigrants, and NGOs argue that there is an onus on the Irish state to provide language classes. One of the biggest providers of language classes in the Blanchardstown area is the ESOL Department of the Blanchardstown Adult Education Centre which comes under the auspices of the Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) and provides both free and private classes in its centre in Main Street as well as in outreach centres, in addition to putting on courses intermittently for BAP and other local organisations.

Even those who master the English language, the main medium of communication in Ireland, noted how language alone is not enough for integration; they alluded to the idea of a *‘ceiling to how far people can socialise, interact’* (P3, Nigeria); *‘I want to integrate, I want to be part of the Irish community which I find very hard I must say because I find the Irish people are very nice and very friendly in the beginning but then they just make a stop and they don’t want you to come any further into their life so it’s very hard’* (P2, Poland). A number of migrant participants noted the limit or barrier they perceive to integration, *‘to make them feel belonged’* (P3, Nigeria) and really part of the community or else explained how *‘we force ourselves to integrate’* (P24, DR Congo), the onus being on *‘them’* to make *‘considerable efforts’* to fit into the *‘us’*.

### **Accent as a marker of difference**

Migrants substantiated the idea of language, more precisely accent, as a marker of difference and another reason why participants do not think they are *‘fully integrated’*. While English is not spoken homogeneously in Ireland, despite a certain perception, accent was identified as one attribute responsible for non-native speakers being treated differently: *‘I don’t think I am fully integrated, although I am here for six years and I will never get rid of my accent and it happens in shops that I am treated in a different way because of my accent or on the phone’* (P2, Poland), explained one participant. Another participant corroborated this, professing *‘There is a bit of a stigma towards foreigners and immigrants ... it’s probably because of our English’* (P15, Romania). Although the



'our' here is equated with foreigners in general, it was white Eastern Europeans who felt they are treated differently because of the way they speak English, while Africans and Asians were judged by their physical appearance as being non-English speaking : *'because I looked Asian they thought I didn't speak English, you know the way'* (P61, Philippines). The notion of skin colour as an ineradicable marker of social difference will be analysed in the next chapter.

### **Language support**

The pivotal role language plays in integration was underlined in the previous chapter and the state provision of English language support at primary and post primary level mentioned. The perceived impact on resources in schools was raised and some examples furnished. Although these experiences are lived out at local level in local schools, the local 'we' is aligned to the national 'we' as a participant commenting on the perceived reduced class contact as a result of withdrawal for language support, noted *'Irish kids lose out – it's discrimination against them'* (P31, Irl.); *'if they (children of migrants) can't speak the language the Irish kids are held back'* (P54, Irl.). Teachers spoke of Irish parents being *'uninformed'* regarding the distribution of resources and questioning whether the resource hours migrants' children are getting *'impinge'* on the resource hours their offspring get (P21, Irl.). The perception is that *'the non-Irish children'* receive language support, although many of these children, as was continuously affirmed by the African interviewees, *'are Irish'*. Some unwillingness to extend the boundaries of belonging to include children of migrants (Gray, 2004: 94) is evident here.

### **Language as a badge of identity**

Participants endorsed Sniderman and Hagendoorn's affirmation that, 'language is a sign as well as a medium of identity' (2007: 72) when they cited the languages spoken as an indication of the increased diversity in the area: *'it's just overwhelming all around Blanchardstown, all the foreign voices, the language'* (P50, Irl.); *'if you stand at the bus stop you will be hard pushed to hear English spoken'* (P23, Irl.). Yet, is English 'our' language, is it really a marker of Irish identity, or is there really a *'dilution of Irishness'* given the diverse way in which English is now spoken? In Ireland - an officially bilingual

country where Irish is the first official language of the state - English, the predominant global language - functions as the principal language of communication. However, English has been devoid of the symbolic importance as a marker of identity, a status reserved exclusively for Irish. Only one participant equated the Irish language at the heart of being Irish as she herself was raised through this language, albeit a minority language. English emerged as the 'language of Irish nation-building' (Fanning and Munck, 2008: 2) during the nineteenth century and despite the attempts to revive Irish, the national language, primarily through the schools in the early decades of the Irish Free State, it remains the major language of communication in Irish society. A Nigerian participant, who is frequently queried regarding his ability to speak English, raised the issue of Irish people's attachment to English by retorting: *'why are you so particular about my speaking English? Is English your language? Ask me if I speak Irish ... English is not your language so why are you proud of it?'* (P3, Nigeria)

### **The concept of 'diaspora'**

Brah's category of 'diaspora space'- the site of the three omnipresent concepts of 'diaspora', 'border' and 'politics of location' - is a site 'inhabited' not only by migrants and their offspring but also by those constructed and represented as 'indigenous' or local (1996: 181). Thus, the scope of investigation is broadened to include the relationship between the host nationals and migrants and their influence on one another (Gray, 2004: 35). Language is one area where the impact of Brah's diaspora space is evident. A large number of participants, particularly African, noted that in fact they speak English at home, not 'their' language. Migration has impacted on families so called 'home language': *'my son was born here so we speak English at home'* (P20, Cameroon). Indeed, one Irish participant, citing an example of a Polish friend who did her best to speak English to her two little boys, regarded it as *'how much they want to integrate'* (P8, Irl.), although it could arguably be viewed as more akin to assimilation.

Finally, the impact of Brah's diaspora space is also evident on the Irish 'we'; the presence of migrants has caused us to reflect on our vocabulary. Language is one area where the fear of coming across as racist becomes pertinent and an uncertainty hovered

over the terms to denote black people, *'when you think of foreigners first of all you think of the ethnic groups of the large population all the, without being rude, blacks and coloureds'* (P6, Irl.), *'I hope the terms I'm using, I'm very conscious of them ... I'm conscious of not being offensive'* (P21, Irl.). Another participant, in reference to her workplace where the Irish are in a minority, spoke of how *'you do feel like you are treading on eggshells an awful lot of the time'* (P54, Irl.), namely watching what you are saying, the language you are using. Language evolves and Fanning, commenting on the 2004 referendum, notes that *'the term non-national transcended official use by government Ministers and civil servants to become the prevalent one used by the media and general public to denote all non-Irish others'* (2007: 22) There was a marked decrease in the term from the previous study I conducted (Ní Chonaill, 2006). One of the rare participants who employed the term *'non-national'* corrected herself by saying *'I'm not supposed to say that'* (P13, Irl.). Given how language adapts, four of the focus groups raised the question of the more recent expression employed, the *'new Irish'*, although not all were in agreement as regards the appropriateness of the term; *'how can you be new Irish and not be born in the country?'* (P37, Irl.), while another Irish participant put forward the view that *'they don't want to be Irish'* (P12, Irl.). In the diaspora space language is changing and evolving. The NCCRI took action to address the complex issue of terminology with their publication entitled *Improving Government Services to Minority Ethnic Groups. Useful Terminology for Service Providers* (2007), but the terms are not filtering down - leadership from the government is required, in consultation with ethnic minority communities, to employ language acceptable to all.

Finally, following on from the phenomenon of *'treading on eggshells'* and caution regarding language, the perception was that communication was being impeded, in addition to a divide created: *'you can't say anything to them. If you say anything to them you are called a racist'* (P37, Irl.). This is linked then to the issue of voicing opinions and speaking out. A number of focus groups raised the issue of Irish people being *'very reluctant to speak about things, to say what we feel. We don't say what we think for fear of being racist'* (P34, Irl.). However, this view was voiced particularly strongly in one group comprising Irish people from one of the more disadvantaged areas of

Blanchardstown, who viewed themselves as not being listened to, unlike those from the more affluent areas of the south side of Dublin:

*because for people here to articulate what they want to say, because of their feelings around it, because of what has been landed here they're deemed racist and if the same thing was happening on the south side they wouldn't be. They'd get out and say whatever they had to say and rightfully so, they would be heard over there and people aren't heard here (P41, Irl.).*

## **Culture**

Recent debates have raised questions about the nature of Irish culture (Kuhling and Keohane, 2007) in the context of the huge social, economic and cultural restructuring that Irish society experienced over the last 15 years. Cultural difference is frequently seen as concerning 'them', the follow-on being that 'we' are all the same, that is monocultural. Culture, as a concept, has proved difficult to define. Wright (1998) contrasts the old anthropological definition of culture as the whole way of life of a group or society, a set of ideas and meanings shared by a homogeneous population, with the newer vision of it as not bounded or static, but dynamic. With the advent of new racism, or rather cultural racism, culture has become a euphemism for race. The term 'new racism', coined by Barker (1981), was advanced to explain racist discourse regarding black and ethnic minority groups in Britain, where the exclusion of Others was argued, not on biological, but on cultural grounds (Fanning, 2002: 17). The new theory of racism is constructed as the defence of a culture, or way of life, with immigrants being viewed as threatening the unity of the nation (Lentin, A. 2004: 92). The tendency is thus to reformulate the nation in terms of culture, which can lead to the reification of groups. But no culture, on the level of the nation-state or migrant communities, is homogeneous. Hence differences also need to be comprehended within the same culture, in addition to within individual subjects (Whitaker, 2004).

