

“THEY LOOK AT YOUR COLOR”: CHILDREN OF NIGERIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND THEIR BELIEFS AND EXPRESSIONS OF BEING IRISH

By

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ABSTRACT

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Since the 1990s, Ireland has experienced a significant increase in racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity due, in large part, to immigration. A major cause for immigration in Ireland has been economic growth, although other influences, such as social factors, have played a role, too. Perhaps one of the most visible effects immigration and increased diversity have had on Irish society appears in Ireland’s classrooms. Students from a variety of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds now attend Irish schools and are beginning to reshape the overall demographics of Irish society.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how a group of four second-generation Nigerian youths born and raised in Ireland make sense of what it means to “be Irish” today. The dissertation is a case study that investigates how the four children—two girls and two boys in the fifth and sixth grades at an Irish primary school—perceive Irish citizenship and national identity, how they learn to be Irish, and how they express their Irish identities as youths of color. This dissertation’s research questions and methodological approach are rooted in two frameworks: Ogbu’s (1998) classification of minority groups, and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation. The dissertation draws on five main data sources: 1) one-on-one interviews with students, teachers, and school administrators; 2) focus group interviews with students; 3) school observations; 4) school curricular materials; and 5) student schoolwork.

Although there is a growing body of literature regarding diversity and schooling in the Republic of Ireland, there is a significant need for additional research to investigate the beliefs of

students from diverse racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds in Irish schools, and how these students make sense of their identities as Irish citizens. This dissertation aims to help fill this gap and to inform policymakers, educators, and others in the Republic of Ireland to think more deeply about the way Irish schools are preparing *all* students for active citizenship, and how these schools can more precisely mirror the changing demographics in Irish society.

The dissertation concludes that the four second-generation Nigerian students in Ireland developed racialized perceptions of what it means to be Irish based on their experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination they encountered both inside and outside school. As a result, the students often felt excluded from social groups. In addition, although the four students were born in Ireland, identified as Irish (to varying degrees), and were legal Irish citizens, the children claimed that they felt not fully Irish because of how they were treated. However, despite these challenging circumstances, the children demonstrated resilience as they accessed different forms of cultural capital in creative ways that allowed them to express their Irish identities. Ultimately, the students' ingenuity helped them carve out a place for themselves as youths of color in Irish society. This dissertation's findings enhance understanding about the way youths circumnavigate social challenges to create opportunities, as well as how second-generation youths develop conceptions of citizenship and national identity as active social agents in the world.

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To Mom and Dad
and Anthony

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“I wanted real adventures to happen to myself,” said the narrator in *An Encounter*, a short story in James Joyce’s book, *Dubliners*. “But real adventures, I reflected, do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought abroad.” I first sought my own adventure abroad when I travelled to Ireland over ten years ago, and ever since, I have returned to Ireland for many more adventures. This dissertation is one of them. However, this dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and support of many people. I owe a debt of gratitude to these individuals, and I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to them here.

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Finally, I want to thank my partner and best friend, Anthony. The narrator in Joyce's short story, *An Encounter*, may have felt that real adventures happen abroad, but, as it turns out, I found my greatest adventure here at home. It is you, Anthony. Thank you for standing by my side through thick and thin. I love you.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EU	European Union
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IES	Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
NCCA	National Council of Curriculum and Assessment
NPAR	National Action Plan against Racism 2005-2008
OMI	Office of the Minister for Integration
SESE	Social, Environmental, and Scientific Education
SPHE	Social, Personal, and Health Education
US	United States

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In May 2014, *The New York Times* reported that the European Union (E.U.) Parliamentary elections, which took place earlier that month in 28 European countries and lasted over four days, resulted in a stunning outcome. Throughout Europe, many “rebellious outsiders” were elected “including a clutch of xenophobes, racists, and even neo-Nazis” (Higgins, 2014, May 26). As the author explained, prior to their elections, many of the winning candidates “put strident anti-foreigner rhetoric at the heart of their campaigns, and held up European integration as a threat to national identity” (Higgins, 2014, May 26). Overnight, these election results put issues such as immigration, national identity, and citizenship front and center in European politics and society. The results also served as a reminder to all Europeans (and to the rest of the world) that “Every nation has its others, within and without. In fact, nationalism is constituted through a series of imaginary as well as very real demarcations between us and them, we and others” (Benhabib, 2004, p. 18).

Undoubtedly, the E.U. Parliamentary elections have the potential to profoundly affect the way countries in Europe address immigration and, more broadly, issues of diversity and citizenship within their borders. This is especially true for nations such as the Republic of Ireland. Indeed, since the 1990s, Ireland has experienced a rapid increase in cultural and ethnic diversity due, in large part, to immigration. A major cause for immigration in Ireland has been economic growth, although other influences, such as social factors, have played a role, too. Perhaps one of the most visible effects immigration and increased diversity have had on Irish society appears in Ireland’s classrooms. Students from a variety of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds now attend Irish schools and are beginning to reshape the overall demographics of

Irish society. In fact, between 2006 and 2011 alone, “The number of foreign national children [in Ireland] increased by 49.5%” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2012, p. 4).

Scholars contend that these cultural and ethnic changes have significant implications for Irish schools. For example, Leavy (2005) argues that Irish schools face challenges because many Irish pre-service teachers have limited exposure to culturally and ethnically diverse people in their lives. Devine, Kenny, and Macneela (2008) argue that ethnic stereotypes and prejudices exist among primary school students in Ireland and that majority ethnic students in Irish schools (i.e. Irish, White, and Catholic) often have limited understandings of diversity. These scholars advocate for students and teachers in Ireland to become more aware of their own perceptions about race and culture and to acquire greater respect for cultural differences. These and other research findings raise a number of critical questions about Irish schooling, especially in regards to citizenship education in Irish schools: How has increased diversity in Irish schools affected the way teachers address citizenship education? What are the experiences of culturally diverse students in school as they learn what it means to be democratic Irish citizens? What implications might increased diversity have for school curriculum?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how a specific group of elementary students—the children of Nigerian immigrants—make sense of Irish citizenship and learn to “be Irish.” Therefore, at this stage, it is important to articulate what I mean by “citizenship” and how it relates to national belonging. Citizenship is a complex concept with meanings that are often contested (McLaughlin, 1992). However, for the purpose of this study, I borrow Shklar’s (1991) understanding of citizenship as nationality:

Citizenship as nationality is the legal recognition, both domestic and international, that a person is a member, native-born or naturalized, of a state...American citizenship as nationality has its own history of exclusions and inclusions, in which xenophobia, racism, religious bigotry, and fear of alien conspiracies have played their part (p. 4).

I select Shklar's definition because it describes citizenship in terms of legal membership and cultural diversity. Shklar's definition emphasizes that citizenship, especially American citizenship, has often been conceptualized in terms of inclusion and exclusion based on one's cultural and/or ethnic background. Although this dissertation takes place in an Irish context, this understanding of citizenship is appropriate to use because of the racial, cultural, and ethnic stereotypes and prejudices that exist in Irish schools and society (Bryan, 2009; Fanning, 2002; Watson et al., 2007). As this dissertation reveals, Shklar's understanding provides insight to further enhance the conceptualization of citizenship and citizenship education in the Republic of Ireland.

In addition, in this study, I also draw on an understanding of citizenship identity as it relates to national belonging. As Banks and Nguyen (2008) explain,

Becoming a legal citizen of a nation-state does not necessarily mean that an individual will attain structural inclusion into the mainstream society and its institutions and will be perceived as a citizen by most members of the dominant group within the nation-state. A citizen's racial, ethnic, cultural, class, language, and religious characteristics often significantly influence whether she is viewed as a citizen within her society (p. 144).

In this way, I understand being Irish and expressing Irishness (concepts stated in my study's research questions that I will present later in this chapter) as being closely connected to my understanding of citizenship and its relationship to national belonging. As this dissertation

argues, the four students in this case study (who all identified as Irish citizens) often felt excluded in Irish society because of their racial and cultural backgrounds, and they believed that the dominant group of White Irish citizens in their community viewed them as not fully Irish. As a result, the students struggled to become a part of mainstream Irish society. The students' experiences of exclusion had a significant influence on how they understood themselves as Irish citizens of color, as well as how they developed their own notions of Irish citizenship and national belonging. Therefore, even though the word "citizenship" is not explicitly used in any of this dissertation's research questions, this study is nonetheless about citizenship in the context of national belonging. The four case-study students, all children of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland, were deeply affected by their experiences of exclusion that, in turn, had a profound affect on how they developed their citizenship identities.

Theoretical Framework

For my dissertation study, I use two theoretical frameworks to anchor my research. First, Ogbu's (1998) classification of minority groups accounts for the immigrant backgrounds and experiences the students have, as well as the variation in experiences the students encounter inside and outside school. Using this classification provides a lens to examine the students' beliefs about being Irish that the students developed based on their experiences. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) builds on Ogbu's classification to help understand the social aspects of the students' lives and how the students learn to be Irish. LPP understands learning as "a social practice in the lived-in world" (p. 35). In this way, LPP helps to examine the students' trajectory from peripheral civic participation towards possible full civic participation. More generally, focusing on the students' beliefs in this dissertation means that their understandings of what it means to be Irish are socially constructed.

By interacting as agents within the social world in various ways, the students formed perceptions about Irish identity that influenced how they understood themselves and the people around them.

Ogbu's classification of minority groups. Ogbu's (1998) classification of minority groups defines "minority" as a population that "occupies some form of subordinate power position in relation to another population within the same country or society" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 162). Ogbu classifies three types of minority groups: autonomous, voluntary (immigrant), and involuntary (nonimmigrant). Autonomous minorities "may be different in race, ethnicity, religion, or language from the dominant group" (p. 163) and may experience discrimination. In the US, examples include Amish, Jews, and Mormons. Ogbu claims that autonomous minorities are not totally oppressed, so "their school achievement is no different from the dominant group" (p. 164).

Voluntary (immigrant) minorities, the second type, "more or less willingly moved to the United States because they expect better opportunities (better jobs, more political or religious freedom) than they had in their homelands or places of origin" (p. 164). They were not forced to move to the US and they may be from different cultural and/or ethnic backgrounds than the dominant group. "Voluntary minorities usually experience some problems in school...However, immigrant minorities do not experience long-lasting school performance difficulty and long-lasting cultural and language problems" (p. 164). Examples include immigrants from Africa, Asia, and South America.

Third, involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities are those who were forced to move to the US because they were conquered, colonized, or enslaved. They "usually interpret their presence in the United States as forced on them by white people" (p. 165). Involuntary minorities may be

from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds than the dominant group. Examples include American Indians and Black Americans who came to the US as slaves.

Ogbu notes that the children of immigrant minorities (like their parents) are classified as immigrant minorities, too. This is because “the education of the descendants of immigrants continues to be influenced by the community forces of their forebears” (p. 166). However, Ogbu claims there is an exception to this rule: descendants of immigrant minorities can identify with nonimmigrant minorities if they experience discrimination from White Americans. For example, the descendants of Black African and Caribbean immigrants to the United States in recent years may eventually develop a collective identity with other nonimmigrant minorities in the US and gradually become Black Americans.

Ogbu also identifies five additional characteristics that are important to his classification of minorities. First, Ogbu states that the classification is not determined by race. Second, Ogbu’s classification “is about how *groups* operate within a society. It focuses analysis on the *dominant* patterns of belief and behavior within minority groups” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 168). Third, the beliefs and behaviors of minorities work on a continuum. For example, voluntary and involuntary immigrants may, at times, share certain beliefs. Fourth, Ogbu says it is possible for differences to exist among people within the voluntary and involuntary minority groups. From one person to the next, there could be differences in belief and behavior. Fifth, Ogbu asserts that the same treatment among minorities can bring about different interpretations in these people’s lives due to a minority group’s history and the meanings this group attributes to its experiences. In turn, these interpretations can have an affect on these individuals’ lives, particularly for minority students attending school.

In light of my dissertation's research questions, Lave and Wenger's framework and Ogbu's classification allow my research to account for the unique sociocultural context of the children of Nigerian immigrants at an Irish primary school. The frameworks also help to explore how these students exercise agency in their lives while interacting within the social world. Overall, the frameworks help me consider how children of Nigerian immigrants learn to be Irish, along with the political power the students may or may not access.

Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that LPP emphasizes how learners “participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (p. 29). A central idea of peripheral participation is that learners are active in the social world as they interact with their communities. The communities, which the scholars describe as changing, affect the learners' perspectives, their learning trajectories, and the development of their identities.

In terms of their view on learning, the scholars state, “In our view, learning is not merely situated in practice—as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world” (p. 35). Furthermore,

Viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means that learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is an evolving form of membership. We conceive of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus, identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another (p. 53).

Lave and Wenger perceive LPP as complex and multilayered with an objective to understand the learning process: it is “not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or a teaching technique” (p. 40). In this way, the researchers aim to illuminate aspects of the learning process that, they claim, are often overlooked. They hope the framework helps unfold the complexity of learning by studying how it takes place.

Lave and Wenger also note that human agency is an integral part of LPP because human agency is central to any theory of social practice. In addition, LPP recognizes the historical context of the agent and the world around her/him. LPP, then, is “a critical theory; the social scientist’s practice must be analyzed in the same historical, situated terms as any other practice under examination” (p. 51). LPP does not simply focus on a person, but rather, how a person interacts within the world. As a result, this focus “promotes a view of knowing as activity by specific people in specific circumstances” (p. 52).

Research Questions

Irish schools serve as important spaces for promoting democratic citizenship and teaching young students how to become active citizens. For example, the Irish *Primary School Curriculum Introduction* (2005) explains that one objective of the Irish curriculum is to help students become democratic citizens who are civically engaged. The curriculum aims to help students form a sense of Irish national identity by recognizing “the historical and cultural roots of Irish society” and “the richness of the Irish heritage” (Government of Ireland, 2005, p. 26). It seeks to prepare students for responsible citizenship in Ireland, as well as Europe and the wider world. Preparing students for responsible citizenship is accomplished through student learning in several subject areas such as language, history, geography, and SPHE (social, personal, and health education). SPHE is defined as teaching “the child to understand himself or herself, to

develop healthy relationships, and to establish and maintain healthy patterns of behavior” (Government of Ireland, 2005, p. 57).

With these ideas in mind, my study, which understands citizenship in the context of national belonging, addresses three main research questions:

- 1) What experiences of racism, if any, do four elementary school students of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland have?
- 2) What beliefs do four elementary school students of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland have about what it means to be Irish?
 - a. Do these beliefs differ among the students?
 - b. If these beliefs differ, how and why do they differ?
 - c. How do the students learn what it means to be Irish?
- 3) How do the four elementary-grade students of Nigerian immigrants express their Irishness?

Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this dissertation, then, is to illuminate issues around inclusion and exclusion that children of Nigerian immigrants in Ireland face—issues that, I believe, must be further explored to promote greater acknowledgement of, and respect for, people from diverse backgrounds. In light of the Irish Republic’s overall increase in diversity in recent years, it is important for research to explore these issues—particularly from the perspectives of those who are most affected by them on a daily basis—to strengthen understanding and to work towards greater unity in Ireland. Furthermore, because issues around migration and diversity have surfaced in the EU in recent years (leading to rising tension and, in many cases, intolerance towards people from minority groups), it is imperative for research to address how young people

are responding to the challenges that result from the intolerance that is taking place. As this dissertation reveals, the experiences of discrimination that the four case-study children experienced on a frequent basis had a significant effect on the way they developed their understandings of what it meant to be Irish.

This study also responds to a call for more evidenced-based research regarding diversity and education in Irish schools, and it builds on recent research aiming to help meet this goal (McClure, 2016). In 2010, the Irish Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration in Ireland released the Intercultural Education Strategy for 2010-2015, a policy aimed at helping Irish schools become more conscious of diversity and to respect cultural difference. The creation of the policy itself is a positive step forward, and this dissertation aims to build off that policy to show how a small group of second-generation Nigerian children attending one school in the Irish Republic develop their understandings of Irish identity based on their experiences both inside and outside school. Therefore, this research has the potential to inform policymakers as they craft future educational policies in Ireland, as well as educators who strive to create culturally relevant and sensitive pedagogy.

Third, I situate the rationale of this dissertation in terms of how it can contribute to the pursuit of democratic education (and promote democratic values and principles more generally) in Ireland and in other countries. No doubt, the Irish context is unique; the Irish Republic has its own history, culture, values, and societal norms that differ from other countries around the globe. However, despite its uniqueness, Ireland *does* have a clear link with many other countries today (including the United States) that cannot be ignored: increased globalization. Ireland, like many other nations, has experienced a large flow of immigrants in recent years, and this trend shows no signs of stopping. As a result, Ireland, as well as other nations, must consider how to build

schools and societies that are prepared to respond to this globalization in constructive ways. As Suárez-Orozco (2004) states,

Integrating immigrants and the subsequent generations into the receiving society is a primary challenge of globalization; failing to do so, however, will have long-term social implications. The ability to formulate an identity that allows comfortable movement between worlds will be at the very heart of achieving a truly “global soul” (Iyer, 2000).

Therefore, this dissertation not only acknowledges the reality of globalization in the world, but it also highlights the need for schools in Ireland (and elsewhere) to continue working towards greater equality in light of increased globalization. In addition, this dissertation reveals promising possibilities for creating unity among diversity based on the creative expressions of Irish identity that the four students in this study demonstrate. In these ways, this dissertation is valuable not only for education in an Irish context, but also, perhaps, for educational systems in other countries around the world.

Setting the Context: Immigration and Diversity in the Republic of Ireland

In recent decades, the Irish Republic has experienced an increase in cultural and ethnic diversity due, in large part, to the large number of people moving to the country from other parts of the world. Once considered a nation of “entrenched emigration and relative cultural and religious homogeneity” (Loyal, 2011, p. 9), Ireland currently has a population of approximately 4.6 million residents. This number includes over 544,000 non-Irish nationals representing 196 different nations and comprising 12% of the country’s total population (Central Statistics Office Ireland, 2012). According to the Irish census, immigrants from different parts of the world (particularly Europe and Africa) continue to come to Ireland. This trend has contributed to Ireland’s overall jump in population, and it has paralleled an increase in Ireland’s urban area

population. In 2011, the population of urban areas in the Republic hit an all-time high of 2.8 million residents, or 62% of the country’s population (Central Statistics Office, 2012).

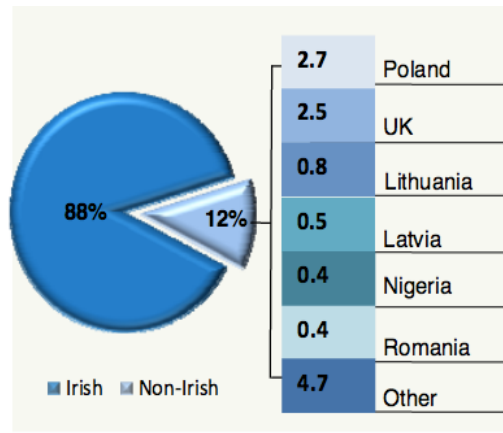


Figure 1. Population by nationality. Adapted from “This Is Ireland—Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1: Nationality,” by Central Statistics Office, 2012, p. 33. Copyright 2012 by Government of Ireland.

Causes of immigration and increased diversity in the Irish Republic. A variety of different forces in the past several decades have led to increased immigration in the Irish Republic. Efforts to develop higher education, along with economic policy-related decisions, increased business development in the 1980s and 1990s, and more women in the workforce influenced Ireland’s economy to grow. In turn, these efforts created labor shortages and provided immigrants with opportunities to secure new jobs in Ireland. Other forces, such as strong social connections between individuals residing inside and outside Ireland, also played an important role in many immigrants’ decisions to move to the Republic.

The development of higher education was one important step in helping Ireland develop economically. Institutes of technology and universities were established to provide Irish residents with the chance to develop specialized skills and prepare for jobs in different sectors. Despite the public support these efforts received, critics argued that the development of Irish higher education was simply an attempt “to massage the unemployment statistics” (Hilliard &

Phádraig, 2007, p. 2). In April 1987, the unemployment rate hit a record high of 19.1%, leading some to believe that “the best that could be hoped for, it seemed, was stabilizing the debt situation and keeping unemployment to manageable levels” (Battel, 2003, p. 99). Nonetheless, many Irish remained in strong support of the movement to improve tertiary education.

A second force that helped Ireland’s economy grow was the improvement of infrastructure. Improved roads and bridges were critical to economic development, and infrastructure projects added jobs. Funding from the European Union was instrumental in promoting infrastructure development that likely would not have occurred in the early-1990s without E.U. financial support. As scholars note, “‘the begging bowl’ was continually taken to Brussels and the Irish became renowned at exploiting every opportunity to extract structural funds and tap into grant schemes” (Hilliard & Phádraig, 2007, p. 2).

Third, government policy decisions helped strengthen Ireland’s economy. Initiatives such as the “partnership” approach (an idea borrowed from the EU) “produced a new era of strike-free industrial relations by trading wage restraint for tax cuts, a minimum wage, and some social spending” (Hilliard & Phádraig, 2007, p. 3). Women (particularly married women) also influenced Ireland’s employment level increase over the years. “Significant legislative change regarding employment equality, the legalising of artificial contraception, and changing attitudes to gender roles all contributed to this, combined with increases in the cost of living and increased employment availability” (Hilliard & Phádraig, 2007, p. 4).