### **Culture: a factor of unification and division**

In a similar fashion to language, culture can be a unifying factor, but also a dividing factor between 'them' and 'us'. Migrants are perceived as '*different*', they '*don't have the same values as we do*' (P6, Irl.), suggesting that cultural differences do not concern 'us',

therefore we are all the same. Kuhling and Keohane argue that ‘immigrants, simply by their presence, affirm our way of life’, ‘our Irish culture’, ‘our identity’ (2007: 68/9). One migrant participant highlighted the dynamic nature of culture, *‘no matter how you want to preserve your culture the whole thing is open’* (P3, Nigeria), while another underlined how it is not homogenous *‘being Irish you have your own culture but you have some differences, it is normal’* (P16, Italy). While culture is seen as uniting what ‘we’ have in common, one Irish participant cites an example of the divide created by culture: *‘You know the family room; I was told there are certain days now where the Irish can’t go in, it’s for their (migrants’) culture alone’* (P40, Irl.). Although the school’s clarification did not substantiate this perception, the idea of a boundary between ‘them’ and ‘us’ prevails.

### **Cultural differences**

Stereotypes were reproduced on both sides when referring to cultural differences. Where stereotyping ‘reduces, essentialises, naturalises and fixes “difference”’ (Hall, 1997: 258), Africans were portrayed on occasion as *‘loud’* (P9, Irl.) and *‘lazy’* (P6, Irl.), Eastern Europeans as drink drivers *‘they are all hopping into the cars and they’ve been drinking’* (P30, Irl.). This is in keeping with Kuhling and Keohane’s argument that the Other always appears to be excessive in some way: ‘We know that we drink, even that we drink a lot, but we say that they drink too much. We drink and drive and have a lax attitude to rules and regulations, but they, the immigrants, are “even worse than us!”’ (2007: 69). Furthermore, the *‘them’* is perceived as a homogeneous group: *‘you kind of group them all together there’s so many of them, but you still group them all together and you can still get the same image’* (P29, Irl.). Sniderman and Hagendoorn observe that the prevailing image of the Other is one of a group as opposed to individuals, thus differences between ‘them’ are diminished and differences between ‘them’ and ‘us’ consequently maximized (2007: 44).

The Other, however, perceives the Irish as drinkers (P5, Zimbabwe), with drink seen as rooted at the heart of Irish culture: *‘if you don’t drink here you don’t really socialise here’* and yet as one migrant participant explained, when you go out at night you do not see immigrants drinking or clubbing, *‘the demand on us is big, we can’t afford to waste those kind of scarce resources’* (P3, Nigeria). Hence there is an additional barrier to

socialising with the Irish. One migrant participant spoke of the how stereotyping and generalising stems from the ‘fear of the Other’ (P25, DR Congo). Curtis (1984) and Hayes (2006) amongst others, have underlined how in the works of various English writers the Irish have been represented as Other in a bid to endorse the colonialist project. Giraldus De Barri, who visited Ireland in the early twelfth century, wrote an account of his travels, underlining the vices of the Irish people, depicting them as ‘a barbaric, bestial, corrupt, filthy and immoral Other’, a stereotype which was to prevail for centuries (Hayes, 2006: 83). As Kuhling and Keohane argue, ‘Ireland’s problematic relationship to immigration, migrant workers and refugees can be interpreted against this backdrop of trauma, ambivalence and amnesia’ (2007: 66). The new ‘reinvented Ireland’ to cite Kirby, et al, is founded on the repression and denial of many aspects of Ireland’s history and its negative representation (2002: 197). Despite some links drawn between Ireland’s past emigration and current immigration, as was noted in the previous chapter, we still have a lot to learn from the experience of migrants, as one migrant participant observed: *‘lots of Irish people, they forget that lots of Irish people themselves knew the same situation in years gone by. They left for Australia, they left for England, and they left for the United States. They confronted the same situation, they forget the past’* (P24, DR Congo).

Migrants themselves alluded to differences between their culture and that of the Irish, with one of the participants referring to the fact that *‘In Romania and, from what I have heard in other countries, people in estates they have more of a community ... they talk to each other more like it used to be here years ago’* (P15 Romania), which was corroborated by a Nigerian participant and a Polish participant who spoke of the *‘open door policy back home’* (P2, Poland). This is in keeping with the findings of Feldman et al’s study where participants noted a more limited sense of community in Ireland, as opposed to that in their countries of origin (2008: 143). Notwithstanding that, Irish participants also spoke about the changes experienced by Irish society - the fact that *‘Irish people keep to themselves. It wasn’t like that years ago where everybody helped everybody else’* (P49, Irl.). Hobsbawm underlines the increasingly indiscriminate and empty employment of the term ‘community’ at a time when communities in the sociological sense become difficult to locate (1994: 428). Bauman maintains that identity

‘sprouts on the graveyard of communities’ (2001: 129), or indeed to cite Jock Young’s compact exegesis: ‘Just as communities collapse, identity is invented’ (1999: 164).

### **The role of migrants in changing culture**

Culture, to echo Spencer is ‘always in the making’ (2006: 134), it is not static but dynamic, as has been argued earlier. The change that culture in Ireland has undergone is also acknowledged : *‘even with the St Patrick’s Day parade you see that is changing and stuff like the cultural diversity’* (P29 Irl.); the headscarf, *‘that also is becoming part of our culture’* (P41, Irl.). Migrants are identified by one group of Irish participants as instigators in this cultural transformation, *‘they want us to change’* (P38, Irl.). Another Irish participant gave an example of the local school : *‘since the foreign national kids have joined our school we don’t have any holy days off ... so that’s not living up to our Irish culture changing our ways again for the foreign nationals’* (P37, Irl.), the local and the national being aligned once again. The school in question explained that the decision taken not to close for individual holy days such as the 8<sup>th</sup> December, but rather to group days together was taken in light of facilitating working parents and had nothing to do with a more diverse student body (P99, Irl.). *‘They are bringing their culture over to our culture and expect us to drop our culture. They want us to turn around for them’* (P17, Irl.) exclaimed another participant voicing opposition to the perceived impact of migration on the cultural realm. However, the Irish participants, almost exclusively feel that the onus is on the migrants to adapt to ‘our’ way of doing things, *‘sometimes they say that’s the way we do it in our country but understand it is done our way’* (P9, Irl.); *‘I think they should learn some of our cultural values’* (P31, Irl.). This can be seen as an attempt to cling to shared notions of ‘community’ and ‘identity’ in the postmodern era.

### **Colliding identities: a clash of cultures**

While the discussion on any occasion did not go as far as defending ‘our culture’, one group spoke of cultures in contact being in conflict, alluding to *‘a clash of cultures’* (P41, Irl.). Gender was one factor identified, *‘when the men come over here they expect us to be the same. They can’t understand that the Irish woman, she has a vote, she has a say’* (P17, Irl.), the way they treat their women *‘different to the way men would treat us’* (P30,

Irl.). In both instances *'they'* were undefined Others. It must be noted that gender did not emerge as a prominent theme from the data collected from both migrant and Irish participants. Only one Irish participant discerned the second factor, namely religion, with Muslims explicitly referred to: *'There's a big thing round the hidjab right now and how Muslims wear that ... to me that's a threat to my identity as a woman'* (P41, Irl.) *'you feel on some level that has been imposed on your culture ... they can choose to wear that freely'* (P41, Irl.). In their study of the Netherlands, Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2007) found that threats to cultural identity had a far greater impact on hostility to minorities than any other kind of threat such as an economic one. They also identified the status of women in Muslim culture as a source of conflict of values between Western Europeans and Muslim immigrants (2007: 21). Lamont similarly found evidence of strong boundaries constructed around Muslim immigrants in France (2000: 239). In the above quote gender and religion are linked as the case of the Wexford school principal who sought guidelines from the Department of Education regarding the wearing of the head scarf in schools and the media coverage that ensued was the background to the comment (Mac Cormaic, 2008a). However, it must be noted that the issue of Muslims was not a dominant theme, rather restricted to comments from one service provider who raised the issue of religious gatherings in residential houses due to a lack of a mosque in Blanchardstown and the logistical problems such as parking encountered by locals as a result (P36, Irl.) and a Muslim participant who spoke of the abuse his wife experiences as a result of wearing the headscarf (P67, South Africa). As part of the background research, members of the Muslim Women in Dublin 15 group (2008) were consulted and because they did not reside in the Blanchardstown area, they were not included as participants in this study. However, they identified a need for a more focused study regarding Muslim women.

Brah maintains that *'some constructions of difference such as racism posit fixed and immutable boundaries between groups signified as inherently different'* (1996: 125-6). However, despite the emphasis on differences between *'them'* and *'us'*, the porousness as opposed to the impermeability of the boundaries is evident. Numerous participants, both Irish and non-Irish, portrayed children as being able to overcome obstacles, citing examples of their offspring mixing with different nationalities: *'all the kids ... they get*



*along, they integrate very well, they play with each other'* (P14, Nigeria). Age was a factor identified by Irish participants as influencing people's acceptance of migrants. Participants spoke of younger people, children particularly, having *'a better acceptance level of difference'* (P8, Irl.), *'children don't know different colours and nationalities'* (P23, Irl.), they accept the more multicultural society *'as normal'* (P13, Irl.). The idea of the *'fear of the Other'*, mentioned above, was alluded to *'because kids are learning to mix at an earlier age, it's not as frightening'* (P8, Irl.). For children, particularly those at primary level in the local schools, mixing with different nationalities and cultural backgrounds is the norm. However, the same is not necessarily the case for adults, as perceived by migrants: *'it would be nice to know that the Irish would like to socialise a bit beyond with foreigners and they are not afraid of foreigners'* (P2, Poland). One participant who perceived a change as regards the neighbours' behaviour towards himself and his family, traced a certain *'open mindedness'* to possibly *'meeting the Other'*: *'people got used to it given the massive arrival of foreigners, of immigrants of different origins, they got used to the situation, they didn't find anything different, thus they adapted'* (P24, DR Congo). Unlike the children who have ready-made situations in schools or at the playground, as regards the older age groups, exchanges or opportunities need to be created: *'you need to mix and let people know you might be different on the outside but they are the same on the inside'* (P8, Irl.). Division can take place at local events: one service provider spoke of how the CELEBRATE<sup>16</sup> festivals were seen by the local communities as something for *'foreign nationals not for themselves'* (P71, Irl.). One of the objectives of the very successful Meitheal project was *'to assist the host population in understanding and valuing the social contribution of newcomers'* (Murphy, 2007: 13). Similarly, one of its shortcomings noted was that it *'didn't engage with the community here as opposed to the new communities'* (P71, Irl.). In the evaluation of this project notwithstanding significant achievements, it was noted that progress regarding the area of cultural and social inclusion, both in terms of new communities and the host community, was *'slower'* (Murphy, 2007: 41). According to the manager of the Blanchardstown Area

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<sup>16</sup> Two CELEBRATE festivals were held in October 2006 and 2007, an event organised by the Meitheal Project in collaboration with Fingal County Council. Murphy states that *'a general consensus was that intercultural awareness was heightened considerably among all of the target groups during the CELEBRATE festival and that it provided a high profile for Meitheal'* (2007: 30).