Development in higher education, investment in the country’s infrastructure, economic policy decisions, and more women in the workforce, coupled with additional efforts to attract businesses through fiscal incentives such as low corporate tax rates and favorable currency exchanges, led to the birth of the so called “Celtic Tiger” economy in Ireland in the 1990s—the

name ascribed to the Irish Republic's period of rapid economic growth. Transnational corporations accounted for over half of the economic growth in Ireland by 1999 (Hilliard & Phádraig, 2007); many of these corporations came from the US (a country that itself was experiencing an economic boom at the time). In fact, transnational corporations from the US in the areas of information technology, pharmaceuticals, and electrical engineering established offices in Ireland with the purpose of accessing the profitable E.U. market.

As industries in Ireland grew, employment opportunities increased. Many Irish (who once emigrated from the country due to a scarcity of employment) were now returning to the country to fill available jobs; however, many of these Irish jobs (particularly those in the service industry) remained unfilled, even after the Irish returned. To fill these jobs, Ireland participated in recruitment fairs abroad and placed advertisements in eastern European countries, such as Lithuania, to attract workers who could not find employment at home (Loyal, 2011). Therefore, "push" factors in other countries such as unemployment rates, also could have contributed to individuals from other countries deciding to migrate to Ireland. The presence of eastern Europeans in Ireland strengthened the Irish economy in predictable ways through, for instance, the transportation industry. As consumer demand for travel between Ireland and Eastern Europe increased, so did commercial airline service between these locations. Overall, Irish recruitment methods proved largely successful, so much so that by 2005, the unemployment rate in Ireland dipped to 4.2%, the lowest in the EU at the time (Hilliard & Phádraig, 2007).

Historical or colonial influences affected Ireland's immigration increase, too. "For example, Irish missionaries sent to Nigeria working as teachers or founding schools and churches provided early forms of contact with a number of Nigerians who subsequently migrated to Ireland or came as asylum-seekers" (Loyal, 2011, p. 30). For Nigerians (particularly those from

a Catholic or Christian background), the Irish Republic's strong Catholic/Christian identity could have influenced them to settle in Ireland due to their increased risk of marginalization in Nigeria. As Osaghae (1999) notes, one reason why Nigerians emigrated from Nigeria starting in the late twentieth century was due to "The capture of state power by regional and religious leaders, and the marginalization and virtual exclusion of others, notably southerners, ethnic minorities, and non-Muslims from enjoying the benefits of belonging to the state" (p. 89).

Effects of immigration and increased diversity in the Irish Republic. *Positive effects.*

Immigration and diversity in Ireland has led to many social and political effects in the nation. On the positive side, immigration and increased diversity made Ireland a more dynamic member of the global community. As an economic gateway to the EU, Ireland has served as an important industrial link for the US and Europe, particularly for corporations such as Intel, Dell, and Microsoft (Battel, 2003). The movement of immigrants in search of employment in Ireland has helped to further establish the Republic as a center for business and has exposed the nation to a variety of cultures. This exposure has led to new opportunities for cultural dialogue and learning. For example, since 2006, Irish Aid and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have hosted daylong public events in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Galway called Africa Day. Africa Day takes place on May 25 each year and is a family-friendly event consisting of educational activities that focus on the traditions of different African cultures.

Ireland also has been exposed to new cultures through the creation of groups such as the Dublin City Interfaith Forum. The forum consists of members from diverse religious groups who work to build religious tolerance in Ireland. The group also provides Irish people with opportunities to engage in constructive dialogue about faith issues.

Increased racism and discrimination towards minority groups. Despite the benefits of immigration, there also have been setbacks. In particular, research shows that in recent years, there has been a steady increase in racism and anti-immigrant attitudes in Ireland towards members of minority groups (Bryan, 2009). For example, Watson, Phádraig, Kennedy, and Rock-Huspatel's (2007) study shows how Irish attitudes towards immigrants changed between 1995 and 2003. According to their research, during these years, there was a rise in the number of Irish who believed immigrants were "associated with increased crime rates" and took "jobs away from people living in Ireland" (p. 219). Fanning (2002) notes an increase in racism in Ireland in the late-20th century. He states that by the 1990s, racist propaganda towards Black asylum seekers was widely distributed to the public throughout the city of Dublin. White (2012) argues that African immigrants have been the victims of racism in Ireland for years, especially through the media, where radio and television news programs, newspapers, and other outlets have produced "a constant flow of racist representations and the counter-representations produced to challenge them; an ongoing Irish narrative featuring appropriate and problematic renderings of 'blackness'" (White, 2012, p. 69). Racism has even appeared in Irish schools. Scholars report that discriminatory incidents have occurred between minority students and their Irish peers and teachers (Bryan, 2009; Devine, 2011; Devine, Kenny, & Macneela, 2008). These findings are troubling and they contribute to significant inequality for diverse groups in Ireland.

In response to these incidents, the Irish government has worked to mitigate racism and discrimination through various policy efforts. For example, in 2005, the report *Planning for Diversity- The National Action Plan against Racism 2005-2008* (NPAR) was released by the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and the Irish Minister for Justice, Equality, and Law Reform (Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration, 2010). The

purpose of this report was to propose a framework for combating racism and discrimination in Ireland. Similarly, in 2010, the *Irish Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015* (IES) was released, a strategy created to encourage Irish schools to better acknowledge the country's growing cultural and ethnic diversity and to provide Irish students with an education that respects all forms of diversity. Although these policy efforts are promising steps towards progress, there is still more work to do to build a more equitable society for all people in Ireland.

2004 citizenship referendum. Another notable effect that immigration has had on Ireland concerns the country's citizenship law. In 2004, the people of Ireland voted to abolish birthright citizenship that was first established in the Constitution of the Irish Free State in 1922 (Mancini & Finlay, 2008). Surprisingly, it was only in the late-1990s that the Irish Republic voted to confirm birthright citizenship in accordance with the 1998 Belfast Agreement. However, with the passage of the 2004 referendum, being born on Irish soil no longer guaranteed one with Irish citizenship. One now had to prove her/his Irish lineage through, for instance, a parent to become an Irish citizen. As Mancini and Finlay (2008) explain,

The referendum can be seen to work toward 'freezing' the nation in time by curtailing the access of 'new' ethnic and racial groups. As Brook Thomas suggests, this impulse is more than merely xenophobic, but also represents a central limitation of classic republicanism: the tendency to define "the sovereign people...as those who founded the republic, a definition making it impossible to redefine 'the people' in light of changing circumstances (p. 581).

A major impetus for the 2004 citizenship referendum was the 2003 Irish Supreme Court ruling for the case *Lobe v. Minister for Justice, Equality, and Law Reform*. In this case, two Roma and Nigerian families who were denied asylum in Ireland challenged their deportation

orders because the mothers in each family gave birth to children in Ireland. Since the children were born in Ireland, by law, the children became Irish citizens. Therefore, the families argued that “Deportation would violate the rights of these infant Irish citizens to enjoy the ‘care and company’ of their families within the jurisdiction under Article 41 of the Constitution” (Harrington, 2005, p. 440). Interestingly, a similar argument was used for a case in Ireland in the late-1980s, *Fajjonu v. Minister for Justice, Equality, and Law Reform*, where the Irish court granted permission for two non-Irish appellants to stay in Ireland with their Irish-born child. However, in the *Lobe* case, the court ruled that the appellants were not allowed to stay in Ireland with their Irish-born children because they had “no automatic right to ‘care and company’ within the state... Thus, the child citizen’s right to remain in Ireland remained in effective suspension until adulthood when independent choice could be exercised” (Harrington, 2005, p. 440).

Some scholars contend that the 2004 citizenship referendum following the *Lobe* ruling stemmed from anti-immigrant sentiment in Ireland. As Mancini and Finlay (2008) argue, “it would be naïve to think that immigration—and negative feelings toward immigrants within the electorate—did not play a role in the politics of the referendum” (p. 582). Other research (Harrington, 2005) suggests that the referendum reflects biopolitics at play in Ireland through the control of “women’s fertility: variously encouraging smaller or larger families, excluding non-natives and their dependents, or determining which families are legitimate and which illegitimate” (p. 429). Overall, the referendum’s passage reflects the Irish people’s anxieties about immigrants, along with their uncertainty about what immigrants mean for Ireland’s future (Shandy, 2008).

Seemingly, Irish government policies appear to be both part of the solution and part of the problem regarding the spread of racism and anti-immigrant attitudes in Ireland. On the one

hand, the Irish government has acknowledged the presence of discrimination toward minority groups and has taken steps to help mitigate it through the creation of policies such as NPAR and the IES. On the other hand, the Irish government has helped fuel anti-immigrant views through the passage of an amendment to the Irish Constitution that changed the country's citizenship law. As a result, immigrants in Ireland have been put at a disadvantage. These actions have implications for institutions throughout Ireland, especially schools, which prepare children to become engaged democratic citizens in a multicultural society.

Summary: Situating the dissertation. This dissertation investigates the beliefs and perceptions about Irish citizenship and identity that a small group of primary school students hold who are the Irish-born children of Nigerian immigrants. The students—two boys and two girls—attend a primary school in the suburb of an Irish city and are enrolled in the fifth and sixth grades. This study draws on the students' experiences—both inside and outside school—to understand how the students perceive Irish citizenship, develop perceptions about what they think it means to be Irish, and express their Irishness. This study addresses the way the four students are shaping—and are shaped by—their experiences as young Irish citizens of color¹ amidst a backdrop of significant economic, political, and social change in Ireland and the rest of Europe.

This dissertation, however, also strives to achieve another important task: it aims to challenge a widely held assumption that, as Maira (2004) states in reference to Buckingham's (2000) book *The Making of Citizens: Young People, News, and Politics*, that “young citizens—to the extent that they have rights, which are often limited—must be socialized into adult norms of

¹ In this dissertation, the words “of color” are used to describe the four students because the students often used the word “color” to racially identify themselves in interviews. Similarly, later in this dissertation, the words “Black” and “Brown” are used as racial identifications because the students described themselves and other people of color in these ways.

political involvement rather than being considered thinking agents who may express important critiques of citizenship and nationhood” (p. 206). Indeed, the four students in this study shared critical, well thought out, and nuanced ideas about Irish citizenship and national identity that reflected not only clear and thoughtful reflection, but also deep emotion. Therefore, the students’ points-of-view can help inform our understanding about topics such as citizenship development, school curriculum, diversity, and youth culture. Ultimately, the students’ perspectives presented in this dissertation can provide valuable insight for educators, research scholars, policy makers, and others to create a more just and inclusive society in Ireland and elsewhere.

Dissertation’s Chapter Organization

I conclude this chapter by explaining the organization of this dissertation. In chapter two, I review literature concerning citizenship education in three parts: 1) students’ national belonging and perceptions of citizenship; 2) curriculum and citizenship education; and 3) rethinking citizenship education in schools. Chapter three lays out the study’s method including the research design, the research context, research participants, data sources, and data analysis.

In chapters four through seven, I report the findings of this research. Chapter four addresses the four case-study students’ experiences of racism inside and outside school. In chapter five, I discuss how the students’ experiences of racism led the children to develop racialized perceptions of what it means to be Irish, along with their feeling not fully Irish because of how they were treated. In chapter five, I also describe differences among the students in terms of their beliefs about race and being Irish. Chapter six focuses on the different ways the students learned about race and being Irish. Chapter seven describes how the students expressed their Irish identity as children of color. In chapter eight, I provide a discussion that summarizes the

main findings, situates them in relevant literature, and identifies limitations of the study, directions for future research, and implications of this study. Finally, I close this dissertation with a brief epilogue following chapter eight.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review research regarding education, citizenship, and national identity. The literature is organized into three main categories: 1) students' belonging and perceptions of citizenship, 2) curriculum and citizenship education, and 3) rethinking citizenship education in schools. The purpose of this review is to identify current patterns and trends in the literature concerning education, citizenship, and national identity in both Irish and non-Irish contexts. I include research from non-Irish contexts because currently, there is a paucity of research that investigates the intersection of education, citizenship, and national identity in an Irish context. By identifying patterns and themes in extant research literature, I identify ways that my own study can build on this research to help fill gaps in the area of citizenship education.

Methods for Locating Literature

I utilized three main methods to locate literature for this review. First, after consulting with subject area librarians Jill Morningstar (education) and Agnes Widder (Irish history/studies) at the Michigan State University Main Library, I conducted an online database search using the Michigan State University library system. I accessed e-resources such as JSTOR and ProQuest and used key words such as "Ireland," "immigrants," "immigrant students," "citizenship," and "citizenship education" to find published qualitative and quantitative studies between 2002 and 2016, as well as conceptual pieces related to my research topic. I searched for literature between 2002 and 2016 because 2002 was the first year the Republic of Ireland ever asked a question about nationality in its census (Central Statistics Office Ireland, 2012).

Second, I reviewed the reference lists of books and journal articles that I read. Then I obtained resources from these lists through the M.S.U. Library and by purchasing books myself. Third, I received several literature recommendations from professors in the College of Education

at Michigan State University. The professors' recommendations helped me deepen my knowledge about citizenship and citizenship education, as well as broaden my understanding of these issues in an Irish context. Below, I discuss my findings from the literature.

Students' National Belonging and Perceptions of Citizenship

Research shows that students have complex experiences regarding national belonging in school, as well as unique perceptions about citizenship. El-Haj (2007) studied Palestinian American students in the United States and argued that they “constructed and negotiated a complex, multilayered sense of national belonging, one that was more encompassing than, and at times inclusive of, their citizenship status” (p. 308). In her ethnographic study focusing on Palestinian American high school youth in a large U.S. city, El-Haj found that the students positioned themselves as U.S. citizens with strong national identity ties to Palestine. However, the students believed that the larger U.S. community also positioned them as outsiders (and even enemies). This positioning was especially true for male students who, El-Haj claimed, were disproportionately disciplined in school due to “racialized images of Arabs as terrorists” (El-Haj, 2007, p. 290). The researcher also argued that the Palestinian American students practiced flexible citizenship, or “the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions” (Ong, 1999, p. 6). El-Haj noted that, despite the challenges, the students and their families believed the US was a desirable place to live. The students and their families felt this way because they viewed the US as a nation where they could acquire various social rights such as employment and education which were not always available to them in Palestine.

Maira (2004) conducted an ethnographic study “on working class Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrant students in the public high school in Cambridge, Massachusetts...” (p.

210). She found that the students, whom she also described as Muslim, developed a cultural citizenship that linked them to countries outside the United States. She defined cultural citizenship as “cultural belonging in the nation, or the cultural dimensions of citizenship more broadly...” (Maira, 2004, p. 212). In particular, Maira learned that there were three ways the South Asian students understood and practiced their cultural citizenship: 1) flexible citizenship, 2) multicultural/polycultural citizenship, and 3) dissenting citizenship. Although Maira did not define multicultural/polycultural citizenship, she borrowed Ong’s (1999) understanding of flexible citizenship (stated above), and she explained that dissenting citizenship was “based on a critique and affirmation of human rights that means one has to stand apart at some moments, even as one stands together with others who are often faceless, outside the borders of the nation” (Maira, 2004, p. 222). Overall, Maira learned that the students in her study viewed citizenship as shifting and contextual, and she asserted that the immigrant youths were “living a new kind of transnational adolescence” (Maira, 2004, p. 214).

Callahan and Obenchain’s (2012) qualitative study explored how high school social studies classes shaped U.S. Latino immigrant students as political and civic participants. The researchers interviewed National Board Certified (NBC) teachers and 10 of their former Latino students who were in their early 20s. Findings suggest that the former students felt civically empowered by their teachers through their learning of critical thinking skills, having opportunities to communicate their ideas openly in class, and receiving emotional support from their teachers. However, the researchers argue that despite the former students’ perceived civic empowerment, they did not engage in citizenship that was justice-oriented, or in other words, citizenship that required the use of “knowledge to challenge the status quo and to address issues of oppression and disempowerment” (Callahan & Obenchain, 2012, p. 30). As some research

argues, this type of participation is needed to achieve democratic education, particularly in the form of controversial discussions (Hess, 2009). Therefore, Callahan and Obenchain argue, “In this sense, the students may not have perceived that they were being socialized into a discourse representative of the dominant culture beyond the discourse of critical thinking” (Callahan & Obenchain, 2012, p. 31).

Relevant themes regarding national belonging and citizenship have surfaced in education research outside the United States as well. For example, Solhaug (2012) studied the political attitudes of immigrant students in Norwegian schools. Similar to other European nations, Norway has experienced a significant increase in immigration in recent years; Solhaug claimed that immigrants comprised 10% of Norway’s population. Solhaug’s research found that immigrant students attending three upper secondary schools in Norway often possessed more than one national identity, reflecting both their Norwegian and their non-Norwegian backgrounds. He noted that non-Western immigrant students felt politically powerless and that they generally viewed Norwegian immigrants as guests in the nation who were “not supposed to become involved in politics” (Solhaug, 2012, p. 16). Solhaug used interview data that he collected from immigrant students (originally from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe) and school survey data from the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD).

In Northern Ireland, Niens and Reilly (2012) researched primary and post-primary students’ perceptions of global citizenship in a divided society. As the authors argue, Northern Ireland was a particularly relevant setting to research this topic because “segregation remains a prominent feature of many social arenas, including the education system” (Niens & Reilly, 2012, p. 105). Most Protestant students attended schools called ‘controlled’, and most Catholic

students attended schools called ‘maintained.’ At the nine schools that participated in the study (four primary and five post-primary), Niens and Reilly learned that their focus group students indicated three main themes of global citizenship that framed the students’ perceptions: 1) environment, economy and interdependence; 2) cultural diversity at the global level; and 3) cultural diversity sectarianism and conflict. “Pupils in this study were concerned about global inequality and motivated actively to improve living conditions of others around the world. However, critical engagement was limited and [focus group] discussions reflected what Roman termed the ‘intellectual tourists’ discourse of brief forays into unfamiliar cultures...” (Niens & Reilly, 2012, p. 114). The researchers also noted that they observed a lack of engagement in controversial issues in school. As a result, the authors argue that the schools in the study were reinforcing students’ segregationist attitudes rather than encouraging these students to challenge political divisions that existed in Northern Ireland.

Other citizenship education scholars argue that youths perceive their citizenship in gendered ways. For example, in their study of Kenyan youths in Nairobi, Arnot, Chege, and Wawire (2012) found that gender played “an important role in framing [the youths’] understanding of themselves as citizens” (p. 87). They interviewed 24 men and women between the ages of 16 and 25 who resided in one of the world’s largest slum settlements. “Young men focused on the public sphere, emphasising voting rights, political corruption and their role in leading community change, whilst secondary educated young women recognised the importance of ‘freedoms’ associated with national membership, their rights to choose within cultural tradition, and the need to support their families” (Arnot et al., 2012, p. 87). Arnot and colleagues also argue that, rather than being fixed, citizenship identities are contested, and that in order for

citizenship education in Kenya to be successful, gendered constructions of citizenship should be recognized and addressed.

Taken together, these studies show multiple ways that youths around the world perceive and express their citizenship and national belonging. Some immigrant youth, for example, view and practice their citizenship in ways that are flexible, multicultural, or dissenting. Others perceive the global dimensions of their citizenship in ways that reflect the environment, economy and interdependence; cultural diversity at the global level; and cultural diversity sectarianism and conflict. Still other youths understand citizenship in gendered ways. Although varied and diverse understandings of citizenship exist, one characteristic links all of these different perceptions together: citizenship is complex, multilayered, shifting, and contested; it is neither fixed nor static. Citizenship's multiple forms depend largely on contextual factors that are unique to social, political, and cultural circumstances. This makes citizenship (and by extension, citizenship education) a challenging concept to define, although it provides a rich area for researchers to explore, especially in the context of globalization.

In light of these research findings, my study builds on previous research to investigate the way the children of Nigerian immigrants in an Irish primary school develop their understandings of what it means to be Irish in the context of their own unique circumstances. My research aims to explore how these students perceive Irishness in their own lives and the ways they learn to become democratic citizens in the Irish Republic.

Curriculum and Citizenship Education

There also exists a body of research literature on curriculum and citizenship education. In particular, recent scholars have noted different educational approaches that social studies curricula have taken in the area of citizenship. For example, Abowitz and Harnish (2006)

studied texts on citizenship and citizenship education dating from 1990 to 2003. Their study “aimed to map out the multiple citizenship discourses circulating in contemporary Western democracies, particularly the United States” (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 654). For their study, the researchers borrowed Foucault’s definition of discourse, describing discourse as “rules and practices that govern meanings in particular areas” (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 654). After analyzing English-language curricular texts and examining civic standards in three U.S. states (New Jersey, California, and Ohio), Abowitz and Harnish identified seven citizenship discourses. They characterized two of these discourses as dominating (civic republican and liberal), while the other five were critical (feminist, reconstructionist, cultural, queer, and transnational). The scholars argue that although there were diverse ideologies pointing to many different forms of democratic engagement, “the current, formal taught curriculum of citizenship produces a relatively narrow scope and set of meanings for what citizenship is and can be” (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 656).