Partnership (BAP), Linda Curran, the learning from the Meitheal project is something that the organisation has taken on board, *'rather than hold separate events, the focus is now on bringing the whole community together'* (Curran, 2009). An example of this is the Community Family Day held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008 by BAP in conjunction with the local *Gardaí*. In contrast to previous events organised to celebrate diversity, this event celebrated all families living in Blanchardstown.

### **Differential treatment regarding resources**

The issue of resources was dealt with in the previous chapter. Irish participants outlined the impact they saw migrants as having on welfare payments, housing and schools. As could be gleaned from some of the quotes, a 'them' and 'us' situation is created which will now be analysed in more detail. *'They'* are seen as being treated differently from *'us'* as regards housing, *'they get an apartment with the social welfare paying for it'* (P37, Irl.) while the Irish *'born and bred here'* do not (P37, Irl.). This is then extended to other welfare benefits or money coming from the government: *'How can they afford these cars (08 taxis), they must be getting grants off the government'* (P53, Irl.). The personal experiences expressed by those from the lower socio-economic groups differentiate between the *'foreigners'* and the Irish *'us'* and *'they'* are perceived as benefiting from the process, *'they are getting what they want, when they want'* (P37, Irish). A second group concurred with one participant exclaiming *'I know that 99% of the Irish don't know about the handouts that they're entitled to'* (P54, Irl.) and the perceived consequence of *'them'* *'getting far too many handouts from the country'* is that *'Irish people are becoming second class citizens'* (P53, Irl.). The Other is thus constructed as a drain on resources, profiting from the system, with Irish people losing out: *'a lot of people I know say they are all out to cheat the system'* (P30, Irl.). *'They'* are considered as being very clued-in regarding entitlements, despite the data and studies (MRCI, 2007) often contradicting this: *'but they know everything that they're entitled to and they tell each other. People coming into this country should work ... but these people come into the country and they just want handouts, like I'm not being racist'* (P53, Irl.).

Discussion of social rights becomes distorted into a deliberation of privileges that need to be reserved or defended for 'natural' beneficiaries: a parent cited an example of

differential treatment in a school setting, noting *'my child who was born here doesn't have the right to have a full education and be happy and secure in school life because people are afraid to tread on eggshells'* (P54, Irl.). *'They'* are perceived as getting preferential treatment *'they are telling our government that they are hungry. Our government that we don't see is just writing, signing the cheques'* (P17, Irl.). However, this does not extend to the Irish: *'they are not going to write you out a cheque for a buggy, they will for a foreign national'* (P37, Irl.); *'It's different rules for the immigrants than what there is for us'* (P17, Irl.). These participants discussed the possibility of giving a different name, *'a foreign name'* next time they had to deal with the Council in order to get a quicker response. The feeling that migrants get preferential treatment regarding local authority housing was raised in the previous chapter. The idea of not being able to voice opinions, for *'fear of being racist'*, was alluded to earlier. One participant explained the sentiments voiced regarding the unequal distribution of resources as follows: *'I think there's a strong overriding sense of people in these areas feeling disenfranchised and it's not about racism. In some ways it appears like racism but it's about people feeling that other people are coming into the country and are getting everything'* (P41, Irl.).

The focus on culture can be critiqued for its failure to deal with power relations. McVeigh underlines the necessity of an understanding of 'otherness' structured by power (1992: 43) where unequal relations reign. As regards economics, the issue of allocating resources and who has the power to do so must also be considered. The notion of power relations is also crucial to 'belonging' which is constructed, as argued earlier, through means of inclusion and exclusion (Dalal, 2008: 128). While boundaries are drawn at a local level, although frequently projected onto a national level, the state contributes to this construction of 'us' and 'them'.

### **Construction of identity: the national 'us'**

The propensity to conflate nation and state (Connor, 1994: 38) was referred to earlier, the consequence being one official national identity produced by the state, striving for uniformity, to unite the 'us'. To speak of a single national identity is to reify the idea of a culturally homogeneous nation and assume that the significance of the nation is identical for all (Thompson et al, 1999: 53). Applying identity as theorised earlier to the collective

level of cultural identity, there is no stable sense of oneness, sameness, belonging, no sense of homogeneity cited in certain explanations of nation as a form of identity (Connor, 1994: 36). Delanty (1996) describes the form of national identity prevalent today, new nationalism, as ‘banal’ (Billig, 1995), but also ‘cultural’, concerned with safeguarding difference. As was argued earlier, in the context of globalization the narrative of the nation is being retold and the state plays a role in the process. Lentin (2001), similarly to others (Balibar, 2002, Gilroy, 1987 and Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992), recognises an affinity between nationalism and racism, both of which exclude by the very nature of their inclusion. Miles notes the key part played by the discourse of ‘race’ in the creation of myths of national origin (1989: 31), Ireland being no exception (Fanning, 2002: 9). The idea of the Irish race was used in the nineteenth century Catholic Irish nationalist rhetoric ‘to negate claims of the inferiority of the Irish within colonial ideology’ (Fanning, 2002: 9), hence the construction of a homogeneous view of the ‘true’ Irish people and culture.

### **The role of the state in the construction of identity – the homogenous ‘we’**

Classification, to cite Bauman (1991), fundamentally concerns excluding or setting apart, and, as has already been argued, the state possesses the power to categorise as ‘Others’. The legal and administrative categories employed by the state serve to include in and exclude from the ‘imagined community’, but also play an important role in both the dominant and marginalised groups’ definition of themselves and each other (Loyal, 2003: 83). As was highlighted in the previous chapter, what was clear from the data was a dearth of information and widespread confusion regarding entitlements and the different categories. Urban myths were referred to in two groups, such as ‘them’ getting free baby-buggies (Moriarty, 2005) from social services – *‘I know for a fact they get €450 prams’* (P38, Irl.), *‘they get their hair done, €360’* (P35, Irl.) *‘and our government pays for it’* (P17, Irl.), *‘living in mortgage free houses, nice cars, you know they are getting their clothes allowance without an eye being blinked at them, again the buggies’* (P53, Irl.). Once again the perception of the Other is of a homogeneous group and the stereotype alluded to earlier is reproduced here, that migrants are *‘freeloaders, that they do not*

*work*', the assumption being that the state i.e. *'our government pays for it'* (P17, Irl.), the free prams, houses, cars.

Furthermore, the state's involvement in the construction of identity, through print and other media which produce and reinforce emotionally charged notions of collective identity (Corcoran, 2000: 28-9), was evident. Migrants were particularly critical of the media which was perceived as *'polarising'*, *'playing up against the immigrants'* (P67, South Africa), or on the other hand, the national newspapers were seen as not reporting the multicultural situation (P24, DR Congo), *'you would never think there are immigrants in this area'* (P67, South Africa). The tabloid press was also criticised for their coverage *'people have been left to make up their mind based on what they read in the newspapers, News of the World, the Sun'* (P3, Nigerian), acting as a source of information, myths, stereotyping. In keeping with Lynch's argument (2008: 4), the media can, on the one hand, be pivotal in bringing issues of discrimination to the fore, but on the other hand, it also plays a role in stereotyping and scapegoating ethnic minorities.

Despite globalisation, the state, in addition to constructing identity, is the key player in racial matters: it has the power to deliver resources along racial lines, to advance or impede racial discrimination (Winant, 2004: 3). As has been mentioned earlier, the government was cited as a source of racism: *'I feel that the government have made, created a lot of racism because of the handouts that will be given in one direction and won't be given in the other'* (P54, Irl.). As alluded to in a quotation in the previous chapter, lack of planning on the part of the state regarding immigration was another factor perpetuating bad feeling: *'there was no planning by the government'* (P34, Irl.), *'it wasn't very well thought out by the authorities beforehand'* (P25, DR Congo). Hence the power of the state not only to include and exclude, but also to construct identity, must be recognised as state categorisation and actions feed into and influence perceptions at a local level.

## **Conclusion**

In the age of migration, identity acquires increased saliency. In this chapter the postmodernist view of identity as constructed was put forward before outlining participants' definition of the Irish. Then the focus shifted from identity at a national

level, to a local level. Evidence of boundaries found in the data was examined. These included linguistic and cultural differences and differential treatment regarding resources - drawn at a local level between 'them' and 'us'. The local perceptions feed into the national perceptions, as participants frequently aligned a local 'we' to a national 'we'. Language was considered as one means of differentiation, with examples cited of how language is creating a palpable divide between 'them' and 'us', of language as a barrier, as a means of inclusion and exclusion, a means of identifying members and non-members and finally the impact of Brah's (1996) concept of 'diaspora space' on language. The diasporic space challenges boundaries, they can be shifted and broken down: migration has impacted on families' home language but it has also affected the vocabulary of the Irish 'us' and Irish participants spoke of the reluctance to speak out *'for fear of being racist'*. Culture functions similarly as a factor of unification and division, stereotypes were reproduced regarding difference on the part of Irish and migrant participants. Migrants were perceived by some as agents in the production of cultural change in Irish society and there was some reference to *'a clash of cultures'*, primarily involving gender and religion. Boundaries which are socially drawn may however be redrawn and children were portrayed as breaking down barriers and overcoming differences. Lastly, on the issue of differential treatment regarding resources, as discussed by the lower socioeconomic groups, once again boundaries constructed on a local level fed into the perceptions of the 'imagined community' at a national level. Indeed frequently in the discussion participants aligned a local 'we' to a national 'we'. Throughout the analysis the state's role in the process, in striving for homogeneity and defining the 'us' and the Other, was acknowledged.

## Chapter 5: Colour as a marker of difference

### Summary

This chapter examines the example of colour as a racialised boundary. Colour was widely recognised as a signifier of difference, by both Irish and migrant participants. There were numerous examples of ‘blackness’ as a marker of difference in the data, highlighted by both Irish and black participants alike. Notions of black and white thus acted as signifiers of inclusion and exclusion. Stereotypes were cited regarding Africans, in particular Nigerians, being targeted. Personal examples of differential treatment provided by black participants are in keeping with the findings of research regarding discrimination. However, the issue of racism and discrimination was not limited solely to these participants but raised also by Irish participants who spoke of what they perceive as unfair treatment of white children in local school settings. The idea of a lack of voice was raised on both sides, on the Irish side the *‘fear of being racist’* and on the migrant side a lack of forum for expression. Once again children were regarded as the positive way forward although some caution was expressed regarding how they are treated. The state has a role to play in fighting racial discrimination and the recent funding cut-backs in the Equality Authority budget and the complete erasure of the NCCRI do not bode well for the fight against racism, regarding which the government cannot afford to be complacent.

### Introduction

O’Toole affirms that a profound abstruseness regarding ‘race’ has distinguished Irishness in the past (2000: 20) and is still apparent today. Having analysed the construction of identity - an act of power, based on the exclusion of the Other (Hall, 1996: 4/5) - in the previous chapter, one of the crudest indicators of ‘difference’, namely non-white appearance will be addressed in this chapter. First some key terms pertinent to the topic will be defined. Then the role of colour, which, similar to culture is a signifier of racial difference, will be outlined and examples provided from the data to illustrate this. Next, participants’ terminology will be discussed. The binary terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ as essentially fixed oppositional categories will also be unpacked. Then the ambiguity of the Irish case will be highlighted, tracing how the Irish ‘became white’ in the US, before outlining how Irishness became conflated with whiteness and investigating this in the data. The Irish example is interesting as it reveals the limitations of the black-white paradigm which will be discussed in light of the internal hierarchy visible within the ‘white’ category. Power relations between blacks and whites will then be examined with

examples provided of how the black participants are singled out, before the hierarchy existing within the 'black' category is also highlighted. The issue of racism and discrimination, raised by both Irish and migrant participants, will also be explored. The chapter will conclude by acknowledging the role played by the government and the media in the racialisation of the Other and the reaffirmation of whiteness in the contemporary era.

### **Colour as a marker of a racialised boundary**

As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) have demonstrated, any signifier – be it biological, cultural, linguistic or religious – can be utilised to construct racialised boundaries. Hence colour-centred racism, targeted at non-white groups, is but one of a number of types - albeit a prominent one - which is reflected in the data gathered for this research. Racism cannot be reduced to the singular but exists rather in the plural (Brah, 1996: 167). Although 'race' cannot be contracted exclusively to a question of skin colour, Kenan (2008: 141) underlines how the idea of 'race' is interwoven with the concept of 'colour' nowadays. Furthermore, blackness has long been considered the paramount signifier of the visible Otherness (Nobel, 2005: 153). Burns describes colour as 'the most obvious outward manifestation of race ... the criterion by which men are judged' (1948, cited in Fanon, 1967: 118).

The '*visible presence of migrants in Dublin 15*' (P34, Irl.), noted by participants was referred to in chapter 2. The Other, just like the Self, is not homogeneous – to cite Fanon, 'Negro experience is not a whole, for there is not merely *one* Negro, there are *Negroes*' (1967, 136). The tendency to homogenise migrants into the one 'category' was referred to in the previous chapter. However, further probing underlines the centrality of their '*visible*' difference, namely, African women '*are very easy to distinguish because of the colour of their skin so it is very easy to pick them out*' (P8, Irl.). Black participants corroborated this, speaking about their experience '*you are different, you are seen*' (P3, Nigeria); '*we are black, we are different*' (P24, DR Congo). Based purely on physical appearance or skin colour, Eastern Europeans are not as markedly '*different*', to cite an Irish participant, the Poles would not be '*as conspicuous*' (P43, Irl.), rather their accents



are noticed. While *'foreign'* is not necessarily explicitly equated with *'coloured'* or *'black'*, the examples that are provided of migrants getting preferential treatment over Irish people as regards local authority housing and welfare payments almost invariably involved *'black people'*: it was *'black fellas driving 08 merks'* who *'must be getting grants'* (P53, Irl.); *'a widower, a coloured guy with two children'* (P35, Irl.) got a house instead of a neighbour, and it was a Nigerian woman who has been *'transferred four times to four separate houses'* (P36, Irl.), since *'if you are black you will get provided with another (house) no problem'* (P35, Irl.). The justification for the focus on blacks reiterates what was said above, skin colour as a distinguishing feature, underlining the prominence of their racial difference. Rolston and Shannon (2002: 2) refute the argument that Irish encounters with 'people of colour' are new, tracing the phenomenon back to the Viking era. These participants cited bear witness to the fact that the Irish nation has not 'got used' to the presence of black people.

### **Terminology**

Dyer (1999: 543) discusses the political problem surrounding the appellations appropriate for designating people who are not white, opting for the term 'non-white'. Although cognisant of the negativity of this choice, 'black' omits a wide variety of people such as Jews and Asians who are neither white nor black. This underpins the black/white polarity which we need to move beyond. He also considers the popular American term 'people of colour' as inadequate since it reinforces the notion that some people have colour while others, namely whites, do not (1999: 543). As was referred to in the previous chapter, participants demonstrated a certain reluctance to refer to colour: *'I don't know if black is the right word to use, but some of the African countries possibly'* (P21, Irl.); *'but there's a few, I'm using the term again like black people, but they tend to stick together'* (P30, Irl.). Hesitation to using the term 'black' was not associated with its inadequacy as a term to cover all non-white people as argued by Dyer (1999), but rather was almost seen as racist or taboo: *'here's a person after moving in across the road. I'll say a black person, I can't say foreign national. I was never racist but I am now'* (P38, Irl.). The terms *'coloured'* (P8, Irl.; P38, Irl.; P6, Irl.) or *'African'* (P8, Irl., P21, Irl.) were also employed.

### **The construction of blackness and whiteness: a dialectic process**

Just as ‘race’ is a social and political construction, so too are binaries, of which black/white is but one example: ‘whiteness and blackness were both historically created and historically variable categories’ (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 29). Indeed the Irish, as will be illustrated next, have been depicted as both black and white and in-between, where these categories correspond to status (Garner, 2004: 7). According to Goldberg, whiteness, in social terms, represents ‘status and superiority’, in political terms ‘power and control’, in economic terms ‘privilege and property’ and in cultural terms ‘self-assertion and arrogance’ (2002: 196). The invisibility of whiteness as a racial position requires challenging. Considered as ‘racially unmarked’ since they were ‘racially invisible’, or failing to recognise themselves as racially coloured, whites were in a position to assume power as ‘the norm of humanity’ (Goldberg, 1997: 83) and define the Other in racial terms in relation to themselves. Fanon underlines the relational construction of blackness – ‘a white man’s artefact’ (1967: 14) - in opposition to whiteness. Goldberg elucidates that race proffers visibility or invisibility on to those it categorises, and it may be employed strategically ‘to promote or deny recognition, social elevation, and status’ (1997: 87).

### **Irish racism: an ambiguous history**

As McVeigh (1992) and others since - Lentin (2001), Fanning (2002), Garner (2004) - argue, racism in Ireland is not a new phenomenon that manifested itself in the late 1990s with the influx of in-migration, rather it is a complex issue. Ireland has been described as ‘quintessentially “between two worlds” – both perpetrator and survivor of racism’ (McVeigh and Lentin, 2002: 8). As Hall outlines (2000: 217), Ireland constituted Britain’s first ‘colony’, the Irish being thus the first group to be racialised within British imperialism. Similarly to representations of the Irish as Other, as cited in the previous chapter, historical examples of the racialisation of the Irish within British colonialism abound such as the nineteenth century Cambridge historian Charles Kingsley’s account of the Irish as white ‘human chimpanzees’ (Curtis, 1968, cited in Ní Shuinéar, 2002: 180). During the Irish experience of emigration, ‘No blacks no Irish’ was the sign that

symbolised discrimination faced at the hands of landlords in Britain, which Irish participants referred to. What is perhaps less well known is the story of how the Irish ‘became white’ in the United States, to cite the title of Noel Ignatiev’s book. ‘White’ is a dynamic as opposed to a static, fixed category and it was not always clear down through history on which side of the colour line the Irish were situated (Ignatiev, 1995: 111). The Irish emigrants, referred to as Blacks ‘inside out’ (Roediger, 2002: 329), were racialised in the US. Ignatiev contends that ‘while the white skin made the Irish eligible for membership in the white race, it did not guarantee their admission; they had to earn it’ (1995: 59). The Irish attained whiteness by distancing themselves from others, in particular from blacks (Garner, 2004: 112).