In light of this narrow scope, other scholars have called for curricula that reflect multiculturalism more prominently. For example, Castles (2004) argues that the varied linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds of students “means building diversity into the curriculum, classroom practice, and the organization of the school” (p. 37). Parker (2004) advocates for educators to steer towards “a principled democratic and multicultural curriculum that values civic equality and freedom alongside toleration and recognition of group differences” (p. 434). In their book *Powerful Social Studies for Elementary Students*, Brophy, Alleman and Halvorsen (2012) encourage educators to adapt their social studies curricula to the cultural backgrounds of the students that they teach. Sleeter (2000) argues that school curricula should work to help students collaborate in “citizen coalitions” (p. 182) whose aim is to critically

examine issues regarding exclusion and power in society, and Gay (2013) advocates for social studies education that teaches “to and through cultural diversity” (p. 65) in order for students to move closer to realizing *e pluribus unum*. All of these perspectives are particularly relevant in contemporary times, for as Levinson (2005) contends, “The themes of citizenship education for democracy—political participation, deliberation, civic engagement, and so on—are relatively invisible in our typical school curriculum, not to mention the surrounding civic culture” (p. 333). Ladson-Billings (2005) takes this point-of-view further, claiming that in a U.S. context, “Too often, official curricula treat all students as if they were white, middle-class, natural-born citizens” (p. 75). These scholars support efforts to widen the scope of curricula in schools so curricula more strongly promote students’ exploration of multiple and diverse perspectives as they learn what it means to be democratic citizens.

In the Republic of Ireland, however, research shows that the way diversity is featured in the curriculum matters and that if done improperly, it can lead to deleterious effects. For example, Bryan (2008) studied secondary school curricula and policy documents in Ireland and found that, “contrary to interculturalism’s aim of ‘normalising diversity, national anti-racist policy documents, curricular materials, and intercultural practices ironically have an abnormalising effect” (p. 53). Bryan argues that these policies, curricula, and pedagogical practices actually positioned minorities as “outsiders whose presence might cause [the] traditional Irish spirit to change” (Bryan, 2008, p. 53). This perspective was due to the assumption that cultural diversity was a new phenomenon in Ireland. However, Bryan notes that Ireland has not always been a completely homogenous nation; she claims that diverse peoples have lived in Ireland for generations. Therefore, Bryan urges Irish schools to re-conceptualize the way they educate for democratic citizenship by creating curricula, for instance, that help

students critically examine the way(s) they are privileged and/or marginalized in their own lives. In addition, Bryan asserts that Irish schools should show students how to engage in meaningful dialogue about controversial issues like race, even if these discussions might be uncomfortable. Bryan, therefore, appears to advocate for a stronger presence in Irish schools of the critical citizenship discourses that Abowitz and Harnish (2006) identify so Irish students can learn how to consider multiple points of view.

Given these research findings, my dissertation study explores messages that citizenship education curriculum in an Irish primary school conveys about diversity, along with how the curriculum considers different points of view (if at all). It also considers how citizenship education curriculum might be framed to further reflect the increased diversity that now exists in the Irish Republic. Furthermore, this dissertation considers what the students learn outside the formal school curriculum about Irish citizenship and identity, particularly by studying social interactions that take place among the students and other people inside and outside school.

Rethinking Citizenship Education in Schools

Several recent studies also have focused on rethinking citizenship education in schools. In fact, many of these studies resonate with literature presented in the previous two sub-sections of this review. For example, Banks (2008a) argues, “citizenship education should be reformed so that it reflects the home cultures and languages of students from diverse groups” (p. 129). Banks claims this reformation is especially important today because of increased immigration flows that are taking place throughout the world. Banks believes the reformation of citizenship education will help young students deliberate with each other more critically, especially with students who come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Ladson-Billings (2005) contends that active citizenship through civic participation in U.S. schools will provide valuable

opportunities for students. However, Ladson-Billings argues, “One of the challenges schools experience in fostering active citizenship is the inactive citizenship of many of the adults who surround students” (p. 78). Therefore, Ladson-Billings advances the idea that administrators, teachers, and adults in the local community should thoughtfully model active citizenship for children.

Doppen (2007) researched post-9/11 citizenship education in the Netherlands by conducting a case study at a culturally diverse public school with a high Muslim student population. He chose this school as his research site because of its diversity; he notes that Dutch society has become increasingly multicultural in recent years, and that schools have been tasked with bridging the cultural gap between students from different backgrounds. In his qualitative study, Doppen researched the way that two administrators and nine social studies teachers at this school taught civic education to students. The researcher found that study participants thought it was important to teach students about democratic values, such as the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech, but that it was also necessary for teachers to help their students form a Dutch identity. In fact, Doppen stated that, except for one teacher, all of the teachers in the study “argued that the school’s changing student population did not and should not have any significant impact on the curriculum” (Doppen, 2007, p. 12). Despite this trend, the administrators and teachers explained that they thought their school should teach non-Muslim students how to be more tolerant of Muslim students. The researcher used his findings to suggest that “the Dutch must decide how best to offer its youth a civic education that will prepare them best for living in an increasingly multicultural democracy and interdependent world” (Doppen, 2007, p. 116).

Other scholars also have focused on Islam and citizenship education. For example, Tan (2007) studied religious diversity in Singapore to explore challenges and implications that Islam (particularly Muslims from a Malay background) had on citizenship education. In the article, Tan claims that because Muslims in Singapore have transnational loyalty beyond the nation state (due to their religious beliefs), some Singaporeans believe there could be a potential conflict to Muslims' loyalty to Singapore. In her study, she argues "there is a need for a form of citizenship education in Singapore that takes into consideration the multiplicity, complexity, and intersection of religion and citizenship" (Tan, 2007, p. 23). Tan also advocates for citizenship education that promotes an awareness and appreciation of different religious belief systems in Singapore, particularly Islam. Although she admits there is evidence that Singapore is currently moving in this direction, Tan still calls for an assessment of the present approach to citizenship education in Singapore to consider ways that it could be reformed.

Other research focuses on different perceptions of citizenship that exist between the state and society, and how these varying perceptions impact citizenship education and policymaking. For instance, Chen (2013) observed a discrepancy in the meaning of citizenship between the Chinese state and Chinese society through her examination of citizenship themes in two Chinese newspapers (*Southern Metropolis Daily* and *People's Daily*) between October 2007 and August 2010. The *Southern Metropolis Daily*, Chen says, is considered "daring" because it expresses "public opinion even if contradicting the state" (Chen, 2013, p. 267). On the other hand, Chen describes *People's Daily* as "the prime mouthpiece of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party]" (p. 267). Her content analysis included 2,257 articles from *Southern Metropolis Daily* and 2,744 articles from *People's Daily* that were reviewed and grouped into three categories: rights, responsibilities, and participation. Then the articles were further analyzed using SPSS to

measure frequencies and to run Chi-square tests to determine the significance of difference between these frequencies.

Chen found that *Southern Metropolis Daily* emphasized “the notion of citizenship in terms of rights,” while *People’s Daily* used terminology that “tends to highlight the responsibilities and participation of citizenship” (p. 274). The researcher used these findings to describe four implications for citizenship education in China. First, Chen suggests that citizenship education in China should be established as its own subject in school rather than being a part of moral education. Second, moral education in its current form in Chinese schools should be assessed for its effectiveness. Third, in China, “social and cultural rights of citizenship cannot be ignored in the policymaking of citizenship education” (Chen, 2013, p. 273). Fourth, Chen suggests that education for active citizenship should be pursued by the Chinese State. Chen also admits that there were limitations in her study (she only selected two newspapers for her research and the length of her study could have been longer), but nonetheless, she argues that her work illuminates a discrepancy of different perceptions of citizenship in China that, in turn, present implications for citizenship education in the country’s schools.

The studies in this sub-section illustrate beliefs about how educators and scholars are rethinking citizenship education in different countries around the world. Banks (2008a) argues that citizenship education should reflect students’ own cultural and linguistic backgrounds, while Ladson-Billings (2005) contends that U.S. educators and community members should model active citizenship for young students. Scholars such as Doppen (2007) and Tan (2007) have focused on the role of religion in citizenship education in the Netherlands and Singapore, and they recommend that educators in each location provide citizenship education that reflects multiculturalism and awareness of different cultural backgrounds in society. After noting a

discrepancy in perceptions of citizenship in the media in China, Chen (2013) claims that there are several implications for Chinese citizenship education that should be considered. Taken together, these studies emphasize the need for schools to develop citizenship education that reflects diversity, recognizes the complexity of citizenship, and promotes active civic participation for students. My study aims to build on this research by investigating how four children of Nigerian immigrants in Ireland who attend an Irish primary school understand Irish citizenship and identity, and the way these students' perceptions influence how the children navigate through Irish society as young citizens of color.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Research Design

This dissertation is a qualitative case study that investigates “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” and it relies “on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). It is characterized by “spending extended time on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting and revising descriptions and meanings of what is going on” (Stake, 2004, p. 450). The focal students in this case study are four children of Nigerian immigrants who attend a primary school in the Republic of Ireland.

For this study, I investigate three main research questions (and three sub-questions for the second main research question). These questions are:

- 1) What experiences of racism, if any, do four elementary school children of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland have?
- 2) What beliefs do four elementary school children of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland have about what it means to be Irish?
 - a. Do these beliefs differ among the students?
 - b. If these beliefs differ, how and why do they differ?
 - c. How do the students learn what it means to be Irish?
- 3) How do the four elementary-grade children of Nigerian immigrants express their Irishness?

Although multiple data sources are used in this study (see “Data Sources” below for more information), interviews are the optimal data source used to answer these questions. This is because, as the research questions above indicate, this study focuses on the beliefs and

expressions of the four students themselves. In order to best understand the students' own perceptions and actions, it was necessary to speak with the children in multiple one-on-one and focus group interviews to learn about their lives from their own points-of-view. Other data sources used in this study were certainly useful and they added valuable information and perspective to further understand the students' perceptions. However, interviews with the children were critical in learning about the students' own experiences and how these experiences influenced the views they developed over time.

The Setting: St. Hilary School

St. Hilary School², the research site, was established in 1977. Today it is a co-educational, third- through sixth-grade Catholic school that enrolls approximately 285 students. Although most students and staff at St. Hilary are White and Catholic, a significant number of students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds attend the school. For example, in spring 2014, the St. Hilary principal, Mr. O'Neal, told me that approximately 25 students from an African origin would attend St. Hilary in the 2014-2015 school year. Most of these students, he said, would be from a Nigerian origin.³

St. Hilary School is located in Lancaster, a suburb of an Irish city. According to the school's "Whole School Plan for SPHE" (Social, Personal, and Health Education), St. Hilary is designated with disadvantaged status, or DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Band 1. This designation indicates that St. Hilary encounters "...impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools" (Department of Education and Skills, 2005, p. 7). Therefore, DEIS Band 1 schools are schools that experience significant levels of financial and social

² All school, city, and participant names are pseudonyms.

³ Formal statistics of student demographics at St. Hilary were not available to the researcher.

disadvantage in the Irish Republic, and consequently, receive additional funding each school year to help provide needed resources for students, faculty, and staff.

St. Hilary was selected as the research site for this study because of my prior relationship with the school. From 2005-2006, I was a fifth-grade math and English learning support teacher at St. Hilary and I also taught fifth- and sixth-grade music. In spring 2012 and spring 2013, I was a researcher at St. Hilary and I collected data for my practicum study at Michigan State University. My years of collaboration with the school, both as a teacher and as a researcher, provided me with opportunities to build trust with administrators, teachers, students, and parents. As a result, St. Hilary served as a suitable research site because of the work I had completed there and the knowledge I had gained about the school over the past decade. In addition, given St. Hilary's increase in students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in recent years (particularly students from a Nigerian background), this school was an appropriate site to investigate my research questions.

Participants

There are twelve research participants in this study: four students, five teachers, two school administrators, and one Gaelic football coach/P.E. teacher. The four student participants were enrolled at St. Hilary during the 2014-2015 school year, and the teachers and administrators were full time employees at St. Hilary who interacted with the students on a regular basis in school classrooms, hallways, "on yard" (i.e. the school playground), in the library, and in the school's P.E. Hall. The Gaelic football coach/P.E. teacher, Ms. Madigan, taught P.E. to the four students and to their classmates once a week, and during the rest of the week, she taught P.E. at other nearby schools. This meant that Ms. Madigan was not at St. Hilary every school day. However, she did interact with many St. Hilary students (including some of my student

participants) outside school at the St. Hilary GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) club during the Gaelic football season. In this context, she coached students who attended local Lancaster schools, including some from St. Hilary, who were members of the club's youth Gaelic football team. In the sections below, I discuss additional details about the students and their backgrounds, as well as information about the school personnel at St. Hilary who participated in the research. All research participants signed Institutional Review Board-approved consent forms and were assigned pseudonyms to protect anonymity and adhere to research guidelines.

Students. For this case study, I focused on a small group of four primary school students enrolled at St. Hilary during the 2014-2015 school year: two girls and two boys. At the time of data collection, one of the children, Jacob, was a fifth-grade student, and the other three children (Bella, Victor, and Candace) were sixth-grade students. The four students were all children of color who identified as Irish-born citizens; however, the students also said that their parents were originally from Nigeria and moved to the Republic of Ireland before they were born. Therefore, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace were also second-generation Nigerians. All of the students lived in "estates" (neighborhoods) in Lancaster, the community where St. Hilary was located. Although I could not confirm the details of each student's socio-economic status, the estates in which the students lived were public housing communities where low-income families resided.

The four students in this study were selected based on three main criteria: 1) students enrolled in the fourth, fifth, or sixth grades at St. Hilary; 2) students of color who were Irish-born citizens and the children of Nigerian immigrants in Ireland; 3) two males and two females. (Gender balance was used as a criterion to account for possible differences in the students' views regarding gender and Irish identity.) I aimed to select students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades because, according to Ireland's primary school curriculum plan, fourth, fifth, and sixth

grade students during these years begin thinking about citizenship in more complex and critical ways. For example, the students' learning in these grades focuses on issues relating to national, European, and global identities; fairness and justice; and increasing awareness about cultural traditions that are different from their own (Government of Ireland, 2005). Students from a Nigerian background were selected because, according to the most recent Irish census (2012), Nigerians were the largest group of African immigrants in the Irish Republic and the fifth largest immigrant group in Ireland overall. Due to the increasing population of Nigerians in Ireland, I wanted to investigate how the Irish-born children of Nigerian immigrants understood Irish citizenship and national identity as young students of color in a predominantly White country.

Jacob. At the time of data collection, Jacob was a 10-year-old, fifth-grade boy at St. Hilary. When I first met Jacob at St. Hilary, I quickly learned that he was a soft-spoken person. Every day at school, Jacob wore blue-rimmed spectacles and, like his school peers, wore a uniform including a maroon V-neck sweater (with the school's seal stitched into the upper left side); a maroon necktie; a white-collared, button-down shirt that was always tucked in; and a pair of neatly pressed gray trousers. (Girls wore gray skirts instead.) Jacob also wore a worn pair of "runners" (sneakers), evidence of what I later learned was his love for playing sports such as "football" (soccer) and "GAA" (Gaelic football). In general, Jacob strived to be a rule-follower. He said that getting good grades was important to him and that he worked hard to be a good student in school. For Jacob, being a good student not only meant getting good grades, but also avoiding conflict and being respectful and obedient to his teachers, principal, and parents.

Jacob was born in the Republic of Ireland and described himself as Irish, but since his parents were originally from Nigeria, he also identified as Nigerian. "I'd say I'm half Irish and half Nigerian," Jacob once told me in an interview. Jacob said his immediate family was "quite

small” and that he lived with his mother, his father, an older brother, and a younger sister in a house located in an estate in Lancaster near St. Hilary. When I asked Jacob what his parents did for a living, he said, “My mom works in the hospital and my dad’s a taxi driver.”

Jacob’s older brother was 13 and attended a secondary school near St. Hilary. “He plays for a football team and he’s really smart as well. He’s really fast and he wants to become a footballer for Arsenal” (an English football club), Jacob said. Jacob also explained that his younger sister attended St. Hilary and that she was “nine or something. She likes to dance and she likes to sing a lot. She likes to play with these big dollhouses and she always buys these big dolls and carries them around a lot.” Jacob also explained that he had extended family that lived in Nigeria including a stepbrother (who he thought was 21), grandparents, and uncles. In addition, he had an aunt, an uncle, and a cousin who lived in London, United Kingdom that he visited from time to time with his parents and siblings.

Other than playing sports, Jacob enjoyed learning to speak Yoruba, his parents’ ethnic Nigerian language. He said that learning Yoruba at home from his parents was very different than learning English, and that picking up new words and phrases could sometimes be challenging. “My dad has to say it at least three or four times before I understand it properly,” he said. Even so, Jacob explained that Yoruba was his favorite language to learn (compared to English and Irish which he studied in school), and that speaking Yoruba was a way for him to express his Nigerian identity. However, over time, I learned that Jacob was not always comfortable expressing his Nigerian identity to others. Choosing to restrict his use of Yoruba mostly to his house (with the exception of a few of my interviews with him at school) was one way that Jacob seemed to create boundaries around his Nigerian-ness.

Bella. Loud. Funny. Sporty. Clumsy. Troublemaker. These were five words that Bella used to describe herself. Bella was a sixth-grade, 11-year-old girl at St. Hilary School who, I quickly learned, was social and energetic. She led an active lifestyle and described herself as a “tomboy.” She said, “All my friends are all girly girl. They all talk about boys and makeup and that kinda stuff and I’m just there sayin’, ‘Can we go climb a tree?’” Indeed, Bella liked running and playing outside, especially with friends. She was a member of the sixth-grade girls Gaelic football team at St. Hilary and, outside school, liked to go to “this massive field two houses down” from her house to play football and GAA with her friends. Since playing sports brought about an appetite for her and her friends, Bella and her peers would often walk to “the chipper,” a food shop down the road, where they would eat “chips and curry” after playing outside.

Bella had five people in her family. She said, “I’ve got my mom, my dad, and me and my two sisters.” Bella told me she was the oldest child in her family and that being the oldest had its challenges: “It’s annoying because [siblings] want to do everything you do, follow wherever you go and all. So annoying.” Bella’s mother was an accountant and her father was a taxi driver. Bella said her parents, both originally from Nigeria, moved to Ireland together in 1999. She said her parents “moved from Africa to Morocco, Morocco to Spain, and Spain to Ireland.” Although she had never been to Nigeria, she was excited to visit the country someday. In particular, Bella said she wanted to meet her great-grandfather who was “the chief of my town” and who owned “loads of animals.” Bella said she and her sisters learned her family’s ethnic Nigerian language (the name of which she couldn’t completely recall) from their mother at home, but that she and her sisters could only understand the language, not speak it. Referring to her mother, Bella said, “She started teaching us since we were three.”

In terms of her opinions about St. Hilary School, Bella said it was “a really great school because it’s got loads of technology and loads of rewards that you get as well.” One of the things she liked most about attending St. Hilary was when “you do something really, really nice, then you get to go down to the principal’s office to get a prize. Then you take it home to your parents and you can frame it and all. You can be proud of yourself and say, ‘Wow, I was good for a whole week without getting into trouble!’” Bella admitted there were times when students, including herself, got into arguments or fights at St. Hilary. “I used to hit people because of anger mostly,” she told me one time. Throughout my interviews with Bella, I learned that much of her anger stemmed from being slagged (teased) from her peers because of her racial background. “I am the only different skin-colored [student] in the class, so then like the jokes, it’s just really annoying and really stupid. They’re just racist jokes all the time. If I get frustrated, I might end up hitting them and then I’m gonna be the one getting in trouble.” As a sixth-grade student, however, Bella developed a strategy to avoid getting into fights when she was slagged. “I just tell the teacher and walk away. That’s it,” she said.

Victor. “We always call it the Saturday food,” 11-year-old Victor said about eating traditional Irish breakfasts with his family every Saturday morning. “Me and my mum and brothers, we always have that every Saturday. It’s baked beans, chips, sausage at the side, eggs, and tomato.” Indeed, food and family were two important parts of Victor’s life and, no doubt, they were essential to supporting Victor’s active lifestyle.

Sixth-grade student Victor was the middle child of five siblings and he lived in a house in Lancaster near St. Hilary. He had two older brothers, a younger brother, and a younger sister. His oldest brother was a college student at a university in the west of Ireland. His second oldest brother attended a secondary school in Lancaster not far from St. Hilary that, Victor said, was

“over the blue bridge and beside the park by the [football] stadium.” Victor’s two younger siblings attended St. Hilary School with him. Victor said he did not know how to describe what his father did for a living, but he said his mother was “a carer.” He continued, “She helps people in need and everything, like disabled people. She helps bring food and everything to the people that can’t get out of their house.” Victor said he enjoyed being in a big family, “especially in Ireland because I’m in the middle so I get to play with all of them. I don’t need to go knocking to call people. I just need to get my brothers to come out and then I have a game to play.”

Indeed, one of Victor’s main interests and hobbies was playing sports. Like Jacob and Bella, Victor loved to play football and GAA. He played with his brothers outside, but he also played with his friends and on youth athletic teams. During the GAA season, Victor’s schedule was particularly busy after school. He said, “Monday I have football, Tuesday I have GAA, Wednesday football, Thursday GAA, Friday football.” One time when I asked Victor what he liked about playing football, he responded, “Just being able to express yourself in a fun way without people looking racistly or something like that.” For Victor, playing sports was not only an activity he enjoyed, but an opportunity to escape, as much as possible, daily experiences of racism that he experienced inside and outside school.