### **Ireland’s role in colonisation**

Similarly to the complexity regarding racism in the Irish context is ‘Ireland’s ambiguous status as part-colonised and part-colonising, white but arguably subaltern, perpetrator and victim’ (Mac Einrí, 2006: 260). Ireland’s exposure to colonial ideologies of western superiority that justified the suppression of black people derives from Irish participation in the army, the colonial police force and administration, and the missions (Fanning, 2002: 13). Tim Pat Coogan calls to mind how colonial ideologies of racial superiority emerged in missionary nationalism:

We were brought up believing that Africans as a class were as much in need of the civilising influences of the Irish religions as parched earth was of water. It was an image propagated by missionary magazines with their pictures of a big beaming Irish priest, generally robed in white, surrounding by a group of adoring, chubby little black children (2000: 508).

One group specifically referred to the ‘black babies’<sup>17</sup>: *‘If anyone can think back to the years when you were going to school. Do you remember getting boxed around and lashed for not having a penny for the black babies and now they are here, they are back and taking over, like taking our rights’* (P38, Irish). Her colleague concluded, *‘we gave them too much’* (P37, Irish). As the contemporary Irish case demonstrates, to have been a

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<sup>17</sup> A picture of the ‘black babies’, namely the children in the missions, usually figured on the front of the collection boxes commonly found in the classrooms of Irish Catholic schools (Mac Einrí, 2006: 272).

victim of racial oppression, does not stop someone from subsequently oppressing others (Mc Veigh, 1992).

### **The racialisation of the Irish**

As noted in the previous chapter, ‘race’ served as a portentous instrument in strengthening the nationalist project. Hence the racialisation of the Irish was not just a product of British and American attitudes, but also of the Irish nationalists’ own construction of identity. While Mac Éinrí argues that considering the whiteness of Ireland as a core element of the early Irish Free State would be an overstatement, he concludes that the ‘whiteness’ of the Irish was undoubtedly taken ‘as a given’ (2006: 268). A relationship was established post-independence between ‘Irishness’ and ‘citizenship’ on the one hand and ‘whiteness’ and ‘Catholicism’ on the other (Loyal, 2003: 89). The Irish ‘nation’ in the modern day has been described as culturally, religiously or even racially defined as a narrow exclusionary ‘we’ (Fanning, 2002). The notion of what constitutes ‘looking Irish’ ‘corresponds to terms such as “white” and “European” in popular thought’ (Garner, 2004: 72). Indeed, Garner observes that whiteness as a norm was omitted from definitions of Irishness as if such a characteristic were ‘natural’ and ‘uncontested’ (2004: 248).

It was apparent from the participants’ discussions that categories of ‘visibility’ (Gray, 2004: 141) were one factor involved in establishing identity. On a number of occasions whiteness was conflated with Irishness. One participant professed that *‘like the majority of time that I’ve gone (to the doctors) I’ve been the only white person or the only Irish person’* (P30, Irl.). Another participant, speaking about the area where she lives, affirmed *‘everybody there is black, so I’m the only white person on the block’* (P38, Irl.). As her colleague added, *‘they call her spot the Irish’* (P17, Irl.). While a black participant touched on this need to be cautious not to conflate colour with nationality, when defining what it meant to be Irish : *‘because of the dynamics of the new people, you wouldn’t want to say white, English speaking resident. It would connote the facts of Irish, but that doesn’t mean now. It’s just a physical description’*, he then voiced the common link

established *'if you see a white person in Ireland or in Dublin you'll just assume that the person is Irish'* (P66, Nigeria).

The relational construction of blackness in opposition to whiteness was underlined on occasion: *'I don't like to be racist but it overwhelms you and on the bus when you look around you say, oh my God, I'm the only white person here'* (P50, Irl.), or in relation to the local school: *'I was shocked when this classroom of children just came out and walked around and went back in but there was one in three children black'* (P45, Irl.). The presence of black people in the area is reflected in the statistics, with Nigerians comprising the largest group of non-Irish nationals, and was also reflected in the number of black participants interviewed. It was something that younger participants mentioned that they had got used to in the area: *'but even when you are walking to the local shops or anything, like it's not strange the way it was years ago if you saw a coloured person you were like ahhh they are coloured'* (P6, Irl.).

While Irishness and whiteness were not always conflated explicitly, on occasion *'migrant'* or *'non-Irish'* and skin colour were conflated, juxtaposed with the whiteness of the Irish: *'but even I was out on Saturday night and the pub was jammed and I think there was only one or two coloured people in the whole pub and then I went onto a night club after that and I'd say there was about 200 people there and I'd say 20 if even were migrants'* (P6, Irl.). That said, some younger participants see this conflation as limited to the older generation: *'where as if you said immigrants to the older generation they'd think of Bosnians, black people. But now I think our generation sees black people as just mixed into Ireland, that's Ireland'* (P29, Irl.), although the comments of all the participants from this age group, such as the preceding citation, did not always support this. What was notable was that blackness was a visible marker of difference. Despite the high profile nature of a number of Irish non-white musicians and sports stars such as Phil Lynott, Samantha Mumba, Seán Óg Ó hAilpín and Jason Sherlock, the conflation of *'whiteness'* - as symbolic of national collectivity and of admittance to belonging - and Irishness is reflected in a small number of the participants' views. Blacks are perceived as excluded from the imagined community, placed outside its contours. Ireland is thus represented as a *'white'* nation, *'the fictive homogeneity of a constantly evoked but never*

defined “us” (Ní Shuinéar, 2002: 177). To reiterate Garner (2004): whiteness as a norm is often left unstated.

### **Deconstructing racial categories**

While racism concerns power, it intersects with and fortifies other power differentials across class, gender, sexuality and disability (McVeigh and Lentin, 2002: 37). Thus not all white ethnicities are dominant, and not all ‘whites’ are advantaged (Gabriel, 1998: 4). As the Irish example also illustrates, whiteness is not a homogeneous category. Hence power relations exist within the category of whiteness just as they do between blacks and whites. One illustration of the hierarchical ordering within the white grouping is the example of ‘organic’ Irish racism, concerning Travellers. Long constituted as an invisible minority, Travellers were constructed as the symbolic other in relation to the dominant imagined ‘sedentary’ community (McVeigh, 1992: 41). Court observes that the terms ‘black’ and ‘dirty’, employed by the English in relation to the Irish, have been applied by the settled Irish in connection with ‘Tinkers’ (cited in McVeigh, 1992: 40). McVeigh (1992: 40) links the racialisation of the Irish Travelling population to the racialisation of black people, underscoring the interrelations between different racisms, despite the fact that the Irish public strongly resist acknowledging the treatment of Travellers as racism (O’Connell, 2002: 52). It is necessary to go beyond the black/white model to comprehend the disadvantage suffered by some of the Irish diaspora such as the Irish in the UK or indeed within the nation by groups such as Travellers, or other marginalised groups left behind in the ‘Celtic Tiger’. The much quoted scene from the film *The Commitments* ‘the Northside Dubliners are the blacks o’ Dublin’ (cited in Fanning, 2002: 22), encapsulates the inequality and hierarchy prevailing within the category ‘whiteness’. This hierarchy in socio-economic terms was evident amongst participants in the study, who ranged from professionals to those unemployed.

Lentin and McVeigh (2006: 37) argue that Irishness is purposively being associated with whiteness in Ireland where migration is challenging monolithic notions of ‘whiteness’. Racialisation is not limited to the colour line, but also relates to ethnic and cultural differences, although as Lentin observes, ‘it is clear that Blackness is less

optional than, say, cultural difference, which may allow greater possibilities of “passing” (2000: 8). However, to reiterate the point made in the previous chapter, Eastern European participants still spoke of a ‘*stigma towards foreigners and immigrants*’, based on accent as opposed to skin colour and spoke about ‘*I keep having a problem when I’m judged before somebody, even before I talk so sometimes it bothers me*’ (P15, Romania). Hence, this is a further example of the hierarchy reigning within the category of ‘whiteness’.

### **How black people are treated differently**

Notwithstanding the power differentials that are at play within the ‘white’ category, skin colour was also a factor cited as contributing to differential treatment. Coulter notes that amongst immigrants in Ireland, Africans are ‘especially badly treated’ (2003: 27). This is confirmed by other studies including Russell et al’s (2008), where respondents of black ethnicity were identified as having the highest ‘raw’ risk of discrimination. In his study of immigration and the Irish media, Mac Einrí echoed this sentiment, concluding that in light of the racism evident in articles, discrimination was proportional to the darkness of skin colour (2001: 12).