In terms of his cultural identity, Victor said he considered himself both Irish and African. He told me that his mother said to him once, “You’re born in Ireland. You’re not only African. You’re Irish as well. You’re both now. It’s in your genes.” However, Victor believed he was more African than Irish because his parents were from Africa. As he put it, “I just say I’m African cause there’s more people in Africa and it shows in my color and everything. I would just say African to leave trouble alone.” (The trouble Victor referred to concerned the racism and discrimination he experienced, described in later chapters.) Victor compared his point-of-

view to being a football fan: “If I’m an Arsenal fan and a Barcelona fan, I will just have to pick one. You pick the one you like the best which [for me] is Arsenal.”

Candace. Candace, a tall and quiet 12-year-old girl in the sixth-grade, said she wanted to be an accountant someday. However, as a youth, she loved to draw. Candace saved many years’ worth of drawings and paintings that she completed for school projects and she stored them in a scrapbook. Her artwork consisted of decorated acrostic poems, sunflowers painted in the style of Van Gogh, and scenes of fall foliage.

One time, I asked Candace to look through her scrapbook and select one drawing or painting that she was most proud of. As Candace paged through her scrapbook slowly, she studied each art piece carefully. After several long moments, Candace stopped on a page about halfway through her scrapbook. “I think it would probably be this one,” she said in a soft voice.



Figure 2. Candace’s favorite drawing.

Candace pointed to a poster that she made in the fourth grade. The poster addressed bullying in school and included both pictures and words. In speech bubbles, Candace wrote words in upper-case letters that a bullied student might hear: “STUPID!” “WIMP!” “IDIOT!” In lower-case

letters, she wrote advice and motivational statements to help students overcome bullying: “stand up for yourself,” “ignore bully’s,” and “tell someone you trust.” The poster also included scenes of a White girl with blonde hair bullying a female student of color, and the drawing was bordered by what Candace said were colored beads that represented a “a friendship bracelet.”

Indeed, Candace had experienced her share of bullying, but she was not always comfortable talking about it, especially when it came to discussing the racial discrimination she experienced. In fact, in one of my early interviews with Candace, I noticed that even saying the word “Black” in a racial context was difficult for her. When she did say the word, she often did so in a whisper and sometimes with her hands covering her face.

Candace relied heavily on her immediate family for guidance and support. Her family included her older sister, her younger brother, her mother, and her father. Candace’s sister was 14 and attended a local secondary school. Her brother was nine and attended St. Hilary. Her mother worked in the health care industry and her father was a taxi driver.

When asked about her cultural background, Candace said she identified as both Irish and Nigerian, but that she felt more Irish “cause I don’t really know much about Nigeria.” Even so, Candace enjoyed learning the Irish language at school and the Yoruba language from her parents at home, and she spoke fondly about a recent trip she took with her family to Nigeria to visit her grandparents, aunts, and cousins. When discussing her trip to Nigeria, Candace said she felt “free” because she could “run around and play outside,” two things she could not do at home since she had neighbors who “slag you off and everything.” Despite the challenges Candace experienced in Ireland, Candace was a kind person who focused on her studies, particularly “maths”, and she said she planned to live in Ireland when she grew up. In discussing her future

plans, Candace said that someday, she wanted to live “in a really big house.” She then paused for a moment and said with a smile, “Well, not that big, but regularly-sized.”

St. Hilary School personnel. In addition to the four case study students just described, there were eight school personnel from St. Hilary who participated in this study. Below, I list demographics for these personnel in the table.

Table 1.

St. Hilary School Personnel Research Participant Demographics

<u>School Personnel</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Years Teaching</u>
Ms. Nevin	Jacob’s fifth-grade homeroom teacher	Female	3
Mr. Donnelly	Victor’s sixth-grade homeroom teacher	Male	10
Mr. Malone	Bella’s sixth-grade homeroom teacher	Male	3
Ms. Powers	Candace’s sixth-grade homeroom teacher	Female	9
Mr. Casey	Fifth-grade learning support teacher and Bella’s sixth-grade GAA coach	Male	24
Ms. Madigan	P.E. teacher and St. Hilary GAA club coach	Female	12
Mr. O’Connor	Deputy/Assistant Principal	Male	40 (1 as Deputy Principal)
Mr. O’Neal	Principal	Male	35 (11 as Principal)

All school staff members who participated in this study were White. In addition, all of the staff members, except for one, were born and raised in the Republic of Ireland. (Mr. Casey

was originally from England and moved to the Irish Republic as an adult.) All of the school personnel, except for Ms. Madigan, were credentialed teachers who had successfully completed a teacher preparation program.

Data Sources

There are five data sources for this study: 1) one-on-one interviews with students, teachers, and administrators; 2) focus group interviews with students; 3) school observations; 4) St. Hilary curricular materials; and 5) student schoolwork. I also drew information from various other sources such as the St. Hilary School mission statement, Irish educational policy documents, and Irish news articles.

One-on-one interviews with students, teachers, and administrators. All one-on-one interviews were audio recorded and took place at St. Hilary School. Student interviews were conducted during school hours in classrooms, the school library, or the Parents Room, and they ranged between 25 minutes and 75 minutes. I conducted four one-on-one interviews with each student, and each interview covered a range of topics that addressed the students' school, home, and community lives (see Appendix A). These topics were rooted in the research questions themselves, and they addressed the students' beliefs and expressions of Irish identity and how the students learned to be Irish. In addition, I spoke to the students about their backgrounds (families, friends, hobbies, etc.) in order to build context for my research and to establish relationships with them that were built on trust. Furthermore, I approached the interviews around sets of topics rather than specific questions because I wanted to provide the students (and myself) with flexibility to speak in a less scripted way about issues that were important to the students. In this way, I aspired to conduct interviews that were as student-centered as possible. In addition interviewing around sets of topics provided me with the flexibility to ask the students

follow up questions based on the information they provided (which, of course, I had no way of knowing in advance). In total, I conducted 16 one-on-one interviews with the four students.

Teacher and administrator interviews were conducted before, during, and after school hours (depending on each teacher's and administrator's availability), and they took place in classrooms, offices, or the Parents Room at St. Hilary School. I conducted one interview with each teacher and administrator. All interviews ranged between 30 and 60 minutes, except for my interview with Ms. Madigan, which lasted approximately 15 minutes. (Ms. Madigan had a tight schedule the day I interviewed her, so she was only available to speak with me during her lunch break.) Similar to the one-on-one student interviews, the teacher interviews were organized around topics rather than specific questions to provide opportunities to speak about issues in a less structured way. These topics included the teachers' and administrators' educational backgrounds, professional experiences, their impressions of students at St. Hilary School, and citizenship education at St. Hilary (see Appendix B). In total, I conducted eight interviews with St. Hilary teachers and administrators.

Focus group interviews with students. I conducted three focus group interviews with the four focal students. Each interview took place in the St. Hilary Parents Room during school hours. All four students were present for the first two focus group interviews; however, only three students—Bella, Victor, and Candace—were present for the third focus group interview. (Jacob was on a school field trip with his class that day.) The focus group interviews lasted approximately 75 minutes, 45 minutes, and 70 minutes, respectively. Like the one-on-one interviews, discussion topics addressed the students' school, home, and community lives (see Appendix A). The focus group interviews also built on information I learned in my one-on-one

interviews with the students. The second and third focus group interviews also built on conversations I had with the students in previous group interviews.

School observations. School observations took place in five locations: 1) the four students' classrooms; 2) the P.E. Hall during P.E. classes; 3) St. Hilary Church for school religious services; 4) the school playground during the students' morning and afternoon breaks; and 5) a local athletic stadium for the sixth-grade girls Gaelic football championship game (the whole school attended). Classroom observations were conducted during the instruction of different content areas including math, SPHE, Social, Environmental, and Scientific Education (SESE), English/language arts, Irish, and religion. During my observations, I took field notes (both handwritten and typed on a laptop computer) describing classroom spaces, the content students were learning, and the social interactions that took place among students, among teachers, among teachers and administrators, and among students and teachers. In total, I conducted approximately 70 hours of school observations.

St. Hilary curricular materials. During my fieldwork at St. Hilary, I obtained fifth- and sixth-grade curricular materials to analyze. These materials included student textbooks and workbooks from four content areas: SPHE, SESE, religion, and Irish. I analyzed the Irish Primary School Curriculum (accessed online through the Irish NCCA (National Council of Curriculum and Assessment)), and I studied homemade curricular materials that teachers made and displayed in their classrooms such as posters, timelines, and electronic documents on smart boards.

Student schoolwork. I also accessed and analyzed the four focal students' schoolwork. This schoolwork included drawings and writing assignments. Some of these artifacts were created during student interviews and I was able to keep them. Other artifacts, such as those

stored in the students' scrapbooks, I could not keep. In these cases, I took photos of the students' work after securing verbal permission from the students to do so.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred throughout the data collection process. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, early data analysis allows field-workers to “cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better data. It can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots” (p. 50). Therefore, analyzing data throughout the data collection process allowed me to identify and fill in research gaps, as well as explore emerging findings in relation to theory over time.

In this study, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed first. After the interviews were transcribed, I created a set of thematic codes to analyze the interviews. The purpose of using codes was to assign “units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during [the] study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The thematic codes, therefore, helped me organize my data and identify relevant patterns and themes within and across interviews. I established codes by using the two theoretical frameworks I selected for my study. For example, Lave and Wenger's (1991) LPP, which focuses on the learning process, was used to create codes that categorized different modes of participation that the second-generation Nigerian students used in their communities. Ogbu's (1998) classification of minority groups was used to help identify “*dominant* patterns of belief and behavior within minority groups” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 168). Coding took place using Dedoose qualitative software, an online data analysis program. In the table below are the codes I used for data analysis.

Table 2.

Interview Codes

<u>Primary Code</u>	<u>Sub-Codes</u>
Background	Cultural and Ethnic Identity; Education; Family and Home Life; Interests and Hobbies; Peers; Race; Other
Beliefs about Irish Citizenship	Environmentalism; Gender; Health and Hygiene; Knowledge about History; Language; Legal Requirements; Political Activism; Race; Religion; Sports; Traditional Irish Customs; Other
Learning about Irish Citizenship	Hobbies/Extracurricular Activities; Home; Media; Peers; Teachers; Other
Practicing Irish Citizenship	Environmentalism; Gender; Language; Learning History; Legal Requirements; Political Activism; Race; Religion; Sports; Traditional Irish Customs; Other
Quotes to Note	n/a

During my school observations, I took detailed field notes (either handwritten or typed on my laptop computer) to help capture the social interactions that took place among students, as well as among students and teachers at St. Hilary. In my notes, I recorded daily learning routines, the layout/organization of classroom spaces, and other noteworthy observations. At the end of school observations or interviews, I completed a contact summary form (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Appendix C). On this form, I provided a brief summary of the contact, recorded salient points about the contact that were related to my research questions, and noted any additional information that I found particularly relevant. These contact forms helped me identify themes regarding the students' beliefs about what it means to be Irish, how they learned to be Irish, and how they expressed their Irish identity.

To analyze any documents that I acquired (student work, school reports, newspaper articles, etc.), I completed a document summary form for each document (see Appendix D). “This form puts the document in context, explains its significance, and gives a brief summary” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 54). After completing the form, it was stored and for analysis.

For this study, one-on-one and focus group interviews with students were used as the primary source of information. Other data sources, such as my interviews with school staff, my school observations, the curricular materials, and student schoolwork were used as confirming evidence.

Research validity. It is also important to describe how I established validity in this study. In addition to acquiring multiple data sources to achieve triangulation, I debriefed with Dr. Halvorsen and Dr. Youngs (my dissertation co-directors) and I regularly reflected on and monitored my own subjectivity to make my research more credible. I debriefed with my co-directors and conducted subjectivity monitoring by writing monthly analysis memos for my co-directors to review, as well as taking part in in-person and virtual conversations with my dissertation committee members to discuss my data. Furthermore, I conducted member checks, or the sharing of “interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure [I was] representing them and their ideas accurately” (Glesne, 2011, p. 49). If my research participants told me that I was inaccurate in the way I represented them or their ideas, I worked to correct these misrepresentations. Throughout my research, I also strived to provide rich and thick descriptions of my work.

Position of the Researcher

“Do you have any questions for me?” I asked fifth-grade student Jacob as we sat together at a round table in the school library. I had just concluded my third one-on-one interview with

him. I continued, “I’ve been asking you a lot of questions these last few interviews.” Jacob paused, looked at me and said, “Yeah. What does it feel like to be American?” Jacob had a curious tone in his voice as his hands rested on the table in front of him and his round, dark eyes peered up at me through his blue-rimmed spectacles. All of a sudden, I realized that Jacob had turned the tables on me: I was now the one being interviewed about my perceptions of national identity. Jacob’s question not only pushed me to think about how to explain my opinions of being American, but his question was a stark reminder of my own position as a researcher in the middle of doing the messy work that researchers do. I was an American, an outsider, asking youths in Ireland what they thought it meant to be Irish.

“That’s a really good question,” I said to Jacob as I began to think of a response. I continued, “I think it depends on who you ask. For me, it means that I can share what’s on my mind in a respectful way. I can share my thoughts and opinions with other people. I think it means that I have a lot of opportunities to do a lot of different things with my life.” Jacob followed up inquisitively by asking, “And speak up for yourself?” “Yeah,” I said, and nodded my head in agreement.

I acknowledge that my status as an American profoundly affects the way I interpret the research presented in these pages. I also admit that my background as a White male interviewing the children of Nigerian immigrants in Ireland influences the way I make sense of the data I collected. Furthermore, my background as a Catholic conducting research in a Catholic school, as well as my experience as a teacher (particularly as a teacher who taught at St. Hilary from 2005-2006), influences the way I make sense of the data. As a former St. Hilary teacher, I acknowledge that the conversations I had with the students in this study took place, at least initially, with the students viewing me as an authority figure and, perhaps, a disciplinarian

(similar to the way the students viewed their own teachers at St. Hilary). After all, the students called me “Mr. McClure” rather than “Don” over the course of my fieldwork, and all interviews and school observations took place on school grounds. Even so, because of my existing relationships with school personnel, students, and some parents, I was able to build on the trust I already established with members of the school community. These relationships were crucial in helping me gain research access to St. Hilary School in the first place.

The story I tell in this dissertation is my own and it reflects my interpretation of the data as a White, Catholic, American male who has devoted his career to the field of education. As Weber (1949) notes, the results of social science research analysis are “the task of the acting, willing person: he weighs and chooses from among the values involved according to his own conscience and his personal view of the world” (p. 53). Therefore, as an acting, willing person conducting social science research, this dissertation reflects my conscience, my values, and my view of the world.

CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

In this chapter, I answer the following research question: What experiences of racism, if any, do four elementary school children of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland have? In the 2014-2015 school year, Jacob, a fifth-grade student, and Victor, Bella, and Candace, all sixth-grade students, attended St. Hilary School. St. Hilary is located in Lancaster, a suburb of an Irish city. Lancaster, once a rural Catholic monastic site in the eighth century, is now a bustling area with shopping centers, double decker buses, and busy roads. In many ways, Lancaster is a blend of the old and the new: aged stone walls and a medieval church tower juxtapose contemporary buildings and a modern light rail system. Round, verdant hills formed by glaciers thousands of years ago watch patiently over the town and are dotted by brilliant, yellow gorse.

The old and new aspects of Lancaster, however, are not limited only to infrastructure and physical geography. For example, in recent years, the area has become increasingly diverse racially, culturally, and ethnically. This diversity is particularly visible in places such as schools, neighborhoods, and local shops and restaurants. Prior to Ireland's economic growth and expansion in the late-20th century, Lancaster, like the rest of Ireland, primarily consisted of White and Catholic residents whose families had lived in Ireland for generations. While Lancaster, and Ireland in general, remain mostly White and Catholic today, Lancaster has witnessed a significant increase in residents who come from non-White, non-Catholic, and/or non-Irish backgrounds. Bella, Jacob, Victor, Candace, and their families are some of these people.

Throughout my interviews with, and school observations of, Bella, Jacob, Victor, and Candace, I learned that all four students not only observed Lancaster's change in diversity from

simply being residents in the community, but the students also believed that one particular characteristic—race⁴—had a profound effect on their understanding of what it meant to be Irish and how they viewed themselves as Irish citizens. This belief was largely rooted in the students’ experiences of racism in their community. In this chapter, I discuss the four students’ experiences of racism by explaining, in separate sections, how each student experienced discrimination in school, in her/his neighborhood, and in public places in Lancaster. I share the students’ experiences of racism both inside and outside school because, over the course of my fieldwork, I learned that the students’ experiences of racism, no matter where they occurred, informed the development of their beliefs about race and being Irish. After all, Lave and Wenger (1991) state, “Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. *Changing* locations and perspectives are part of actors’ learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership” (p. 36).

In addition, as Victor once put it in a focus group interview when discussing some of his school peers, he said, “They put on a mask in school, and outside of school, the mask comes off.” This mask, I learned, represented a metaphorical disguise that Victor and the students believed many White students in St. Hilary “wore” when under adult supervision—a disguise that hid these students’ true feelings about Bella, Jacob, Victor, Candace and other people of color. Although the four students described experiences of discrimination in school, I learned that the racism they encountered outside school could be much more severe, particularly when teachers and other adults they trusted, such as their parents and older siblings, were not around to

⁴ In this dissertation, I recognize race as a socially constructed concept that divides “the overall human population into subgroups based on aspects such as physical appearance, place of ancestral origin, historical and cultural experiences, language and customs.” The definition and the groups and subgroups in it “evolve over time and in response to larger social and political changes” (Wijeyesinghe, 2012, p. 82).

look out for them. The students' interactions with peers and adults on and off school grounds had a profound influence on how the four students understood themselves as children of color in the Irish Republic.

Racism inside and outside School

Bella: "I'm not gonna crack. You're not gonna make me crack this time." "Should I close the door?" Bella asked, *sotto voce*, after we entered the empty school library. I was standing a few paces ahead of her ready to sit down at a small, round table in the middle of the room (the table where I planned to sit and talk with Bella). Bella, who was wearing her school uniform consisting of a maroon sweater, a matching maroon necktie, a white-collared shirt, and a gray skirt, waited at the door with her left hand resting on the silver knob. I turned around and looked at the door, slightly ajar, and heard a few muted voices and shuffling feet in the distance. Through the door's small window, I could see the corridor's bright fluorescent lights shining on colorful student artwork that hung on the yellow cinder block walls. "You can leave it open," I responded. "The noise actually hasn't been too bad when people have been walking past in the hall."

As I answered Bella's question, however, I began to wonder why she asked it in the first place. Did she want to close the door because, as I inferred, the noise would be distracting? Or had she asked the question because she wanted to discuss a topic that she did not want anyone else to hear? Perhaps her question simply reflected a sense of anxiety about talking to me one-on-one. After all, Bella barely knew me; I had only arrived at St. Hilary a few weeks before, and this was our first one-on-one interview together. Although Bella had an idea of why I was interviewing her (I previously spoke with her and her teacher, Mr. Malone, about the interview, and Bella and her mother reviewed and signed the parent consent/child assent form), likely, Bella

was still cautious about our interview and she did not know what to expect. I sometimes wonder how my first interview with Bella would have been different had the library door been closed.

Shortly after our conversation began, I got the sense that Bella was reluctant, at least initially, to share some aspects of her experience as a student at St. Hilary. When she started describing St. Hilary, she spoke about her classmates in favorable terms: “The students here...they’re really, really friendly,” she said. “I mean, if you fall, like, they help you get up. They’ll bring you to the teacher and, like, they’ll stay with you. That’s one of the best things about the school. It’s got really, really great students.” Indeed, St. Hilary did have friendly students (and teachers and administrators) who helped create a caring and nurturing school environment. Bella spoke fondly of these people on several occasions, and I observed countless instances of positive interactions between Bella, school staff, and students in places such as classrooms, in the P.E. hall, the parish church, and school hallways during my months of fieldwork. After all, Mr. O’Neal (the school principal) once told me, “I have deliberately set out here to create a culture in this school where the interactions between people, no matter who those people are, whether they’re teachers, whether they’re parents, whether they’re children, whether they’re visitors are characterized by friendliness and respect and courtesy.”

However, in my later interviews with Bella, I learned that there were times when Bella and her friends of color also experienced race-based discrimination from fellow students. These experiences stood in sharp contrast to some of Bella’s initial statements. During school hours, these experiences often took place on the school playground (or as Bella liked to say, “on yard”), a busy place where several classes of St. Hilary students could yell, run, and play while a handful of teachers supervised them—teachers, I observed, who often had their hands full conversing with students, ensuring that footballs were not kicked into classroom windows, and caring for

students who, occasionally, fell on the blacktop after a hard landing from a high rebound jump in basketball, or who inadvertently ran into each other during a game of “chasin” (tag). As a result, student conflicts sometimes went unnoticed by teachers.

Some of these conflicts took place when Bella was on yard and they concerned being “slagged” (teased) about her and her friend’s hair by some White boys. The following dialogue, which took place during my fourth one-on-one interview with Bella, illustrates the slagging that occurred from Bella’s point-of-view.

Bella: If you get, like, one little slag, it can bring a person down. Me and my friend, [Brianna], she used to come in and she had different hair. Sometimes she would put her hair into an afro. [The boys] would be like, you know, hitting her when we were outside in the yard. They would hit the ball at her head. [They would say] “Oh, wait, you’ve got a big bushy afro on your head.”

Don: Oh, that’s awful!

Bella: She would cry and cry and cry but the boys who did it, they would get in trouble, but they’d just keep on doing it and doing it and doing it until she was actually sick and tired of it. She just shaved all her hair off. And then when she came in, it got worse because then they would slag her again because she had her hair shaved off saying “You look like a boy! You look like a girl who’s got cancer!” and everything. She just ignored them really and then, like, when her hair grew back, she had braids. Now when they like, slag her, she just goes, “I don’t care anymore because you slagged me before. It’s much more gruesome extreme that you slagged me now so you can keep on going and you can do whatever you want. Say whatever you want.” You can even slag *me* all day but I’m not gonna crack. You’re not gonna make me crack this time.

Don: Do you ever get slagged because of your braids?

Bella: Yeah, a lot. A lot.

Don: What do people say?

Bella: They call me, like, Bob Marley, but they don't do that now anymore cause they've grown past it. I wear these braids everyday now, so if they say anything, they know in their heads that it's just not gonna work because we've been trying it now and trying it now and it's not gonna work, so then they just stop completely. But some people, they're not like that.

In this excerpt, Bella described how she and her friend, Brianna, also a student of color, were bullied by peers at St. Hilary because of their hair. The slagging that Bella described, which took place on the school playground, was clearly emotionally distressing for Bella and her friend. Even though the boys responsible for the harassment “would get in trouble”, they continued to “keep on doing it and doing it and doing it” until Brianna decided to shave off her hair. However, according to Bella, after Brianna shaved her hair, the White boys continued to slag Brianna and they suggested she looked “like a girl who's got cancer.” They also questioned Brianna's gender identity by saying, “You look like a boy!” As Bella explained, she also was slagged by her classmates because of her hair braids when her peers compared her to the Jamaican-born musician, Bob Marley, who wore dreadlocks.

These experiences suggest that Bella and her friend, Brianna, felt excluded by their classmates in school. The racism they experienced, manifested by denigrating comments related to physical aspects of their appearance, along with physical harassment when a ball was thrown at Brianna's head, led Bella to feel disrespected as a person of color. Throughout my interviews with Bella, I learned that these kinds of experiences were not isolated incidents. Rather, they

often were daily occurrences that Bella had with at least some of her peers. These racist encounters, though, gradually led Bella to develop a strong sense of resilience—and resistance—by acknowledging that any race-based discrimination she experienced would not make her “crack.” This “cracking”, I learned, referred to experiences Bella had in the past in which the race-based bullying she encountered lead her to react in verbally and/or physically confrontational ways. For Bella, these kinds of reactions illustrated the metaphorical “cracking” to which she referred. As Bella explained,

Bella: The one thing that I remembered vividly is really, like, just getting bullied. It doesn't annoy me, but if you really, really annoy me, then I might actually crack and I might actually hit you or something like that and get into trouble. But, like, I got in trouble loads of times this year. I just can't. It's just too much. Sometimes I give cheek to me teacher because, like, I don't mean to, but sometimes when somebody just finished slagging me and then teacher comes up saying I have to do this, I have to do that, I'm like, “What do you want?” and sometimes that gets me into trouble. Without even thinking, I just say because it's mostly not my fault.

Don: So it's almost like something else is on your mind.

Bella: Yeah

Mr. Malone, Bella's sixth-grade teacher, confirmed in an interview that Bella could sometimes be in the middle of conflict at St. Hilary. However, Mr. Malone attributed Bella's involvement mostly to her personality rather than to her cultural background.

Don: Do you think that [Bella] is accepted by her peers and other people in the school?

Mr. Malone: I do. Well, as regards to her background, I think there's no issues there.

Well, I'm sure there are issues; children tend to come out like that sometimes. But I

don't think there are any major issues. I think in her case, it'd be more to do with her personality and stuff, and she might in some cases be excluded, but that's just as a result of her personality and how she doesn't get on with certain children. Stuff like that. But I think, as you know, in regards to her background, I don't think, especially in my class, I don't think there's anybody who would exclude [Bella] because of her Nigerian background.

Mr. Malone went on to say that Bella could "get a little bit angry really easily, so if someone says something small, it can become a big thing quickly." As far as the locations in school where conflicts could take place between students, Mr. Malone commented, "Usually, arguments won't take place when I'm in the classroom. It happens during a P.E. lesson or during a lunch break or something like that where there's a little bit more space and a bit more interaction between one another." The St. Hilary yard, I learned, was also one of these places.

Mr. Malone's comments indicate that, from his point-of-view, Bella was sometimes excluded because of her personality. Bella, on the other hand, claimed she was excluded due to her racial background. In addition, Bella's comments show that her experience being slagged not only affected the way she responded to other students' bullying by hitting other students herself, but also through the way she interacted with her teacher at St. Hilary ("Sometimes I give cheek to me teacher..."). Her actions reflect anger and frustration at the way she was treated, and they also show how they affected her level of engagement in the classroom. In particular, the teasing Bella experienced affected the way she communicated with her teacher, along with the way she responded to her teacher asking her to complete tasks in the classroom.

In addition to St. Hilary, Bella also was affected by racist encounters outside school, including those that involved her mother who was an immigrant from Nigeria (and who Bella

greatly admired). For example, one time, Bella shared a story with me about her mom helping a young White boy in the neighborhood put on his shoe. She followed up her story by describing her belief that her community was a racially segregated place.

Bella: Me ma, she gets slagged, like, loads of times... There's this little [White] boy who fell down and me ma was, like, putting his shoe back on and helping him get up. There was this woman and she would be like, "You get off him now!" Like the bad words and everything. And she would say, "I was just trying to help him." [The woman said] "No, you were only trying to kidnap him!" Yeah...like, here, it's Whites against Blacks still... You can't walk down a street without being called a "blackie." You just can't. Even me and [Candace] were talking about this. Even, like, a little kid calls you "blackie" and everything.

Bella's story not only illustrates the overt racism that she and Candace encountered in the community, but it also suggests that another member of her family—her mother—encountered discrimination, too, even to the point of being accused of attempting to kidnap a White boy whom she was helping. Bella's comments suggest that she perceived Lancaster as a racially segregated community ("...like here, it's Whites against Blacks still") in which Black people, including children such as Bella and Candace, were called discriminatory names. Overall, Bella's experiences of racism strongly influenced her in several different ways: her relationship with at least one teacher, her interactions with peers, her perception of Lancaster, and certainly, her sense of self. However, through it all, Bella pressed forward resiliently, determined never to "crack." In this way, Bella's mother—a woman who encountered racial discrimination herself—was a strong source of inspiration for Bella. As Bella explained strategies to me that her mother

used to overcome discrimination, she said her mother "...just ignores them. She just keeps on walking." And, I learned, Bella chose to keep on walking, too.

Jacob: "What dream was it?" Jacob was a quiet student who, most of the time, kept to himself in his fifth-grade classroom. He was a full year younger than Bella, Victor, and Candace, and I even noticed during our one-on-one and focus group interviews that his answers were often brief. (He preferred them that way.)

Jacob was a rule follower who avoided disagreements and conflicts as much as possible, too. One time in the school library, Jacob told me he was a good student because "I always just obey the teacher. I do what I'm supposed to do. I don't speak when I'm not supposed to be speaking, and I do my work neat. I listen to the teacher a lot." For Jacob, being a "good student" meant using impeccable penmanship, writing in straight lines (often using a pencil and a ruler to trace lines into his "copy" (notebook), just to make sure his work was perfectly straight), and following his teacher's directions. Hidden beneath the surface, however, I observed a genuine hope in Jacob—a trait reflecting Jacob's eagerness to learn, to explore, and to question the world around him. Sometimes Jacob tried to hide this hope, but at other times he did not (and could not). Jacob also had dreams for the future. When he spoke about his goals for being a scientist and playing center back for a professional football (soccer) team, I saw his eyes light up.

Jacob showed his optimism and hope at other times, too. One of these times occurred at the end of a focus group interview I conducted with the four students on a cold and wet December day. As the students and I talked in the St. Hilary Parents Room, the five of us listened to the rain beat unrelentingly against the windows. Bella and Candace sat across from me on a cushioned beige couch, and Jacob and Victor relaxed in matching beige recliners that

squeaked as the boys rocked back and forth. I sat in a wooden chair holding a notebook on my lap and a pen in my left hand that I used to take notes, and from time to time, I pulled my shirt's long sleeves down over my wrists after feeling a faint, chilly draft blowing from a closed window a few feet away. A weathered brown and wooden coffee table sat between us and it was marked and scratched from, what I assumed, were many years of use in, perhaps, someone's living room.

I asked the students if they had a vision—a hope—for the way things could be in Ireland given their experiences of racism. Victor answered immediately, invoking Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He spoke passionately and waved his hand in the air: “Martin Luther King, his dream has been going on for hundreds of years. That dream ain't gonna be true in ten thousand years from now. That dream ain't coming true any time soon!”

With Victor's words, a cloud of despair and frustration hung over the group. But then, quite suddenly, the mood changed. As I looked at the students, my eyes were drawn towards Jacob who was perched on the edge of his squeaky recliner, eyes lit up in eager anticipation through his blue-rimmed glasses. In a curious tone, Jacob asked, “What dream was it?” Jacob genuinely wanted to know. He had never heard of this dream before, and it already sounded inspiring. Victor, ignoring Jacob's question, said, “That dream, like, generations and generations are gonna have that dream. It's not gonna happen. You have to think of a way to get it out of our minds because that dream's not gonna happen anytime soon.” Victor's comment did not deter Jacob's curiosity, though—if anything, it made Jacob's desire to learn about it stronger. The ideas of King and his dream were taking root in Jacob's mind now, and I sensed that Jacob would not stop thinking about them anytime soon. As the students briefly shared with Jacob that King's dream was about equality, Jacob listened intently. (I did, too.) The tone of the

conversation changed to a more positive one, and Victor's frustration dissipated (at least for the moment). Jacob's hope and curiosity, it seemed, had touched all of us warmly on that chilly Irish day.

At other times, however, I saw the light in Jacob's eyes dim, particularly when Jacob discussed his experiences as an outsider due to race. I learned that Jacob's fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Nevin (who was White), perceived Jacob as an outsider, too, but she attributed Jacob being an outsider to something different than race: "That's because of his personality. You know, children with Irish backgrounds—exact same. They are just a little bit on the outskirts at times because they're just a more shy personality, but he is very much accepted. Everyone gets on well with him." (Interestingly, this perception was similar to what Mr. Malone said to me earlier about Bella.)

Although I observed during my fieldwork that Jacob could be somewhat shy in social situations (and, as Ms. Nevin suggested, that Jacob was friendly with peers in school), I also learned that there were times when Jacob did not feel accepted by others, both inside and outside school. (Even Ms. Nevin's comment, "You know, children with Irish backgrounds—exact same," positioned Jacob as an outsider, suggesting that, perhaps, Jacob did not have an Irish background.) Jacob told me stories about times when he felt discriminated against because of his racial and cultural background. For example, in one of my interviews with Jacob, he explained that there were racist people in his own neighborhood who sometimes harassed him. The following dialogue, which took place during a one-on-one interview with Jacob, supports this claim.

Jacob: They always say, "You're Black!" and all. They always say bad things. I tell my dad. My dad always comes around and chases them sometimes.

Don: Where does that happen?

Jacob: These bad boys, they always...there's a bad estate beside mine called [Spring Hill] and they all live around there. They're always racist people and I always tell my dad and he always tries to run [them] away. One time my friend left his bag outside. We were playing and the guy took the bag. We tried to chase after him, but he got away and they stole his bag. Sometimes when my brother goes outside and they slag him, he gets *really* angry and he starts to hit them or punch them. Sometimes he might use a weapon, but we stopped him from doing that. Sometimes he finds sticks or something.

Don: Do you get just as frustrated as your brother sometimes when you hear people say unkind things to you?

Jacob: Yeah, sometimes I do get angry because this guy called [Ruari], he's the guy on my street and he used to always call me names. He has this big gang and I was fighting. I was standing for myself and fighting off for myself.

Don: So what do you do to fight him off yourself?

Jacob: I just punch the first one and then they all call after me. And then my brother might just come outside and they all run away. Sometimes I might chase after them as well and trip them up or something.

This interview excerpt illustrates how Jacob felt discriminated against in his neighborhood due to his race. Jacob's story about boys who were racist and who lived near his home shows how Jacob, in addition to his brother and his friend, encountered racially charged verbal harassment and theft. In addition, Jacob, his brother, and his father had to chase the boys and (in the case of Jacob and his brother) fight the boys off when slagging took place. Jacob even said that his brother, at times, used weapons, such as sticks, to defend himself. Jacob

identified the boys as “Ruari” (pseudonym) and a “big gang,” and he expressed anger over the discrimination (“Yeah, sometimes I do get angry...”). This story demonstrates how, from Jacob’s point-of-view, he (and his friend and brother) were positioned as outsiders due to race. Ruari and the “big gang” slagged Jacob and his brother by calling them names. (They always say, “You’re Black!” and all. They always say bad things.”) As a result, the fighting between Jacob, his brother, and the gang of boys escalated, at least at times, to physical violence where hitting, punching, and chasing occurred.

In addition to encountering discrimination near his home, Jacob told me he encountered discrimination in public places in Lancaster, too, such as the local grocery store. One time, he told me the following story.

Jacob: A lot of people who just moved in or new people who just came around, they say sometimes, “Is he from Nigeria?” and all that.

Don: Where do you encounter them?

Jacob: Sometimes when I’m going to Lidl.

Don: That’s the grocery store, right?

Jacob: Yeah, I live right beside Lidl. So when I go to Lidl, sometimes they ask me when I’m with my parents.

Don: How does it make you feel when people ask you that question?

Jacob: It just makes me feel, like, I don’t know. I just can’t explain the way it feels.

Like, if somebody says I’m from Nigeria, I don’t...it doesn’t really affect me that much.

Um, I just say I’m from Ireland and they understand. I just explain where my parents are from and why I have Brown skin and why I’m from Ireland.

Don: Yeah, but how do you feel about it, though?

Jacob: Sometimes I feel offended...because they're basing my skin on where I'm from and it makes me feel really angry.

In this instance, Jacob explained how people at a local grocery store assumed he was not originally from Ireland due to the color of his skin. When I first asked Jacob how he felt about that, he said, "it doesn't really affect me that much." However, a few moments later, he commented that he felt "offended" and "angry" about people asking him if he was from Nigeria. After all, Jacob did consider himself Irish; although he recognized his Nigerian background, he was born and raised in Ireland and he identified as Irish. Therefore, Jacob felt compelled to explain to those who questioned his national identity "why I have Brown skin and why I'm from Ireland." This experience suggests that those who asked Jacob the question may not view people of color in Ireland, like Jacob, as Irish, and it also suggests that Jacob perceived he was positioned as an outsider in Lancaster because he was a person of color. In addition, Jacob's comments point to the possibility that he internalized the microaggression, or discriminatory snubs, he experienced by initially regarding the comments as a minor issue ("...it doesn't really affect me that much"), but later recognizing them as a more serious problem by saying that he felt offended and angry. As a result, Jacob's feelings suggest that he felt excluded in his community due to his race and cultural background.

I learned that Jacob's experiences of discrimination were not just limited to places outside of school, though. Jacob also described an instance of racism he perceived at St. Hilary that involved his fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Nevin. One time in a focus group interview, Jacob, who was almost always soft-spoken and calm in his communication with others, said suddenly (and to my surprise), "I hate Ms. Nevin," in response to a comment Victor made about Ms. Nevin, a teacher whom Victor perceived as racist. As the conversation continued, Jacob

described an instance in which he thought one of his friends, “Aaron” (pseudonym) (also a student of color who, Jacob said, had parents originally from Africa), was treated unfairly by Ms. Nevin. Jacob thought the unfair treatment was due to Aaron’s race.

Jacob: [Steve] kicked [Aaron] and then the teacher just stand there, and then [Aaron] kicked him back.

Don: So she didn’t say anything when [Aaron] got kicked?

Jacob: Yeah, and then [Aaron] kicked him back and he got S3 [Sanction 3].

Don: Oh, okay. Did you think that your teacher had seen both kicks?

Jacob: Yeah, she saw it. She saw [Steve] kick him. When [Aaron] kicked him back, he got S3.

Bella: Stupidity!

Victor: Like this teacher, she’s witches of all witches. She’s king of all witches. She’s queen of all witches!

Although it is possible that Ms. Nevin could have disciplined Steve, a White boy, at a later time and/or addressed the conflict in some other way when Jacob was not aware of it, still, Jacob perceived the incident that transpired as one that was motivated by discrimination based on race. From Jacob’s point-of-view, his friend, Aaron, defended himself by kicking Steve, another boy in Jacob’s class, who kicked Aaron first. However, since Jacob only saw Aaron disciplined by Ms. Nevin, he thought this event pointed to unfair treatment for his friend. (Steve, by the way, was a fifth-grade student in Jacob’s class who often caused significant disruptions. Throughout my school observations in Jacob’s classroom, I noticed that Steve often broke classroom rules and instigated frequent conflicts with other students (and even Ms. Nevin). Aaron, on the other hand, was a rather reserved student who, based on my observations, did not cause disruptions.)

Therefore, in Jacob's eyes, the way Ms. Nevin treated Aaron was especially unfair given Steve's history of breaking classroom rules and creating conflicts on school grounds. Furthermore, for Jacob, Aaron receiving a S3 seemed particularly severe given that a S3 indicated a serious disciplinary offense at St. Hilary that, perhaps, could lead to a meeting with Mr. O'Neal or even a school suspension. As a result, Jacob's suspicion that Aaron was treated differently because of his race led Jacob to express strong feelings about his teacher. ("I hate Ms. Nevin.") I learned that Jacob's suspicion of racism in this scenario stemmed from his experiences of racism that he encountered in his own life.

Like Bella, Jacob also experienced being singled out and discriminated against because of his race. However, in contrast to Bella, I observed that Jacob was less vocal about discussing his outrage over the discrimination (although there were certainly times when he did express his anger and frustration). Instead, I observed that Jacob did his best to remain hopeful each day. In one of my interviews with Jacob, for example, I asked him to think of five words to describe himself. Jacob thought for a moment and responded, "Smart, funny, fast, big, strong." As I watched Jacob's face, however, I could tell there was more he wanted to say, more he wanted to share with me. "Were there other words you were thinking about?" I asked Jacob. Jacob rested his hands in his lap and breathed heavily in and out of his nose that was stuffy from a lingering cold. Jacob said, "Um...nice, kind, approachable." Approachable? What did Jacob mean? I asked him curiously. Jacob raised his head slightly and said gently, "Like, people can come to me and not be scared."

Victor: "I'm African. I can't change it." The first time I walked into Victor's sixth-grade classroom, it was a sunny and warm Tuesday afternoon in late September. Mr. Donnelly, Victor's teacher, was leading the students in a SPHE (Social, Personal, and Health Education)

lesson about classroom rules for the semester. Mr. Donnelly was a teacher in his early thirties who was originally from a rural and rugged county in northwest Ireland. His affability complimented his thick brogue, and his laid-back demeanor seemed to keep his students at ease.

Victor's classroom was cozy for the 15 or so adolescents who used it each class period. Student work tables were arranged, one behind the other, on dark blue carpet. Three to four students sat at each table, and the students' book bags hung on the backs of their chairs. Victor's seat was at a table in the middle of the classroom. The yellow colored cinder block walls were busy with bulletin board displays, posters, student work, and a smart board. Light streamed in (at least on cloudless days) from the translucent windows that lined the back of the room, and fluorescent lights secured to white ceiling tiles shined brightly from above.

"Mr. McClure, why don't you introduce yourself to the students?" Mr. Donnelly said. I walked to the front of the classroom and stood snugly between the smart board and a small table holding a statue of the Virgin Mary and a few religious icons. I paused, looked at the students, and asked, "Where do you think I'm from?" Several students, including Victor, shouted in unison, "America!" "How do you know?" I responded. "Because of your accent," I heard a voice say. I told the class that I lived in a U.S. state named Michigan, that I used to be a teacher at St. Hilary several years ago, and that I was returning to the school to work on a research project: "I want to learn about what it means to be Irish. Would you mind if I visited your classroom from time to time to see what you're learning over the next few months?" "Sure!" several students said enthusiastically. The students were thrilled to have a visitor in their classroom, and a visitor from America, I learned, was particularly exciting for them.

As the students and I got to know each other over the next twenty minutes, I learned their names, hobbies, and some facts about their family backgrounds. While the class and I spoke, I

noticed that Victor was one of three students of color in the class. In contrast to Victor, the other two students, one boy and one girl, were reserved and chose not to say much about themselves or their backgrounds. Victor, on the other hand, was quite conversational and liked to talk about his background. “I was born in Limerick and my parents moved to Ireland from Nigeria before I was born,” he said confidently. After class, Mr. Donnelly whispered to me in the classroom doorway, “I’d say you’ll never have any trouble getting Victor to talk about anything,” punctuated with a grin and a short laugh.