Black participants corroborated this singling out and spoke of how they were treated differently, primarily because of their skin colour, their visible difference. While all blacks participants did not bear witness to being treated badly: ‘*I’ve never experienced any racist thing*’ (P3, Nigeria), the participant was still aware of ‘*being a minority*’ in Irish society, having a visible marker of difference and spoke of how ‘*you are noticed*’. Another participant, speaking of not having witnessed people being racist ‘*personally*’, did not deny it occurring, ‘*why I don’t say people don’t do it exactly*’ (P14, Nigeria). Other participants had a different story to tell. A number of black participants spoke of themselves or their children being the victims of attacks (P20, Cameroon, P5, Zimbabwe). A few spoke of negative experiences in the work place ‘*I decided to keep quiet about it, the experience was quite nasty ... I tell you it wasn’t easy, it wasn’t easy*’ (P5, Zimbabwe). As was alluded to in chapter 3, one black participant spoke of how black people are being discriminated against when accessing employment and being let go at the expense of the Polish (P20, Cameroon). Another participant spoke of his experience in the local neighbourhood, in his local authority housing estate where he is

*'the only black person': 'the majority, besides those who are educated, the others do not give up; they make life very difficult, very, very difficult for us', 'it's as if we are targets at every moment'*. He describes neighbours waiting to *'report everything'*, for example cars not properly parked, *'you are judged in advance, they criminalise you, they victimise you'*, his explanation being *'because we are black, because we are different'* (P24, DR Congo), despite the fact that he holds Irish citizenship. The NCCRI study noted varying level of racist incidents in social housing estates. However, amongst the attacks reported, the majority were directed at those who were visibly different from the majority population (2008a: 17). An Irish participant with African friends spoke of how *'their children are being treated differently because they have a different skin colour'* and went on to explain: *'Black people will say this to you. It's not in the words that are said. It's in the gestures and just in the tone of voice, just something in someone's demeanour that says I just don't like being that near you and they feel it and they sense it'* (P23, Irl.). These last remarks echo McGinnity et al's findings that while a significant minority of migrants said that they had no direct experience of racism, rather it manifested itself 'in the form of glances, avoidance or the feeling they got' (2006: 32), namely there are different forms of racism.

### **The hierarchy within blackness**

Blackness, in a similar fashion to whiteness, is not a homogeneous category. Stereotypes associated with black people were raised in chapter 3: not only were black people seen as refugees, or asylum seekers, but also as immigrants, as freeloaders, taking jobs. However, while black people are singled out, Nigerians specifically are identified. An Irish participant spoke of the stereotypes, the *'second hand stories'* associated with *'the women of African descent pretty much when it comes to babies, the maternity hospital'* and goes on to elaborate *'it was the African Nigerians they get a rough time. It was probably that they are coming over here pregnant hoping to get through that legal loophole, I think that's been closed off'* (P22, Irl.). The reference here is to the 'migrant m/others' (Lentin and McVeigh, 2006: 98) who were targeted in the Citizenship Referendum debate, allegedly arriving heavily pregnant to bear Irish children and held responsible for the overcrowded maternity hospitals, although statistics never backed up



these claims. Women have been represented as the biological, cultural and symbolic reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Lentin and McVeigh argue that the women's (black) bodies were rendered 'central to the re-articulations of Irishness as white supremacy' (2006: 98). Irish participants specifically mentioned Nigerians a number of times: *'I have to be honest and say of all the different nationalities that I come across the only ones that I have problems with are the Nigerians'* (P56, Irl.); *'I find the Nigerians very aggressive'* (P53, Irl.). White describes the widespread usage of the term 'Nigerian' denoting an individual of African descent in Ireland (2002: 105). 'Nigerian', she argues, has become one of several 'codes' to 'emphasise negative associations with a group without using offensive language' (2002: 105). In Moriarty's rendition of the urban myth of the refugee woman at the bus stop with the baby buggy, referred to in chapter 4, the protagonist is a "non national", probably from Nigeria (2005: 2). Her presumed Nigerian identity is a stereotype created out of her blackness (Hall, 1997). Ugba's recent research on Africans living in Ireland, as opposed to his 2004 study, produced more pessimistic findings. Many of the Nigerians interviewed in focus groups 'felt there was a hierarchy in terms of migrant groups, and that as soon as the new EU members started migrating to Ireland, the African communities felt they became 'less wanted' and 'were viewed differently as a result' (2008). Indeed, a hierarchy exists within the category of 'black' as well as 'white' as alluded to by one participant: *'I'm not a Nigerian please because when people see me they say are you Nigerian? One day I am going to say are you Romanian?'* (P5, Zimbabwe).

### **Racism: an Irish and a black concern**

The idea of using the 'race card' was raised on a few occasions, by both Irish and migrant participants: some people *'they just use the race thing at every excuse; they use the race card at the drop of a hat. Why are you doing that, is it because I am black?'* explains a participant who does not *'like it much'* (P3, Nigeria). An Irish participant gave an example from his workplace of how they are accused of being racist, when people parked illegally are asked to move their cars: *'why are you picking on me? Is it because of my colour?'* (P32, Irish).

The issue of racism and discrimination was raised on both sides, not just restricted to black participants. While one black participant confessed *'I think that I am really discriminated on account of my race'* (P24, DR Congo), one group of Irish participants also spoke of themselves or their children being discriminated against and treated differently, or what they saw as unfairly in the local school setting:

*for example my six year old daughter was being bullied by an African child in school and when I raised the point with the teacher she said 'oh I didn't want to say anything in case it caused any friction between them ... where as if it were two white children it would be addressed immediately* (P54, Irl.).

Another participant noted that:

*if some of the African children pass remarks to the white children it's ignored. If the white child retaliates, as to no matter where they come from, whether they are Irish or not, retaliates they are automatically expelled. So there's no fairness there. Why should there be a difference in a colour? It's your behaviour that should be addressed not your colour, do you know what I mean ?* (P56, Irl.).

The outcome is that children *'are not being sent (to that school) because we feel, most parents around here feel now that their children are being discriminated against because they are white, they are being discriminated against at school'* (P56, Irl.). The worrying issue of 'white flight' that surfaced in the McGorman and Sugrue report (2007: 60) is what is being raised here. Sentiments evoked here are linked to the issue highlighted in the previous chapter, the fear of speaking out and being seen as racist: *'I just think the Irish are being trodden down because again we're afraid to say anything. It's all negative racism against the Irish'* (P54, Irl.). This idea of lack of voice was raised on both sides, by the Irish regarding what they say as unfair and unjust, but also by black participants. While the physical visibility of black participants was underlined, this can be juxtaposed with their lack of voice and indeed the lack of voice of migrants in general: as one participant affirmed *'we want to be seen, we want to be visible', 'we need a voice and we need government support to do that'* (P3, Nigeria) which he reiterated more forcibly at the feedback session in reaction to what he saw as the deteriorating economic climate and the negative impact it was having on migrants.

### **Age as an influential factor**

A certain lack of ease with employing the term black to describe what is visibly noticeable, referred to earlier, was commented on as not evident amongst children. As has been alluded to, age is a factor cited by the younger participants as influencing attitudes towards migrants in general, particularly black people:

*a lot of people in their forties, fifties and sixties, they never had coloured people around and they thought they were different and I think that racism exists more so in those age groups than today in the younger age groups. It could be their parents or their grandparents that are saying oh they're coloured (P6, Irl.)*

professed one younger participant, although this was not always corroborated in the data. The idea of children being influenced by adults was voiced by both Irish and migrant participants: *'if you don't tell them (children) at home, that guy look different, that guy come to take our money, to take our job, they would never know the difference. You know they have an open mind, unless you start teaching them at home all those bad vibes'* (P3, Nigeria); *'because the truth is children don't know, they don't know different colours and nationalities'* (P23, Irl.). Younger children in junior and senior infants are portrayed as having 'grown up' with a more diverse Irish society *'so I think like maybe they might be influenced by the older generation but they are going to be more kind of open and it's not going to be so much of a big thing for them'* (P7, Irl.). One participant cited the example of her child in this age group *'he doesn't know any difference ... it's wonderful actually for him. He's accepting it as normal'* (P13, Irl.). As was discussed in the previous chapter, children are portrayed as the positive way forward, overcoming difference including skin colour. However, a word of caution was expressed by one black participant who made reference to the situation in France and spoke of Irish society currently *'breeding rebels'*, referring to black children who, in the future, *'will complain'*, *'will ask for what rightly belongs to them'*, will point to their parent who *'slaved for this country and you are telling me I don't have the right as the white guy next to me, you are joking'*. *'You might treat their parents with disrespect or disdain'*, he warns *'but their children'* ... (P3, Nigeria), the understanding being, as was reaffirmed by the vast majority of African participants, their children who are Irish.

Another positive factor that was referred to was contact or interaction amongst Irish people and visible minorities: *'I think it's fantastic, you'd see a coloured guy being respectful to an older person and the older person being pleasantly surprised'* (P8, Irl.). A local service provider spoke about her work with older people, observing their attitude change over a period of time, in particular in relation to black people when they have contact with them (P93, Irl.). Hence the need to encourage more interaction and contact, to give people a chance to get to know each other, to meet the 'Other' and break down barriers. As one participant put it, *'if you can touch their sides'* and make this interaction happen as a *'way to change people's mentality and look at foreigners a bit differently'* (P15, Romania).

Loyal traces the origin of these stereotypes and representations regarding black people, referred to above, to 'state and media discourses' (2003: 87). The influential role the media plays in shaping public opinion regarding migrants was referred to in the previous chapter. Only one Irish participant, cited earlier regarding African women in maternity hospitals and the *'stories bandied about'* (P22, Irl.) can be seen as indirectly referring to the media and its influence in the lead up to the 2004 referendum. Although Irish participants in this research did not name the media as a source of information regarding black participants, some migrant participants identified the media as influencing views. One spoke of the lack of voice immigrants have in the media:

*I say to Fergus (editor of The Community Voice) your paper has not brought the immigrant community with it – it's about the Irish. The Community Voice, The Blanch Gazette, the Northside People, the same thing, RTE 1, 2 TV3, 4 the same, only Irish. No one has tried to give voice to the immigrant community ... in the papers not one black columnist, they have no foreigners* (P67, South Africa)<sup>18</sup>.