Indeed, Victor had a lot to say about many different topics. One of these topics concerned Victor’s beliefs about race and Irish identity. Many of Victor’s beliefs about race and being Irish were rooted in his experiences interacting with peers and teachers at St. Hilary, as well as interacting with people at local shops, restaurants, and other public places in Lancaster. Victor shared many stories about his life as a Brown person (he was quite clear that he chose to identify himself as Brown, not Black (a topic discussed in more detail in chapter 5)), and many of these stories concerned his experiences of racism—experiences that were particularly influential in how Victor formed his beliefs about race and being Irish.

Within the first two minutes of my first one-on-one interview with Victor in early October, Victor addressed the topic of racism directly (and without my prompting). He said, “I got in a bunch of fights during school just because of it.” “Really?” I followed up. “Yeah, just racist comments and all. Really puts me off. They call me nigger, call me shit, call me poo and stuff like that.” “People in your class?” I asked. “In my year,” he said. “It got me in a lot of fights just because of stuff like that. My friends normally defend me even when I don’t hear them say it. If they hear them say it, they help me, you know.” At least some of the friends who defended Victor were White students in his class. I learned, then, that Victor not only

experienced racism from his peers in school, but that his classmates seemed to be divided into at least three different social groups: those who made racist insults, those who were the direct recipients of racist insults (like Victor), and those who appeared to defend the recipients of those racist insults. (I suspected there were bystanders, too, although Victor did not mention them.)

In addition to experiencing racism from his peers in school, Victor explained that there was a White teacher at St. Hilary who he perceived as racist, too. At first, Victor was reluctant to identify her by name. However, after a few minutes, he said the teacher was Ms. Nevin, Jacob's fifth-grade teacher, who was also Victor's fifth-grade teacher in the 2013-2014 school year. As Victor and I talked one-on-one at a round table in the school library, he told me about some of his interactions with Ms. Nevin.

Victor: Like, one teacher, everyone knows. Even my friends told me to report [her] to Mr. O'Neal. She doesn't like me. Everything I do. Like, today, like me and [a classmate], we were walking down to Mr. Casey's. She had a smile on her face. When she turned around, she saw me and her face just changed completely. Yeah, it's just one teacher. Most of me friends, like last year—she was my year—most of me friends used to just say, "Tell the teacher. Go on." And, like, I just haven't told her. I just ignored her during the whole thing. Yeah. I was in the class for reading group last year and every single time, I would just hide in the corner so she couldn't see me or talk to me. I did my homework, even though like the way I would do my homework with all the teachers, like do it nice and neatly. I have to do it extra neatly, just in case I get in trouble for no reason again.

Don: Okay, so you felt sometimes like there were certain expectations for you that weren't required of other students.

Victor: Yeah, a lot of people notice in my class. They told me to tell, tell, tell but I just cannot because if there was a reason she did it or something like that, it could backfire me if I go and tell. Cause if I tell my teacher now, my teacher won't go and talk to her. My teacher will just have to tell Mr. O'Neal, and then if there's a reason, like, she did stuff like that, it could backfire on me and I'd be the one to get in trouble at the end. Then it might actually happen for real now and then I won't be able to tell. And plus, I was in fifth class, so I knew just a year left and I knew my teacher for the next year, knowing it wasn't gonna be her and stuff like that. I knew I wasn't gonna see her or talk to her or something like that.

Although Victor did not say that his exchanges with Ms. Nevin involved racist name-calling like with his peers, still, Victor's statements about Ms. Nevin illustrate his perception that being singled out and ignored by Ms. Nevin was a reflection of possible racist behavior. Therefore, Victor's perception led him to feel excluded because he did not believe he was treated as fairly as his non-Brown peers were. He thought his schoolwork for Ms. Nevin had to be completed "extra neatly, just in case I get in trouble for no reason again," and he worried that raising his concerns about Ms. Nevin with an adult could "backfire" and create more difficulty for him in the future: "I'd be the one to get in trouble at the end." Victor's interactions with Ms. Nevin illustrate how, at least at times, Victor believed he was not treated fairly compared to his White peers and that he was singled out, possibly due to his race. His comments also indicate that his interactions with Ms. Nevin had a strong impact on his learning and participation in the classroom. It is important to note, however, that Victor did not express similar perceptions about all of his White teachers at St. Hilary. For example, Victor spoke fondly about his interactions

with Mr. Casey and Mr. Donnelly, and at one time, Victor even made a point of saying he did not think Mr. Casey was racist.

Victor also shared stories about racist encounters he experienced with his peers and neighbors in Lancaster, particularly concerning racial and cultural stereotypes. White people in his community, Victor explained, often made false assumptions about Victor and his family that were upsetting. For example, in two different interviews, Victor told me that just because he had an African background, people assumed that the Ebola virus might personally affect Victor and his family. In one conversation, Victor said,

Victor: Have you heard about the Ebola thing, yeah?

Don: Yeah

Victor: My dad was in Africa not long ago, and in that week, I have at least ten people coming up to me saying, “Does anyone in your family have Ebola?” And it’s really an awkward question to answer. I’ll be just like, “Go away.” Like, and sometimes, I’ve just had to...just go away cause it’s just...it just wrecks your head, people coming up to you. It just wrecks your head when people come up to you with stupid questions like that. It wrecks my head.

In a separate conversation, Victor confirmed his experiences above and expanded his point of view by first posing a hypothetical scenario in an effort to make others empathize with his experience. He said,

Victor: Just because I’m African, that doesn’t mean...half the stuff that happens, I don’t know anything about it. Yeah, and they just come to you. Just because it’s happened in Africa, they come up to me and ask. Like, in Belfast, say someone had Ebola in Belfast,

yeah, that came back from Kenya, someone had Ebola that died, and it's just like me going and saying, "Oh, is your family all right?"

Don: People sort of assume that just because you have a background from the African continent, from Nigeria, that automatically

Victor: I have to have it.

In addition to stereotypes concerning the Ebola virus, Victor said he encountered White people who assumed that just because he was a person of color, he was a member of a specific class. One time in an interview, Victor explained to me, "Some people have asked me, have I ever been poor as well." Victor claimed that some people assumed he was poor just because "I'm from Africa." Victor continued, "Most of them I ignore, or to make them think I don't take it seriously, I just laugh. Like a lot of stuff that they say, it really annoys me, but I just have to laugh because if I show my feelings to a few people, they'll come back and use it against us. I don't really get upset."

Although Victor stated that he tried not to "get upset", Victor's comments, nonetheless, reflect his frustration and anger. Victor's comments indicate his attempts to hide his true feelings by employing strategies such as ignoring insults, laughing at questions or comments that are upsetting to him, or simply telling people to "Go away." As Victor noted, showing his true feelings could make him (and other people of color around him) vulnerable, and expressing his feelings could create more problems in the future: "...they'll come back and use it against us". (The "they'll," I learned, referred to White people who were perpetrators of the discrimination.) Furthermore, this particular comment suggests that Victor perceived a shared identity between himself and at least some other people of color in Ireland, and that taking part in confrontations

stemming from racial and cultural conflicts could, in turn, have ripple effects for other people of color in his community.

More broadly, Victor's comments suggest that, as an Irish citizen, Victor felt excluded in his school and community based on his race and his African background. Although Victor admitted that he received support from his family (particularly his mother) and at least some of his peers (including White peers), the race-based discrimination Victor encountered clearly had a profound affect on the way he understood himself, how he positioned himself in school, and how he interacted with others. However, despite his challenges, Victor showed resilience by not allowing the discrimination he experienced to tarnish his sense of identity and his optimism for the future. In this way, Victor shared a common link with both Jacob and Bella who, in the face of discrimination, also demonstrated resilience in their own unique ways. As Victor explained to me one time, "I'm African. I can't change it. And, like, sometimes it's good to be different. Not like everyone. I just have to embrace it. No matter what, even in life, *no matter what*, there's always gonna be an upside. There's always gonna be a downside. So you just have to look at the upside, not the downside. And that's what I do."

Candace: "...sometimes I see them when I'm coming home from school so I just walk faster." "How many times have you been to Nigeria?" I asked Candace. Candace, a sixth-grade student, and I were sitting in the school library having our first one-on-one interview together. She had just told me that both of her parents were originally from Nigeria, that her older sister was born in Nigeria, and that she had traveled to Nigeria in the past to visit her extended family there.

"I think three times," she said. "Is being in Nigeria similar or different than Ireland?" I asked. "Different. Really different," Candace began. "It's really sunny. You feel so free and

everything.” (It seemed that Candace implied she did *not* feel free in Ireland. What did she mean by free in the first place, and why, perhaps, did she not feel free in Ireland? I wanted to know.) “What makes you feel free?” I said. Candace replied, “You can run around and everything and play outside.” I paused for a moment, looked at Candace and asked, “You don’t feel like you can do that here?” Candace slowly shook her head no. “Why?” I asked. Candace responded shyly, “Neighbors, um, just like the area and everything. People will slag you off. I stay inside.” Indeed, Candace did stay inside much of the time. Over the course of my fieldwork, I learned that fear of racism permeated much of her life. Candace was a timid, gentle, and kind person, but the discrimination she experienced was a main reason for avoiding public places where she thought she might be slagged—at least, places where she was not with people she trusted who helped look out for her if trouble might be near.

The trouble Candace feared stemmed, in large part, from her own experiences of discrimination from her peers. Many of these experiences took place in her estate, a subdivision of winding, skinny roads consisting of modest two-story stucco homes painted in various shades of white, gray, and beige. (On a cool evening, it was common to see smoke billowing from the chimneys of these homes and, while walking past, to smell the aroma of burning peat.)

Candace’s estate sat on a small hill, just across the road from Lancaster Community Center (which bordered St. Hilary Church and School). In my first interview with Candace, I asked her to describe her neighborhood for me. In the discussion, she told me about children who lived next door to her that, she said, she did not like very much.

Don: How long have you known them?

Candace: Three or four years, and like, sometimes they can be okay. Sometimes they’re just terrible. They’re...I can’t say, um...racist.

Don: Oh, I see. So what does that mean?

Candace: Like, being different...treating people different because, like, their skin color.

Don: Oh, okay. And sometimes they treat you differently because of that reason?

Candace: *(nods yes)*

Don: How does that make you feel?

Candace: It makes me feel terrible about myself. Like, my sister wants to fight with them. My mom won't let her because she'll just make it worse. My mom just ignores it, and then sometimes I see them when I'm coming home from school so I just walk faster.

At this time, Candace did not describe specifics about the instance of discrimination she experienced; I observed that she was reluctant to talk about it. In fact, during the interview, I noticed that even saying the word "racist" was difficult for her. The one time she did say the word, it was introduced by a long pause and uttered quickly. I saw her lip quiver and her eyes swell with tears. She looked away from me.

The topic of racism came up again in a later interview, and I noticed that Candace remained cautious about discussing it, even to the point of covering her face with her hands and laughing nervously. Due to her obvious discomfort, I proceeded gently and asked Candace why she felt the way she did. I said,

Don: Are you a little reluctant to talk about this?

Candace: *(nods yes)*

Don: Can you tell me why?

Candace: It's embarrassing.

Don: Why is it embarrassing?

Candace: Just because, like, I don't like to talk about racism and everything. Playing outside, if like, say, if [Holly] came to knock for me and my neighbors are outside, they'd say to [Holly], "[Holly], you're playing with a Black girl!" and then [Holly] would stand up for me and then we'd leave. You wouldn't play outside as much unless someone came to knock for you. Then you'd probably go. I wouldn't go outside if no one didn't knock for me.

"Holly" (pseudonym) was Candace's White friend who was also in Candace's class at St. Hilary. In this excerpt, Candace described an experience of racism that she had with children who lived next door to her. When Holly asked Candace to play outside, the neighbors next door (who Candace said were White) made a racist comment to Holly about Candace ("Holly, you're playing with a Black girl!"). As a result, Candace stated that she avoided playing outside alone ("I wouldn't go outside if no one didn't knock for me") in order to decrease her chances of encountering her neighbors who were racist. Furthermore, similar to social groups that existed with Victor and his peers, it also appeared that Candace and her peers were divided into at least three social groups: those who made racist insults (Candace's neighbors), those who received racist insults (Candace), and those who defended the receivers of the insults (Holly).

Based on her experiences, I learned that Candace spent much of her time indoors and that she took up activities such as reading, knitting, and drawing. Drawing, in fact, was one of Candace's favorite hobbies and was a way for her to express her feelings about the way she was treated. For example, in my second interview with Candace, she showed me a poster she drew about bullying.

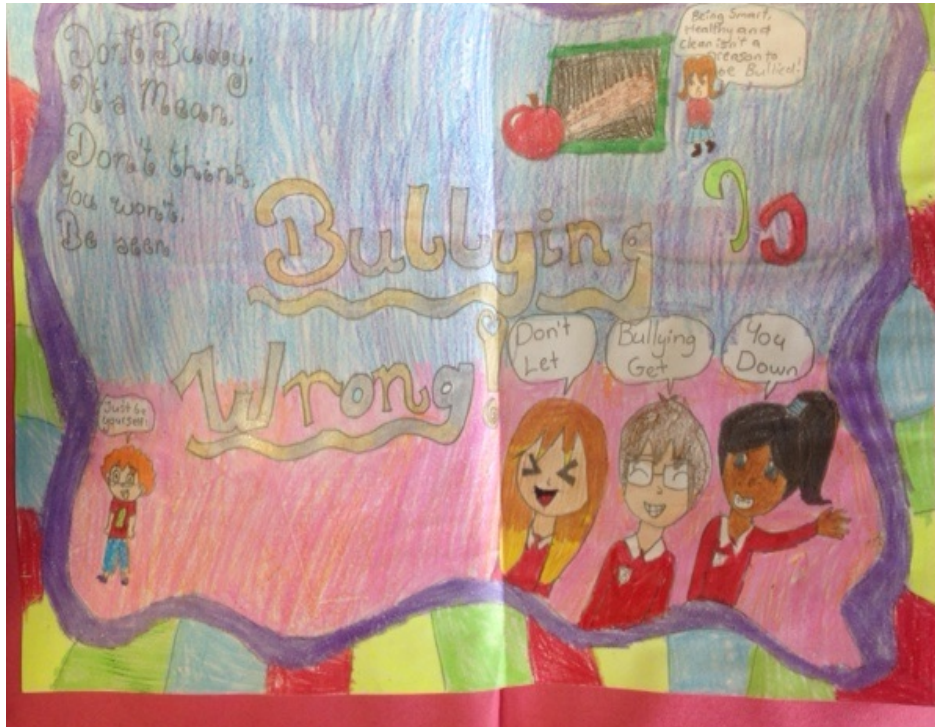


Figure 3. Candace's bullying poster.

The poster, full of color, includes the words “Bullying Wrong!” underlined and displayed prominently in the center of the page. In the upper left corner, Candace utilized the literary device of rhyme to communicate the message, “Don’t Bully. It’s Mean. Don’t think you won’t be seen.” In the upper right corner are a few small drawings including one of a White girl with neat hair, a red shirt, a blue skirt, and black shoes. A speech bubble next to the girl reads, “Being Smart, Healthy, and clean isn’t a reason to be Bullied!” In the bottom right corner is a drawing of three students. (The two students on the left, one girl and one boy, appear to be from Asian decent, and the person on the far right, a female student of color, was a self-portrait of Candace.) All three students in the group have smiles on their faces and are wearing the St. Hilary School uniform. Candace appears to be waving, and three speech bubbles accompany the students. The speech bubbles say, “Don’t Let Bullying Get You Down.” In the lower left corner of the poster

is a small drawing of a White boy wearing a red shirt and blue pants saying, “Just be yourself!” (Candace described this boy as “a nerdy gamer geek” in the interview.) Candace said that all of the students in the drawing, except for her, were not real students; they were imagined.

Interestingly, the poster speaks to different audiences. On the one hand, Candace addresses the people who bully with the rhyming statement in the upper left corner. On the other hand, Candace includes a drawing of three students from minority backgrounds in the opposite corner of the page—students who share encouraging words of resilience for other students who might also be bullied. (The two White students in the other two corners of the page also provide encouraging statements.) Therefore, Candace’s poster implies that children from different backgrounds can be bullied for different reasons. Overall, Candace’s drawing suggests that art was a way for her to address the bullying she experienced in her own life. In this case, Candace’s drawing points to the possibility that there could be other students at St. Hilary who were bullied, too (even though the students in the drawing were imagined). She used her skill of drawing, therefore, to communicate to bullied students that they were not alone, and that it was all right to be different. (“Just be yourself!”) During the time I spent with Candace, I learned that, indeed, drawing was a way for Candace to confront her fear of bullying. Perhaps it was also an opportunity for her to create an imagined community where kinship existed among students who, in some way, were positioned as outsiders like Candace was.

Although Candace did not share specific encounters of racism that she experienced at St. Hilary, for her, the fear of being discriminated against based on her race was always on her mind. This was because at least one of the children who lived next door to her, a girl, was also a student at St. Hilary. Candace said she saw the girl at school often. As Candace explained, “...they don’t say anything in school, but when we’re walking home, I see her and I just walk faster. I

think she's in third or fourth [grade]." Still, Candace thought St. Hilary was "really good" at preventing discrimination and addressing it when it occurred.

In fact, Mr. O'Neal, the school principal, once told me that helping St. Hilary students develop into responsible citizens involved creating a respectful learning environment where students were treated fairly.

Mr. O'Neal: Responsible citizenship, really when you narrow it down to its essence, it involves respect for other people. And, you know, dealing with other people no matter who they might be courteously and respectfully and understanding that you yourself personally are not the center of the universe, and that you must take into account the feelings and the wishes of other people. So I do think that the development of responsible citizenship [at St. Hilary] happens on two levels. One is the informal, the day to day fabric of everyday life, everyday interactions that happen throughout the school, and I do think that's far more important than the specific lessons that are developed as part of the SPHE curriculum.

It was evident that the St. Hilary administrator and teachers made efforts to promote responsible citizenship by creating a school environment that was caring and respectful. (During my school observations, for example, there were many times when I saw Mr. O'Neal and the teachers provide positive reinforcement to students and hold students accountable for their actions.) Even so, fear still permeated much of Candace's life. Compared to Jacob, Bella, and Victor, Candace demonstrated resilience in her own way (particularly through her artwork), but she nonetheless was more socially cautious than the other three students (especially Bella and Victor). This caution was especially apparent when Candace once told me about wanting to participate in an extracurricular activity outside of school. In reference to visiting the local public library to learn

about a knitting club she was interested in joining, Candace said she felt “just terrified, like, to try to talk to the people. I wouldn’t go on my own,” she said, “just in case there’s something racist.”

Conclusion

Racism and resilience. Overall, it is clear that Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace frequently encountered racism in their lives. These experiences occurred in different locations (i.e., their neighborhoods, at school, in the local grocery store) and with different age groups (i.e., White school-aged peers and adults). Although the students reacted to the discrimination they experienced in different ways, all four children demonstrated resilience⁵ that helped them cope with the racism they encountered in their community. For example, Jacob showed hope and curiosity through his eagerness to learn and his efforts to be “approachable.” Bella was determined not to “crack” when people discriminated against her. Victor affirmed his African background by recognizing his racial and cultural differences as an asset. Candace built resilience by participating in activities, such as drawing, that provided her with a means to speak out against bullying. The four students also developed various strategies for avoiding and/or confronting racism. These strategies ranged from staying inside one’s home to avoid conflict (like Candace), attempting to explain one’s racial and cultural background to White people (like Jacob), ignoring discriminatory comments and/or laughing (like Victor), and, at times, taking part in verbal and/or physical aggression when threatened (like Bella and Victor). The students used these strategies at different times and in different contexts. In general, the students’ resilience helped them bounce back from the discrimination they experienced on a daily basis.

⁵ For the purpose of this study, I borrow Floyd’s (1996) understanding of resilient children as “those who beat the odds or bounce back under adverse circumstances” (p. 183). I choose this definition because it reflects the way I observed Bella, Jacob, Victor, and Candace bounce back from the discrimination they experienced in their lives each day.

The resilience of Black students in the US has been well documented in educational literature in recent decades. For example, Floyd (1996) argues that African American high school students build resilience by interacting with supportive family members, working with supportive adults outside of family circles (such as teachers), and accessing personality traits such as perseverance and optimism. Ani (2013) found that high-achieving Black students attending a junior high school in the US believed that being African American meant taking part in the “struggle for liberation and equal rights” (p. 415). These students built resilience by following the examples of ancestors and elders whose perseverance they strived to emulate in the struggle for equality. Cunningham and Swanson (2010) studied African American adolescents and their educational resilience and found that the students possessed “support from the school context, high parental monitoring, and high amounts of academic self-esteem” (p. 482).

Similarly, Bella, Victor, Jacob, and Candace accessed resilience in different ways that helped them face challenges in their own community. For example, Candace viewed her home as a safe place to avoid racist encounters, and she depended on her family to protect her from harm. Victor, Bella, and Candace explained that they listened to advice and counsel from their mothers in the face of racism. When Jacob encountered racism in his own neighborhood, he received help from his brother and his father to chase away boys who harassed him and a friend. Candace even mentioned that, from her point of view, St. Hilary School was “really good” at preventing discrimination and addressing it when it occurred. For all four students, supportive family members and, at times, a supportive school environment, were crucial in developing a strong sense of resilience both inside and outside school.

In addition to the students’ family members and school, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace also accessed personality traits, such as perseverance and optimism, to help them build

resilience. Bella's determination not to "crack", Jacob's hope, Candace's drawings, and Victor's goal to look at the "upside" rather than the "downside" reflect how the students persevered and showed optimism in their own unique ways. Even though the students described times when they faced discrimination that led them to feel discouraged, overall, the students demonstrated an extraordinary amount of resilience in light of the racism they encountered. The students' resilience demonstrates their strength of character, their resolve, and their determination.

The students' comfort levels in discussing race and racism. The degree to which the students felt comfortable discussing race and their experiences of racism in one-on-one and focus group interviews is also notable. Victor, for example, was quite open in discussing his experiences of discrimination, even within the first few minutes of his first interview. Candace, on the other hand, felt embarrassed and uncomfortable when she talked about racism. However, I learned that all four students had limited opportunities to talk about race and racism openly, particularly with White people. As Tatum (1997) argues, "Children who have been silenced often enough learn not to talk about race publicly" (p. 36). Over time, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace became more open in discussing race and racism with me, but it was clear that their experiences of discrimination (combined with their reluctance to talk about discrimination in school) contributed to the students' varying comfort levels in discussing these topics during interviews and school observations.

Racism and gender discrimination. There is also evidence that gender played a role in the racial discrimination that at least some of the students experienced. For Bella and her friend, Brianna (also a person of color who was not interviewed in this study), both girls (according to Bella) experienced discrimination because of their hair. "Related to questions of color are issues of hair texture, an especially sensitive issue for Black women, young and old" (Tatum, 1997, p.

45). The White boys on the school playground slagged Bella and Brianna because of their hair, calling the girls names and even throwing a ball at Brianna's head. In response, Brianna eventually shaved her hair, but she was later slagged by the same students because these students said she looked like a boy. This particular case illustrates the intersection of racial and gender discrimination that Bella and Brianna encountered, and it emphasizes the girls' social identities as females of color—identities that “predispose [them] to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression” (Harro, 2000, p. 15).

Furthermore, as Thorne (1993) argues, separation based on gender is more likely to take place in crowded school settings such as playgrounds (where adults typically exert less control). Teasing that occurs between girls and boys on school playgrounds often “has the effect of marking and policing gender boundaries” (p. 54). In particular, the ball the boys threw at Brianna's head reflects “the significance of material objects in kids' social relations, as a focus of provocation and dispute, as a medium through which alliances may be launched and disrupted, as sacraments of social inclusion and painful symbols of exclusion, and [a marker] of hierarchy” (Thorne, 1993, p. 21). Therefore, throwing the ball was not only a way for the White boys to provoke Bella and Brianna on the school playground, but it also was a means for the boys to strengthen their bonds with each other as White males. The ball became a symbol of inclusion for the White boys and a symbol of exclusion for the Black girls. In addition, throwing the ball was a way for the boys to show dominance over Bella and Brianna. As a result, the playground experience was a painful and humiliating one for the girls. This experience illustrates the social construction and intersection of racial and gender identities on the St. Hilary playground, and it shows how, as females of color in a majority White society, Bella and Brianna's power was limited. This point-of-view is also consistent with Ogbu's (1998) understanding of “minority.”

Racism and classism. It is also important to note the intersection of racism and classism that appeared in these findings, particularly in the case of Victor. As previously explained, in one of my interviews with Victor, Victor described instances in which he was stereotyped as “poor” by some White people because of his race and cultural background. As Victor put it, people thought he and his family were poor because “I’m from Africa.” As scholars explain, the intersection of discrimination based on race and class has a long history in schools and society (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Victor’s experiences reflect an assumption by people in his community that race and class went hand-in-hand (especially if one was Black/Brown): being a person of color with an African background in Lancaster meant that one was most likely poor. On the other hand, Victor (in addition to the other three students) never expressed any beliefs that being White was aligned with being poor, even though there were many low-income families in Lancaster who were White. At least for Victor, then, the intersection of racism and classism was also a form of discrimination that Victor encountered in his community.

Summary. Overall, the four students’ experiences of discrimination had a strong influence on the way the students understood themselves as people of color, in addition to how they interacted with others in their community. Racism was a daily occurrence in the children’s lives that required them to develop different ways of navigating it when and where it took place. In addition, the students’ stories of racism (along with their responses to it and their perspectives about it) reflect the students’ highly sophisticated observations and fine-grained analysis of the social world in which they lived. As a result, based on the students’ stories and understandings of discrimination, I began to wonder what, if at all, these stories and understandings might have to do with the students’ perceptions of Irish identity. Did the students’ experiences of racism influence their beliefs about what it meant to be Irish? What role might race play in the way the

students understood themselves as Irish citizens? Indeed, I learned that the students did associate race to their understandings of what they thought it meant to be Irish. In fact, their experiences of discrimination largely framed their views of Irish citizenship and national identity. In the next chapter, I discuss the students and their racialized perceptions of what it means to be Irish.

CHAPTER 5: THE STUDENTS AND THEIR RACIALIZED PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IRISH

In chapter five, I answer the following research question and sub-questions: What beliefs do four elementary school children of Nigerian immigrants in the Republic of Ireland have about what it means to be Irish? (a) Do these beliefs differ among the students? (b) If these beliefs differ, how and why do they differ? In the previous chapter, I discussed Bella's, Jacob's, Victor's, and Candace's experiences of racism. I argued that the four children encountered racism on a frequent basis, both inside and outside school, and that these experiences influenced how the children interacted with peers and adults in their community. In addition, I described how the racism the students experienced intersected with other forms of discrimination such as classism and gender discrimination. Despite these discriminatory experiences, however, I also argued that the students demonstrated extraordinary resilience, and that they employed strategies to overcome discrimination.

In this chapter, I build on the findings from chapter four to argue that the students' experiences of discrimination led to their racialized perceptions of what it means to be Irish citizens of color from an immigrant background. It is important to note, however, that I do *not* argue that the four students' perceptions are in any way reflective of a universal representation of what it means to be Irish; chapter five only addresses these four students' racialized perceptions of what it means to be Irish. I also argue that the students' discriminatory experiences, along with their racialized perceptions, led the students to feel not fully Irish. Within this discussion, I explain ideas the students had for being more respected as Irish citizens of color. In this discussion, I also describe differences among the students' beliefs about being Irish. Finally, to close the chapter, I provide a conclusion and summary of the findings.

Viewing Irishness through a Racial Lens

The four students' experiences of racism not only influenced the way the students interacted with their families, peers, teachers, neighbors, and others in Lancaster on a day-to-day basis, but these experiences also affected how the students developed their senses of self and their perceptions about what it meant to be Irish citizens of color from an immigrant background. For Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace, I found evidence that the students' understandings of Irishness were largely situated in terms of race. Their experiences, in which the students said they were positioned as outsiders in their community due to their racial and cultural backgrounds, served as a basis for the students' racialized understandings.

In both one-on-one and focus group interviews with the students, there were many times when the students made statements and told stories that expressed their racialized views of being Irish citizens of color from an immigrant background. For example, during an interview with Victor on an autumn morning in mid-November, Victor and I talked one-on-one in the school library. As we sat at a table in the middle of the room, I asked Victor to describe his cultural background for me. He said, "Both of my parents are African, so I would embrace myself as African. But my ma says, "You're both. You can say whatever you want, but just know inside you, you are both." Like, right now, I wouldn't go around sayin', "Oh, I'm Irish. I'm Irish and African." Like, no, you're not. You can't be both. You can only be one. And it's not that I have a dislike for either of them, but I just say I'm African. It shows in my color and everything."

In this excerpt, Victor stated that he identified himself as African because his parents were African. In addition, even though Victor said his mother told him he was both African and Irish, Victor believed he could only identify with one of these backgrounds. He chose African because "it shows in my color and everything." This means Victor decided not to choose Irish

because the color of his skin contrasted with his understanding of Irish identity. As a result, I learned that, for Victor, being Irish was aligned with not being a person of color. Therefore, Victor's belief points to a racialized perception of being Irish (as well as a racialized perception of being African). However, although it was clear that Victor preferred to identify himself as African most of the time, he did recognize his Irish identity to some degree: "You just have to pick the biggest one in you," he said, preferring his African background to his Irish one. Victor continued, "Anyway, like, even though I can act like an Irish person, I'm African and I'm always gonna be African. Two million years from now, I'm still gonna be African. It's gonna be in my genes, so face it." Interestingly, this perspective also reflects Victor's point-of-view that race and national identity were associated with biology.

Bella also expressed her own racialized perceptions of being an Irish citizen of color from an immigrant background. For example, in one of my interviews with Bella, I asked her to draw a picture of someone who was Irish. Bella created the following drawing.

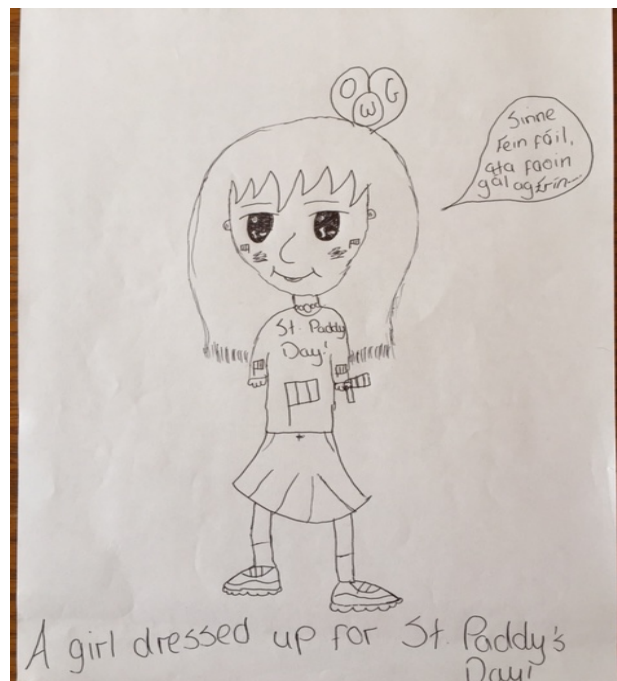


Figure 4. Bella's drawing of an Irish person.

Bella’s drawing, in many ways, is an expression of Irish patriotism. Her picture includes a young girl “dressed up for St. Paddy’s Day” wearing a headband with the letters O, W, G. (Bella said the letters stood for orange, white, and green—the three colors of the Irish flag.) The girl is reciting words which, Bella said, were the first words of the Irish national anthem in the Irish language: *Sinne Fein fail, ata faoin gal ag Erin*. (When I asked Bella what the words meant in English, she laughed and said, “I don’t know. When we learned the Irish Anthem, we didn’t know what it meant in English. We only learned it in Irish and that was it.”) Bella said she remembered learning the Anthem in the fourth and fifth grades: “Everyday on St. Patrick’s Day, we practice the Irish anthem,” she said.

When I asked Bella to describe how the girl in her drawing looked, Bella said the girl had White skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes. Bella also said that having blonde hair and blue eyes was “really good because it kinda matches a bit, and most people in the school, even the teachers, have blonde hair and blue eyes.” Interestingly, earlier in that interview, Bella also discussed aspirations she had in the third grade for having blonde hair herself. As we paged through her school scrapbook, Bella showed me the self-portrait below portraying her with blonde braids.



Figure 5. Bella’s blonde braids.

When describing the picture, Bella told me she had “yellow and black hair” in the third grade, and that the picture (in which she wore her St. Hilary school uniform) was created for a school project. The self-portrait, along with Bella’s statements, could suggest that having blonde braids in her hair was an attempt for Bella to adjust her physical appearance to more closely resemble her perception of how an Irish person looked and, perhaps, fit in with peers and teachers in school.

However, in regards to Bella’s drawing of an Irish person in *Figure 4*, Bella acknowledged that people of color could be Irish, too, but she said she drew a White girl “because the people around me are mostly Irish and White, and Black people, sometimes they don’t even celebrate St. Patrick’s Day because they don’t even know what it is.”

These statements, along with Bella’s self-portrait, suggest that Bella associated Irishness, in part, with physical features such as skin, hair, and eye color because many people around her were White and had blonde hair and blue eyes. In addition, Bella understood the celebration of traditional Irish cultural events, such as St. Patrick’s Day, in racial terms, too. For Bella, celebrating St. Patrick’s Day was an important part of being Irish, but she believed that many Black people did not celebrate the event (based on her experience). Bella associated race with being Irish, both in terms of one’s physical appearance and also whether or not one participated in the celebration of traditional Irish cultural events such as St. Patrick’s Day.

In a similar way, Candace associated race with the celebration of cultural events in Ireland, too. For example, once in a focus group interview with the students, I asked the children if there were any challenges to being Irish. Candace responded that celebrating Halloween, a popular cultural holiday in Ireland with costumes and fireworks, could be difficult for her.

Candace: On Halloween, some people don't get to go trick-or-treatin'. Some people have to go to church.

Bella: Yeah! That is totally true!

Don: Why do you go to church on Halloween?

Candace: Because Brown people don't like the idea of, like, dressing up and the devil and everything. So, like, on Halloween, they like praise the Lord and everything.

Don: This last Halloween, did any of you dress up and go trick-or-treating or go out?

Victor: yeah

Candace: Only once in my life I have gone trick-or-treatin'.

Bella: same

Candace: once

Victor: I always go.

Jacob: I always go.

Bella: It's only some Black people.

Although Candace and the other students did not explicitly associate the celebration of Halloween in Ireland to being White, nonetheless, Candace indicated (and Bella agreed) that she perceived a relationship between race and the celebration of Halloween in Ireland. In this case, for Candace, being Irish, in part, meant participating in certain cultural traditions. In Candace's eyes, her race, coupled with her religious practices, were the reason why she often did not participate in traditional Halloween activities such as wearing costumes or going trick-or-treating. (Candace said she had only been trick-or-treating once in her life.) Although Victor and Jacob both said they dressed up and went trick-or-treating, Bella suggested that it was "only some Black people" who went.

In addition to Victor, Bella, and Candace, Jacob also shared racialized perceptions of being an Irish person of color from an immigrant background. For example, in an interview one time, I asked Jacob if he thought the color of one's skin had anything to do with being Irish. Jacob said, "Sometimes people say I'm from Nigeria because I have Brown skin, but I think it doesn't really matter what skin you have. You could be from any country because people from America have Brown skin and they're from America." As explained in chapter four, I also asked Jacob how he responded to people who thought he was from Nigeria, in addition to how he felt when people made these comments. Jacob said, "I just tell them I was born in Ireland and that I'm not from Nigeria. My parents are from Nigeria. Sometimes I feel offended cause they're calling me Brown just cause...based on my skin where I'm from."

Jacob's comments reveal important points that support the claim that he believed *others* in his community perceived Irishness in racial terms. First, Jacob drew a link between national identity and race by acknowledging that people in his community thought he was not Irish because of his skin color. These comments positioned Jacob as an outsider because people in his own community questioned his Irish identity based on his physical appearance. However, Jacob pushed back against these statements by saying that one's race did not necessarily determine one's national identity. To support his view, Jacob referred to the US, a culturally diverse society ("...people from America have Brown skin and they're from America"). Jacob's comments indicate that he recognized the narrow point-of-view that people in his community could have about who was and who was not Irish, and Jacob appeared to imply that he thought Ireland should be a more inclusive society where people from different racial backgrounds were treated as full and valued members of society.

Irish Travellers. I also learned that at least one student in the group held a racialized perception about another minority group in Ireland. In one of my interviews with Victor, the topic of Irish Travellers came up. (Irish Travellers, characterized by their itinerancy, are “a minority ethnic group who occupy an unequal position in Irish society” (Considine & Dukelow, 2009, p. 426). Scholars note that Irish Travellers have been discriminated against throughout Irish history. For example, as Considine and Dukelow (2009) point out, Travellers are a minority not only in terms of population, but also in terms of power relations. “This is expressed through anti-Traveller prejudice or anti-Traveller racism. Travellers as a group are racialised in the sense that they are associated with a raft of negative traits and considered inferior to the majority settled population” (p. 428).)

In my interview with Victor, I learned that Victor once was involved in a fight after school in which a male Irish Traveller student at St. Hilary hit him. (The fight took place outside St. Hilary School but on school grounds, and Victor claimed the fight was instigated by the Irish Traveller boy.) Victor even said the boy gave him a “busted lip.” He continued,

Victor: Yeah, the Traveller that hit me got hit back by my own friend, and then it became a war that teachers actually had to come out of school and sort out. It was after school that teachers had to come and sort it out because in our place, people just come to you and give you a dig.

Don: Give you a dig?

Victor: Yeah, they can just come up to you and hit you, and when they hit you, if you walk away and tell an adult, it’s gonna come back another time and there will be more fire. So at first, I used to go and tell, but then when I used to tell, it gets worse and worse

and worse, and my mom told me not to hit them back at first, so I didn't hit them. But when he gave me the busted lip, I hit back.

Don: Why did you get into a fight? What was it over?

Victor: It was just for no reason.

Don: They just came up and hit you?

Victor: Yeah, they're allowed to do that. To them, they think they're allowed to do that. So when they hit you back, you hit them back.

Don: How would you describe a Traveller?

Victor: If I ask my friend to describe it, this is the way he describes it for us. He says a person that is not stable. The Travellers are not stable. They move everywhere and I heard, like, most Travellers, they can't say this is their background because they move so much, so many times. Yeah, and like the voice, they have so many freckles, the voice and their skin. Like, their skin are White. Like if you see their skin, they're so White.

In this excerpt, Victor shared his perception of Irish Travellers in racial terms by describing physical aspects of their appearance: "...they have so many freckles, the voice, and their skin...they're so White." Victor also described Irish Travellers as "not stable" since they "move everywhere," and he even said that Irish Travellers could be physically violent, evidenced by the "busted lip" Victor received ("...they think they're allowed to do that.")

Although Bella, Candace, and Jacob did not explicitly describe racialized perceptions of Irish Travellers, the three students did explain that social tension existed between people of color and Irish Travellers in school and elsewhere in Lancaster. For example, once in a focus group interview, Candace said that her home was "surrounded" by Irish Travellers who threw eggs at her house when her parents were "on holiday" (vacation); Jacob said one of his friends "never

goes outside by himself cause he's afraid of all these people" (in reference to Irish Travellers); and Bella described being watched by security guards in a local shop (due to her race, she said) while simultaneously seeing Irish Traveller children shoplift in the same store. Bella claimed that the Irish Traveller children did not receive the same level of supervision by the guards as she did.

The experiences of Victor, Bella, Candace, and Jacob provide evidence for how these students understood being Irish in terms of race. For Victor, race influenced his decision to identify more as African than Irish because the color of his skin looked the same as his Nigerian immigrant parents' skin. His comments suggest that the color of his skin contrasted with his own understanding of Irish identity. In addition, Victor described Irish Travellers in racial terms, too. Bella perceived Irishness in terms of being White, and she believed there was an association between race and participating in traditional Irish cultural events like St. Patrick's Day ("...Black people, sometimes they don't even celebrate St. Patrick's Day because they don't even know what it is"). Candace shared a similar perception about Halloween ("...Brown people don't like the idea of, like, dressing up and the devil and everything. So, like, on Halloween, they like praise the Lord and everything.") Jacob associated race with being Irish because in the past, he was identified as not Irish due to the color of his skin. However, Jacob argued that his community should recognize and fully value the cultural diversity that exists in Ireland because in other countries, such as America, one could be a person of color and American at the same time. Overall, the students' beliefs suggest that they held racialized perceptions of being Irish. Furthermore, the students' beliefs suggest that they did not feel fully accepted in Irish society as citizens of color from an immigrant background. As a result, they felt positioned as outsiders, and they believed that White people in their community did not view them as full Irish citizens.

The Students and Their Beliefs about Feeling Not Fully Irish

“...they look at your color.” Throughout the interviews, it was clear that the students felt they were not treated as full members of Irish society because of the discrimination they experienced. For example, in a group interview I conducted with Victor, Bella, and Candace (Jacob did not attend the interview that day), the three students described how they were singled out (at different times) when shopping at a local mall. As the three students and I sat and talked in the St. Hilary Parents Room one afternoon in early June, Victor explained,

If I walk into a shop, the security guards know who’s gonna steal. Even though they know we’re not gonna steal, they look at your color. When I go to shops, if I walk in meself, I’m gonna have a few security guards just ridin’ right behind me back. I could show them a hundred euro. They don’t give a shit. They will still follow me.”

As Victor spoke, Bella nodded her head in agreement while Candace sat and listened. Bella then said, “I hate when that happens. Me, Brianna, Candace, and Sarah [another St. Hilary student] walked into [the store] and the security guard was outside.” Candace, after hearing her name mentioned, added, “He started walking towards us.” Bella continued, “The looks he was givin’ us! And, like, I know that we’re Black, but we’re not gonna rob anything! It was just so annoying because he followed us. Every shop you get that. Even when you’re in a restaurant—the service—they actually look at you. The stares they give you!”