Goldberg's (2002) argument that modern states are racial states can be further developed in the current Irish context. State regulations with regard to migrant workers in Ireland are clearly market driven as was underlined in chapter 3. As was also argued, Loyal analysed how work permit holders came from countries containing white, Christian populations, in contrast to the asylum seekers, the largest population of whom up until the present are Nigerians (ORAC, 2009). He describes 'this systematic racialisation of work

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<sup>18</sup> He acknowledges the presence of *Metro Eireann* but wants an integrated as opposed to a separate development.

permits by the state' as a 'straightforward attempt to regulate internal ethnic and religious diversity' (2003: 80). The prime source of migrants, specifically targeted by the state since 2004, is the accession countries. It could be argued that white Europeans are more desirable as the distinction between EU national and non-EU national becomes increasingly racialised. One Irish participant highlighted this affirming, '*the government felt they (the Eastern Europeans) were white so take them to keep out the Africans*' (P12, Irl.). The '*black babies*' on the other hand, who have grown up and come to Ireland, are not always welcomed.

Lastly, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, the state has a role to play in fighting racial discrimination. The visibility of racism in all sectors of Irish society has been highlighted in reports (Lynch, 2008) and by the rise in the number of racist incidents being reported to the Gardaí - 66 in 2004, 180 in 2007 (Watt, 2008). The cuts announced in the 2008 budget – the Equality Authority budget slashed by 43%, the 26% reduction in the Minister for Integration's budget, and the elimination of the government's own advisory body on racism, the NCCRI, does not bear well in the fight against racism. To re-echo Phillip Watt, director of the NCCRI, 'budget cutbacks weaken [the] State's capacity to combat racism' (2008). In a time of recession and economic downturn this is a worrying situation.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter the example of colour as a racialised boundary was examined. The racial categories such as 'black' and 'white' were unpacked, underlining their heterogeneity. The ambiguous position of the Irish who were racialised but who themselves were and still are involved in racialising the Other was illustrated. Furthermore, the limitations of the black/white dichotomy were highlighted with an emphasis placed on the prevalence of power relations. While the 'Irish equals white' equation no longer holds up, if it ever did, some participants nonetheless adhered to this principle. There were numerous examples of 'blackness' as a marker of difference in the data, highlighted by both Irish and black participants alike. Notions of black and white thus acted as signifiers of inclusion and exclusion. Stereotypes were cited regarding Africans, in particular

Nigerians, being targeted. Personal examples of differential treatment provided by black participants are in-keeping with the findings of studies regarding discrimination. However, the issue of racism and discrimination was not limited solely to these participants but raised also by Irish participants who spoke of what they perceive as unfair treatment of white children in local school settings. The idea of a lack of voice was raised on both sides, on the Irish side the *'fear of being racist'* and on the migrant side a lack of forum for expression. Once again children were regarded as the positive way forward although some caution was expressed regarding how they are treated. The state, as illustrated, has a role to play in fighting racial discrimination as opposed to reifying racial categories, contributing to the maintenance of the colour paradigm, reasserting the whiteness of the Irish. Lentin, applying Hesse's (1999) 'politics of interrogation', calls for a questioning of the Irish nation, as no longer white or homogenous (2006: 205). Given the prominence accorded to 'blackness' as a marker of differentiation and the conflation of 'whiteness' with Irishness by some participants, I would feel such a critical examination is both necessary and urgent.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Blanchardstown, the fastest growing area in the country, which is home to a particularly high proportion of migrants, was the focus of this research project. Given that this is a qualitative piece of work, findings do not claim to be representative of the area, nor indeed nationally, but pertain only to the participants themselves. Nonetheless, it does provide a snapshot of both Irish people's views of migrants in a particular area at a particular time as well as the views of some of the migrants themselves in that area. Nationally migration into Ireland has placed additional demands on public service provision. Blanchardstown is an example of an area where in light of increased demographics, services such as schools and houses have struggled to keep abreast of the growth experienced. As Ryan, in the context of the rapid change experienced by demographics nationally has remarked 'the experiences of Blanchardstown have possibly been the most dramatic' (2008: 9). Hence, the findings have relevance both for local stakeholders and agencies and are also pertinent at a national level.

Two theoretical perspectives were merged for this study, thus the data was analysed within a cultural materialist framework. Starting with the economic viewpoint, participants' definition of a 'migrant' mirrored the Irish government's market-driven strategy, with the economic 'pull' factor featuring the most predominantly. Both Irish and migrant participants identified economics as the driving force attracting migrants to Ireland, who come to work and search for better opportunities, similarly to the Irish themselves who emigrated, primarily to Britain and the United States, although this link was not always drawn. However, since free movement was accorded to the accession states in 2004, the transient nature of migration, fuelled by the work permit system, has given over to more permanency. This was reflected in participants' views of migrants, who, unlike the 2006 study, were no longer considered as a temporary, but rather as a permanent feature of the Blanchardstown area.

The economic growth of the 1990s was a factor that instigated migration to Ireland, and indeed to Blanchardstown. The types of jobs identified by Irish participants that migrants fill are in keeping with labour market studies, predominantly lower skilled and lower paid jobs. There was no evidence found of displacement of Irish workers

occurring. Keeping in mind the fact that the data was collected between March and July 2008, the economic climate had not started to significantly deteriorate until September 2008, when the country technically entered recession. Both high and low-skilled, migrant and Irish participants, felt that there are jobs available, and migrant workers were not perceived as taking Irish jobs, rather occupying jobs the Irish do not want. Hence there is a replacement as opposed to a displacement effect. Examples of displacement were cited as occurring amongst migrant workers, largely as a result of the government decision to allow the accession state members to freely enter the labour market in 2004, at the expense of non-EU workers. Migrants were recognised as hard workers, although not universally. Irish participants were sympathetic to the exploitation of migrant workers, confirmed on both sides as occurring. However, Irish participants, potentially in competition for the lower-skilled jobs, saw migrants working for less as potentially problematic and a possible advantage in the labour market, particularly given the deteriorating economic circumstances. Hence competition for jobs was not ruled out as a future potential problem. Even amongst these participants, the incoming Others were not seen as the root cause of the problem, but the government and the employers. Migrant participants traced changes in attitudes towards themselves in wider society, attributable in part to the declining economic situation, which would perhaps not rule out the potential for migrants to be scapegoated in the future.

While discussion amongst Irish participants revealed an acceptance of those who work, there was a far lower tolerance for those who do not work, for whatever reason. This lack of acceptance can be explained in part by confusion that reigned regarding the different categories of migrants, which gave rise to stereotypes. These went hand in hand with a lack of correct information regarding entitlements, evident on both sides. The lower skilled Irish participants viewed welfare payments as a scare resource, from which migrants were perceived as unfairly benefiting. A similar pattern emerged regarding housing, which was a major factor that attracted, both Irish and non-Irish, into the area: those competing for an insufficient supply of local authority houses perceived migrants as a threat. Views expressed regarding housing are in keeping with standard economic theory and do not cross the class divide. However, this is not the case for schooling.



Irish participants still perceived school places as an issue since planning permission was given to developers to build houses without placing an onus on them to provide services such as schools, which consequently lag behind. Issues regarding schools were raised with reference to both the advantaged and disadvantaged areas of Blanchardstown. Here again there is evidence that is more akin to Balibar's (1991) concept of 'crisis racism' where migrants are constructed as constituting the root cause of the problem, the drain on resources as a result of the high percentage of non-native speakers of English, as well as the perceived drop in standard of education. There is evidence of a construction of an 'immigration complex', where migrants are seen as denying local Irish children places in schools, as well as draining resources, despite teachers clarifying that this is not how the allocation of resources works. However, the proposed budget cutback to re-introduce a two teacher cap on language support teachers, if implemented, could well give rise to more competition in schools regarding resources for learning support versus language support. As one principal, commenting on the planned cuts noted, *'it would take very little to be anti-immigrant'* (P90, Irl.).

It is important to contextualise the diverging viewpoints. While the Celtic Tiger era was a golden age for some, for other Irish people it marked disadvantage. Ireland was frequently labelled 'a First World economy with Third World public services' (Loyal and Allen, 2006: 222). It was those who were directly implicated regarding welfare payments and social housing that put forward the presence of migrants as an explanation for the lived experience of everyday life, the years of waiting on a housing list. They also particularly expressed the fear of coming across as racist when voicing their frustration regarding what they saw as the inequality of the situation, with migrants doing better than themselves. Those who feel most threatened are powerless to let their feelings be known, to give free expression to what they see as the explanation of their disadvantage.

While participants held the government responsible for creating some of what they described as unfair situations, what they did not pinpoint, and yet what explains their frustration at the lack of resources, is the government's failure to provide adequate school places and social housing. The 'migrant' can serve as a useful scapegoat for politicians and the press. Blaming 'foreigners' for the increased competition, takes the spotlight off the government's own inadequacies and its failure to consider and provide for the impact

of migration on the education, health and social services. Given the availability of land still to be built on in the Blanchardstown area as a whole, unlike other parts of Dublin, the pressure on services such as schools in the area is set to continue into the future. Hence, planning is required to ensure a potentially volatile situation does not erupt.

While the economic approach revealed that those most in competition for scarce resources saw migrants as a threat, the cultural angle showed a different picture. Irishness was regarded as something dynamic. Factors instigating this included globalisation but also the presence of new diasporas. To reiterate Bauman (2001), the death of the community, as affirmed by Irish participants, brings the sprouting of identity and it was evident across all groups that real and symbolic boundaries are being drawn at a local level. Three examples were used to illustrate this. Firstly, language was portrayed as a means of inclusion but also exclusion. Lack of English renders migrants different, setting school children and adults apart from the 'we'. Language is also an area where there is evidence of Brah's 'diaspora space': migrants speak 'our' language at home and 'they' are causing 'us' to modify our vocabulary and a reluctance to speak out exists *'for fear of being racist'*. The second example concerned culture. Culturally, migrants are also portrayed as being *'different'*; although stereotypes were reproduced on both sides. Some participants saw migrants as instigators in the cultural change Irish is experiencing. Boundaries however can be drawn and redrawn; they are not impermeable. Children were depicted in a positive light, by both migrant and Irish participants, as capable of breaking down barriers and overcoming difference. Thirdly, the differential treatment regarding resources mirrors the earlier findings - those who have least view *'foreign nationals'* as getting *'what they want when they want'*.

Participants do not go to the point of defending 'our' culture, the basis of new or cultural racism (Barker, 1981), despite a few references to a *'clash of cultures'*. However the boundaries marked out on a local level between 'us' and 'them' are mapped onto a national level, i.e. Irish and non-Irish. In this era of globalisation, boundaries are being reconstituted rather than dissolved (Gray, 2004: 80); a strong identification with the national community remained visible. Participants in reference to resources voiced their entitlement as part of the 'us', namely Irish nationals, to places in schools or resources. Once again there was an oscillation between the local and the national. There was a bid to

unite or reinstate the 'us' in the imagined community, denoting some unwillingness to extend the boundaries of belonging to encompass migrants or their children.

More disadvantaged Irish participants did acknowledge the part played by the state in what was perceived as unfairly allocating entitlements to migrants with urban myths cited. Migrant participants criticised the role of the media in the construction of identity, for its coverage and representation of migrants, or indeed, lack of coverage regarding issues surrounding immigration. Both migrant and Irish participants acknowledged an absence of planning by the government, while some Irish participants cited the government as a source of racism created as a result.

While 'they' were portrayed as a homogeneous group, against whom the 'us' was defined, colour was widely recognised as a signifier of difference, by both Irish and migrant participants. Black migrants were perceived as more '*visible*', as opposed to the more '*invisible*' Eastern Europeans. Some participants conflated whiteness with Irishness. Many participants have not got used to the presence of black people, hence the reluctance in associating blackness with the Irish nation. While the mixed range of professional backgrounds of the participants goes some way towards demonstrating how not all whites are advantaged, one black participant detected the hierarchy reigning within both the 'white' and the 'black' category, with stereotypes specifically targeting Nigerians. Some black participants spoke of personal experiences of discrimination and abuse suffered which is in keeping with the findings of studies on discrimination. Nonetheless, one group of Irish participants, who reside in an area with the largest numbers of non-Irish residents, spoke of what they view as unfair treatment of white children in the local school. Irish participants in general were reluctant to even use the term 'black', for fear that naming the visible difference came across as racist and the notion of a lack of voice was raised on both sides. Once again children were by and large seen as a positive example although some caution regarding the treatment of black children was expressed by a black participant. The state and the media play a role in perpetuating stereotypes cited. It has been argued that the state specifically targeted white migrant workers, primarily Eastern Europeans, since 2004, although the same welcome was not extended to the newest accession countries, the more Eastern countries of Romania and Bulgaria. Despite the racialisation undergone by the Irish in the United

States and in Britain, there would appear to be a move to reasserting 'our' whiteness in the age of migration. Such a view needs to be challenged in contemporary Ireland and simultaneously at a local level. The recent funding cutbacks in the Equality Authority budget and the complete erasure of the NCCRI do not bode well for the fight against racism, regarding which the government cannot afford to be complacent, in particular in light of the deteriorating economic circumstances. The composition of the Irish nation in the twenty-first century requires a critical examination to move to a more inclusive, than exclusive, definition.

As has been argued, Blanchardstown as an area looks set to continue expanding. This will continue to put pressure on services and resources. Housing is one area that was raised in discussions, but also schools, particularly in light of the extremely young population in the area. The rapid transformation that the area has experienced, and looks set to continue experiencing, particularly the marked changes in the demographics, has challenged the work of local agencies and service providers. In the course of this research, local service providers and agencies were very cognisant of the internal diversity in the area and numerous initiatives have been put in place at local level and at the level of Fingal County Council, to take this into account. The Meitheal Project, referred to in the previous chapters, is an example of one such initiative. Murphy in her evaluation of this project argues, 'while the process of integration will involve all actors at local level, it needs to be state driven and state funded if it is to be successful' (2007: 41). In the Minister for Integration's integration strategy document it is argued that the 'societal gains of properly managed migration are obvious' (DJELR, 2008: 8). However, management is required. Migration in all its various forms is not something that is going to disappear, even in recessionary times; rather it will remain a permanent feature of Irish society. Even in this atmosphere of cutbacks and budget reductions, some forward thinking and planning are required. The provision of proper facilities and support for local activities needs to happen to avoid more costly problems down the line. To cite the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), who underline the importance of integration, 'thought should be given to the costs of not getting it right and the repercussions down the line, both socially and economically, if the conditions for integration are not created' (2006: 23). There is thus a need for reflection and debate at a national level regarding

what sort of society Ireland wants to become and indeed to re-echo Geraghty, ‘the Irish are not as easily packaged as some would like’ (2008: 11). Further research on the majority Irish people is required to deconstruct why migrants are used by some as a scapegoat for everyday ills in our unequal society. Also, given the changes that the Irish economy experienced, it would be interesting to re-run focus groups in the current economic climate to trace any evolution in peoples’ views regarding the impact of migrants in the area.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, the following are a list of recommendations, that are relevant at both local and national level.

#### **A need to organise local activities to develop frequent and active contact and interaction and create dialogue between migrants and the local host community**

It has been argued in Ireland’s integration statement that ‘integration lives and breathes, and indeed dies, at the level of the community’ (DJELR, 2008: 22). Hence, starting at a local level there is a need to organise local activities to develop frequent and active contact and interaction and create dialogue between migrants and the local host community. There is a requirement to engage the latter, particularly adults. Examples could be the development of a personal development module where participants would examine their own attitudes but also then engage with some common theme or activity collectively. This ties in with the European Common Basic Principles of Integration no. 7, ‘frequent interaction between immigrants and member state citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration’ (2005).

#### **A need for a local forum for dialogue and exchange**

Both Irish and migrant participants cited the need for such a forum where issues could be debated, people given a chance to voice their opinions before action is taken as how best to move issues forward.

#### **A need to hear the voice of migrants and empower them to voice opinions on the supports they require**

It is necessary to hear the voice of migrants (especially those experiencing racism and discrimination) and empower them to voice opinions on the supports they require. During the discussions, migrant participants, who were positive about the research and very grateful to be able to voice their opinions, spoke of wanting to represent themselves.

**A continuous need to provide information on migrants' contribution to Irish society**

The government has funded campaigns that educate the Irish public about the role of immigration in Irish society through the NCCRI, but these must continue to be funded. Furthermore the data revealed a continuing need to provide information on migrants' contribution to Irish society in a bid to dispel fears, to understand why people are here. Information is also needed to counteract myths around immigration, regarding rights and entitlements. The local authorities, for example in the case of housing and schools, have a role to play here, as does the government. Instead of just producing fliers and documentation, this might be done in conjunction with local events and activities where migrants and members of the host community get to interact and actively communicate.

**The government must play a leading role regarding integration and in the fight against racism**

The NESC report drew attention to need for a 'whole-of-government' approach to migration policy (2006). While the DJELR see 'successful integration' hinging on 'a vibrant civil society', the government must play a leading role in it and also in the fight against racism. Even in more difficult economic times, state funding is required to address these issues now in a bid to avoid more costly problems in the future.

**A need to link Ireland's experience of emigration and migrants' present experience in Irish society.**

The data showed a need to connect Ireland's experience of emigration to migrants' present experience in Irish society. This could be done through projects in schools or activities organised through local groups.

**A continuing need to provide language support in schools, particularly in the Blanchardstown area and to fully inform parents regarding the allocation of supports.**

The high percentage of newcomer children attending schools in the Blanchardstown and the Dublin 15 area was highlighted in this report. There is thus still a need to continue to

provide the necessary language support teachers in the local schools given the important role language plays in integration. Furthermore some clarification is required for parents regarding how the allocation of resources works at school level.

**A need for one system for all local authorities as regards housing**

Housing was identified as an important local issue in this study. Consideration could therefore be given to bringing Fingal County Council's 'time of entry' system in line with that of the other county councils. In light of the land banks still available for construction in the Blanchardstown area, the housing list for all councils in the Greater Dublin area could be merged so that one area is not disproportionately housing all new applicants.

**A need for future research in the area of Irish people's views of migrants and for the development of training modules to be delivered at a local level to address some of the issues raised in the report.**

From the shortage of qualitative research on the views of Irish people towards migrants, it is clear that further research is required. Given that the research conducted here is but a snapshot at a particular point in time, focus groups could be re-run going forward in light of the changing economic circumstances. Also the issue of skin colour as a marker of identity is one that requires further examination. Furthermore, there is a need for training modules to be designed and delivered to organisations and agencies at a local level as part of the provision of information on migrants and their contribution to Irish society.

**A need to recognize the impact of migration and integration as a long-term process**

To cite the Meitheal evaluation report, 'effective integration involves a dynamic two-way approach based on equality and mutual respect in which newcomers and the host society work together' (2007). Moving social and cultural inclusion forward is a long-term process which should be incorporated as part of a wider community development effort.

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## **Legislation**

Immigration Protection and Residence Bill 2008.  
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