Bella went on to say that the discrimination she encountered in public was embarrassing, especially when other customers stood nearby and watched it take place. Victor, Bella, and Candace agreed that these experiences of exclusion made them feel like outsiders who were not viewed as full Irish citizens. They also claimed that their families and peers of color felt the same way, too.

To further illustrate this point, Victor shared a story about his father shopping at a nearby store in Lancaster. As Victor told the story, he sounded quite emotional; his voice grew louder and he spoke expressively. Victor explained that his father (who was a naturalized Irish citizen) had a discriminatory encounter with employees who worked at the store. He said, “My dad always brings his [Irish] passport around with him, and they were all looking at him like he was a foreigner. My dad just whipped out the Irish passport and said, ‘Do I look like a foreigner to you? I’ve been in this country for years now!’ My dad went into a rage and my mom actually walked out of the store.”

After Victor told the story, Bella followed up by adding, “Once you step into stores and everything, that’s when you get mistreated.” Candace agreed, and she affirmed that similar experiences had taken place with her and her family. The experiences that Victor, Bella, and Candace shared illustrate how the students felt treated as less than fully Irish because of their race (and in the case of Victor’s father, his immigrant status), and they indicate that even carrying out normal, everyday routines such as trips to local stores or restaurants meant encountering discrimination on a regular basis.

In fact, in my fourth one-on-one interview with Bella, Bella stated very clearly that she often felt not fully Irish because of the way she was treated. In the conversation, she imagined what it would be like to feel fully Irish, and she invoked the history of slavery to support her point-of-view. As Bella and I spoke in an empty fourth-grade classroom, I asked Bella more about her views on feeling not fully Irish.

Don: Do you ever feel like you’re not fully Irish because of the way people treat you?

Bella: Yeah, all the time. In school, outside, all the time.

Don: So imagine, for a moment, if you felt fully Irish. How would that feel?

Bella: It would be different. I wouldn't get slagged. I would be the person slagging another person because of their color. It would be so different and I would fit...I would, like, probably fit in. That's what they would say out there, like I would fit in and everything.

Don: So you think being Irish might mean, in part, slagging other people because of the way they look?

Bella: No, but like, not all, but some of them do. Yeah cause, like, because of our history, they think they can still run over us, still now.

Don: And what history are you talking about?

Bella: Talking about being slaves, us getting killed, beaten up, and like the Whites, like, ruling everything. They think that, like, just because our ancestors, like, suffered and everything, they think that they can still do it. Well, they're wrong.

Bella grew angrier as she spoke. The volume of her voice increased, her tone became more assertive, and she opened her eyes widely. That day, I learned from Bella that she perceived a historical connection between slavery and the way she and her family and friends of color were treated in her school and community in Ireland (“...because of our history, they think they can still run over us, still now.”) Bella believed that the discrimination she experienced was deeply rooted in the experiences of her ancestors who “suffered and everything” as slaves, “getting killed” and “beaten up.” This point-of-view suggests that Bella believed a cause and effect relationship between historical events from the past and events from her life in the present. In addition, I learned that, for Bella, knowledge of history informed the way she made sense of her identity as an Irish person of color from an immigrant background. Bella's historical knowledge framed her understanding of racial oppression which, in turn, was a way for her to associate her

own experiences of discrimination with the experiences of those in the past who were also oppressed due to their race. The comments Bella shared in this conversation were consistent with previous comments she made reflecting her determination not to “crack.”

The students’ ideas for being respected as Irish citizens. After the students acknowledged feeling not fully Irish, I asked them if they had any ideas for helping people of color in Ireland feel more respected and valued. Bella suggested certain consequences for store employees who discriminated against customers based on race: “What I think, personally, is that whoever does that should get fired. They should put them in this course to imagine if they were Black and we were all White. They should know how we feel.” Bella also suggested that the enforcement of certain laws could help Irish people of color feel more respected and valued. Bella said, “There should be a law right now sayin’ that White people can’t slag the Black people.” However, Bella admitted that laws may not completely solve the problem: “The thing about laws is that they’re always gonna be broken.”

Victor offered a different strategy. Irish people of color, he said, could prove their Irish citizenship and national identity by showing their Irish passports wherever they go, as well as wearing patriotic clothing that, in his view, reflected Irishness. He explained, “Your color shows it all. This is what you need to do to prove it. Get your red passport, stick it on your back, and wear green, white, and orange everywhere you go. Then they’ll figure, ‘He’s Irish.’ Write on your chest, ‘I’m from Ireland.’ They’ll have a few doubts, but in the end, they’ll figure it out.”

Bella’s comments about discriminatory employees being fired, as well as her suggestion concerning the enforcement of laws protecting people of color in Ireland from discrimination, reflect her overall belief that in order to live in a fair and just society, there must be clear rules and expectations to ensure equality for all, regardless of race. In addition, Bella recognized

education as an important step in combatting the racism that does exist in society, and she believed that education could help promote greater empathy. (“They should put them in this course to imagine if they were Black and we were all White.”) Victor suggested a different approach. He thought proving one’s legal Irish citizenship by showing a passport, wearing colors from the Irish flag, and even writing “I’m from Ireland” on one’s chest could make a difference. These comments reflect the way Victor associated Irish identity with visibility. Victor believed that one was viewed as being (or not being) Irish based on one’s physical appearance. As he put it, “Your color shows it all.” Even though Victor could not change the color of his skin, he surmised that he could appeal to other visual aspects to help “prove” his Irish identity. Both students’ comments suggest that they perceived Irish society as unequal, and their comments point to the need for larger systemic change in Ireland to help people from underrepresented racial groups to feel more respected and valued.

Do the Beliefs Differ among the Students? If So, How and Why Do They Differ?

Whiteness and Irish identity. Although there were similarities between the students’ beliefs about race and being Irish, there also was evidence that suggests some differences, too. One of these differences concerned the students’ racialized perceptions of what it meant to be Irish. On the one hand, when Bella described the picture she drew of an Irish person (discussed previously in this chapter), she made clear links between being Irish and being White. The girl she drew in her picture was White “because the people around me are mostly Irish and White, and Black people, sometimes they don’t even celebrate St. Patrick’s Day because they don’t even know what it is.”

For Bella, being Irish and being White were associated because Whites were the dominant racial group in Ireland, and also because, according to Bella, many people of color in

Ireland did not celebrate traditional Irish cultural events, such as St. Patrick's Day, like White people did. In addition, Bella's comment "because of our history, they think they can still run over us" (also previously mentioned in this chapter), also suggests an association of being Irish and being White. In this case, the "they" Bella referred to were White Irish people who discriminated against her and other people of color in Ireland. White Irish people, Bella believed, were responsible for the unequal treatment of people of color in Irish society and were the reason why she was slagged and why she had difficulty fitting into social groups.

On the other hand, although Candace, Jacob, and Victor expressed racialized perceptions of being Irish, the data suggest that these three students did not necessarily associate being Irish with being White. The students certainly perceived differences in the ways people from different racial backgrounds were viewed and treated in Irish society (i.e. especially people of color and Irish Travellers), but based on these students' comments in both one-on-one and focus group interviews, the data do not suggest that the three students specifically associated being Irish with being White. It is interesting to note, however, that Candace did ascribe certain physical traits to being Irish—once in an interview, she linked being Irish to having red hair—although in none of my conversations with Candace did she suggest a belief that Irish identity was closely linked to Whiteness. In my conversations and classroom observations with Victor and Jacob, I did not observe either of the boys suggest that being White and being Irish necessarily went hand in hand, either. However, these three students (in addition to Bella) did think that being Irish was associated with visibility. From the students' experiences of being singled out in public based on the color of their skin, to Victor believing that a person of color had to "prove" her/his Irishness by wearing certain kinds of clothing and showing an Irish passport, the students largely associated one's appearance with being Irish.

Black and Brown. In addition to the students' different perceptions of Whiteness and being Irish, the students also differed in how they chose to identify themselves as Irish people of color. Specifically, three of the students—Victor, Jacob, and Candace—chose to identify themselves as Brown, while Bella, on the other hand, identified herself as Black. Interestingly, this difference became a point of contention in the first focus group interview that I conducted with all four students at St. Hilary. In the interview, a disagreement took place between Bella and Victor, the two most outspoken students in the group. (Candace also contributed to the discussion while Jacob mostly listened.) The disagreement began as the students spoke about celebrating (and not celebrating) Halloween in Ireland.

Don: Why do you go to church on Halloween?

Candace: because African people

Bella: Oh yeah, Black people!

Victor: You're not Black! You're Brown!

Bella: Huh?

Victor: You're not Black! You're Brown!

Bella: Black, Brown, same thing

Candace: Brown, Brown, Brown!

Later in the interview, the students again brought up racial identification, so I asked them to tell me more about their perspectives. Although passionate disagreements among the students were evident, the students discussed the topic openly and respectfully (and they even laughed at times).

Don: *(To Bella)* You said Black and Brown are the same thing, right?

Bella: yeah

Don: Can you tell me why people might decide to say Brown and why others might decide to say Black?

Candace: Some people are darker as charcoal.

Victor: Yeah, that's how it started.

Bella: I mean, some people are Black.

Jacob: Brown

Bella: Some people are Black, like, proper Black.

Victor: You can't see them even at midnight.

Bella: Yeah, I know.

Victor: I know. *(Jacob, Victor, Bella, and Candace all laugh.)*

Moments later, Victor explained that he felt "annoyed" that Bella identified herself as Black.

Victor: *(to Don)* I was actually annoyed considering she's actually the lightest one between all of us four.

Bella: Even though I'm the lightest one, there's still, you know, Black.

Victor: You're Brown!

Bella: Black!

Jacob: You're Brown!

Bella: No, I mean like, wait! I'm not finished yet!

Jacob: You're Brown! *(laughs)*

Bella: Even though I'm the lightest one out of all of us here, there's still like, you know, the Blackness running through my veins.

In this instance, I observed that the students spoke about racial identification largely in terms of the lightness or darkness of one's skin. In fact, later in the conversation, Victor even claimed

that he thought Bella could be “half-caste,” a derogatory term referring to one who was bi-racial (or, as Victor described, “mixed race”) because Bella had a lighter skin tone. Bella, however, was not familiar with the term (and I sensed that Victor was not aware of its derogatory roots, either).

In contrast to Bella, the three other students—Jacob, Victor, and Candace—chose to identify themselves as Brown. Once in an individual interview, Jacob described himself as Brown and I asked him why. He said, “Cause I think when people call you Black, it’s just trying to be racist.” “Why do you say that?” I responded. Jacob explained, “Because, um, on my road, some people always call other people Black and it’s not really nice.”

In one of my individual interviews with Victor, Victor shared a similar point-of-view and suggested that using the term “Black” was offensive.

Don: So you would describe yourself as Brown then?

Victor: Uh huh. Look at your skin. You’re not Black. You’re Brown! If you’re calling yourself Black, you’re giving them another reason to slug you.

Don: How do you mean?

Victor: Like, because nigger, nigger means Black, and if you call yourself Black, like, you’re giving them another reason to slug yourself. Cause once you’re calling yourself Black...you’re not Black. Stop calling yourself that. You’re not Black. You’re completely Brown. You’re Brown! And, like, when you’re calling yourself Black, you’re giving them, like, another reason to slug you. People like them have another reason to slug you cause you’re calling yourself that and making a fool of yourself...

Don: Do you ever talk to your family about your opinions about being called Brown or not?

Victor: Oh yeah. We sometimes have the argument. My mother says, like, “We’re not in Nigeria anymore. We’re in Ireland. Let them call you whatever they want and knowing, like, just ignore them.” That is what I normally do, but when they come to physically, I do not ignore. My mom always tells me to ignore, but when it comes physically, I never ever ignore physically.

Candace also spoke about racial identification in an individual interview I had with her. Although I learned that Candace, at times, did not talk about race because it was uncomfortable for her, she told me that she identified as Brown.

Don: Why do you choose Brown?

Candace: Cause this is not Black. This is Brown.

Don: So I’m noticing right now as we’re talking that you have your hands over your face.

Candace: *(laughs)*

Don: So are you a little reluctant to talk about this?

Candace: *(nods yes)* It’s embarrassing.

Don: Why is it embarrassing?

Candace: Just because, like, I don’t like to talk about racism and everything.

Throughout my interviews with Candace, I gradually learned that hearing the term “Black” was difficult for her because of the discriminatory way she had heard the word used in the past (such as with her White friend, Holly, and the White children who lived next door to her). As a result, Candace linked the word “Black” to racism, so she chose not to identify herself that way. Compared to Jacob and Victor, then, I learned that Candace and the boys viewed the word “Black” as derogatory, so identifying themselves as Brown was a way for them to avoid, as

Victor put it, “making a fool of yourself.” (Interestingly, Bella also told me about times when the word “Black” was used in an offensive way against her, but she still identified herself as Black.)

The students’ disagreements about identifying as either Black or Brown suggests that the students’ understanding of race was socially constructed. Their experiences of discrimination in their community informed their understanding of the place of race and color in Irish society, and it largely influenced the way they developed their identities as either Black or Brown Irish citizens from an immigrant background. Furthermore, in the case of at least Bella, I learned that her perception of race in Ireland was also historically constructed as she drew on her knowledge of slavery to inform her understanding of both race and racism in Irish society. In many ways, history provided a frame through which Bella understood herself as a person of color in her Irish community, in addition to how she understood and interacted with others.

Conclusion

Identity and culture as dynamic. Bella, Jacob, Victor, and Candace’s racialized beliefs about what it meant to be Irish, in addition to the students feeling not fully Irish due to their racial and cultural backgrounds, suggests that identity and culture were dynamic for the students, or in other words, that identity and culture were a “continuous process of change and negotiation” (Ngo, 2008, p. 6). Scholars contend that, especially for people from minority groups (including immigrant backgrounds), understandings of identity and culture are multilayered and shifting. Ajrouch (2004) argues, “identities themselves are multiple and may shift depending on external forces” (p. 387). Suárez-Orozco (2004) states that second-generation children, in particular, have challenges developing a sense of identity as they try to “feel accepted by the ‘native born’ of the host country” (p. 176) and understand the relationship they have with their parents’ nation of origin. Regarding identity and citizenship, Ladson-Billings

(2004) asserts, “The degree to which the broader society embraces and accepts multiple identities reflects the degree to which individuals see themselves as citizens” (p. 112).

It is clear that Bella, Jacob, Victor, and Candace struggled to make sense of what it meant to be Irish citizens of color from an immigrant background, and that external forces had a strong influence on the way the four children viewed themselves as Irish citizens. All of the students experienced being excluded because of their racial and cultural backgrounds and, in some cases, perceived by others as not Irish because of the color of their skin. Furthermore, the students’ differing views about how to identify themselves racially as either Brown or Black reflects the students’ precarious position as second-generation Nigerian children in Ireland. On the one hand, the students could identify as Brown (visibly closer to White) instead of Black to reject the negative stereotypes and discrimination they encountered in Lancaster when they heard the word “Black” used by White people in racist ways. On the other hand, if the students identified as “Brown,” that meant they would not identify as “Black” (just as their forbearers did) and retain their racial and cultural heritage in the same way as their parents. After all, Jacob admitted that “I think when people call you Black, it’s just trying to be racist,” and Victor explained that identifying as Black “gave them another reason to slug you” (“them” being White people who were racist). Jacob, like Candace, linked the word “Black” to racism, and Victor even associated the word “Black” with physical violence, claiming that identifying oneself as “Black” in front of White people might provide Whites with a reason to physically harm people of color. In addition, Victor admitted to tensions that existed within his family about identifying as Black, which was particularly evident when Victor shared advice that his mother gave to him once: “My mother says, like, ‘We’re not in Nigeria anymore. We’re in Ireland. Let them call you whatever they want...’” (“Them” and “they”, again, referring to White people who were racist.) The

question of how to identify oneself racially within the context of a dominant White Irish society was a particularly difficult one for the children to answer but, nonetheless, was central to the students' negotiation and understanding of themselves as people of color in Ireland.

Inner struggles. All of the students likely experienced significant inner struggles in deciding how to identify themselves racially. On the one hand, Candace, Jacob, and Victor, all choosing to identify as Brown, likely experienced some uncertainty over choosing this racial identification because the students may have viewed their choice as a rejection, at least in part, of their and their parents' racial and cultural heritage. On the other hand, choosing to identify as Black, as Bella did, also could have caused inner tumult for Bella because she, too, had experienced being identified as Black in a racist way ("You can't walk down the street without being called a 'blackie'," she once said.). In addition, Bella could have experienced internal struggle because her peers (i.e., Candace, Victor, and Jacob) rejected the term "Black." By choosing to embrace the racial identity "Black" herself, Bella thus could have feared being excluded from social groups with her peers of color, risking what Cross, Jr. (2012) refers to as *attachment or bonding* within the Black community: "A sense of connection, affiliation, and affection can be expressed through one's dress, gait, worldview, and values..." (p. 198). Therefore, Bella may have viewed her choice of racial identification as being a clash of values with her peers.

A case of colorism? Bella's case, however, is unique compared to Candace, Victor, and Jacob. Phenotypically, Bella had the lightest skin out of all four students in the group. As previously noted in this chapter, Bella was even identified by Victor in a focus group interview as being "the lightest one":

Victor: *(to Don)* I was actually annoyed considering she's actually the lightest one between all of us four.

Bella: Even though I'm the lightest one, there's still, you know, Black.

Victor: You're Brown!

Bella: Black!

Jacob: You're Brown!

Bella: Even though I'm the lightest one out of all of us here, there's still, like, you know, the Blackness running through my veins.

This excerpt suggests that Bella may have chosen to identify as Black in order to "prove" her Blackness among her peers of color. In the excerpt, Bella recognized herself as "the lightest one," but she followed up her comment by saying, "there's still, you know, Black." Therefore, it is possible that, in Bella's eyes, identifying as Black instead of Brown was indeed a way for her to engage in the *attachment* or *bonding* to which Cross, Jr. (2012) referred. Perhaps Bella felt excluded because Jacob, Victor, and Candace all had darker skin than she did, and by identifying as Black, she could fit in more with that social group. After all, as Tatum (1997) explains,

The societal preference for light skin and the relative advantage historically bestowed on light-skinned Blacks, often referred to as colorism, manifests itself not only in the marketplace, but even within Black families. A particular form of internalized oppression, the skin color prejudice found within Black communities is toxic to children and adults (p. 44).

Therefore, it is possible that, in addition to Bella experiencing racism from White people in her community, she also may have experienced internalized oppression resulting from colorism within her racial group (even if that colorism was unintentional on the part of Bella's peers).

How the Nigerians became Brown? In *How the Irish Became White*, a book examining the experiences of Irish emigrants to the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries, Ignatiev (1995) argues,

The Irish who emigrated to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were fleeing caste oppression and a system of landlordism that made the material conditions of the Irish peasant comparable to those of an American slave. They came to a society in which color was important in determining social position. It was not a pattern they were familiar with and they bore no responsibility for it; nevertheless, they adapted to it in short order...In becoming white, the Irish ceased to be Green” (pp. 2-3).

No doubt, the context of Nigerian immigration to the Republic of Ireland in recent decades is much different than the context of Irish immigration to the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, Ignatiev does raise an important issue that, I argue, resonates with the children’s Nigerian immigrant experience in Ireland today: that of the role of race and social position in Irish society. By drawing a parallel to the experiences of Irish immigrants to the US in the 18th and 19th centuries, I argue that, despite the different contexts, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace have similar struggles in understanding and adapting to the role of race in Irish society.

My data suggest that the students struggled to negotiate between being both Irish and being people of color in Ireland—a nation that, while still mostly White, has experienced a notable increase in people from racial minority groups in recent years. The four children’s parents, like many other Nigerians in Ireland, moved to the Irish Republic during a period of rapid economic growth and expansion. Today, the children, as a result of their experiences of discrimination, have become acutely aware of the relationships that exist between race and social position in Irish society. For Candace, Victor, and Jacob who chose to identify as Brown (in

addition to Bella who identified as Black), the students learned how to adapt to life in a majority White society in contrast to the majority Black society in which their parents grew up. Therefore, these students, based on their experiences of racism in their community, constructed their own Irish racial identities and perceptions based on the unique context in which they lived—a context that itself continues to shift and change. In this way, the students appear to be carving out a place for themselves in Irish society as they navigate the ins and outs of social places and spaces in their community. Ironically, and in a parallel way to Irish immigrants adapting to the role of race in America two to three centuries ago, it appears that the young students in this study are wrestling with how best to adapt to the role of race in the Republic of Ireland while retaining their racial and cultural heritage.

Summary. In this chapter, I argued that the students' experiences of racism led to their racialized perceptions of what it meant to be Irish. As Brown/Black Irish citizens (and the children of Nigerian immigrants), Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace felt like outsiders in their community, even though each student identified as Irish (to varying degrees). In turn, these feelings led the students to feel not fully Irish compared to White Irish people. Some of the students offered suggestions for ways they could be more respected as Irish citizens. For example, Bella said that laws, education, and consequences for people who engaged in race-based discrimination could help. Victor said one could appeal to visible means such as wearing patriotic Irish colors, carrying an Irish passport to prove Irish citizenship, and writing "I'm from Ireland" on one's chest. As Victor put it, "Your color shows it all."

Although all four students expressed racialized perceptions about what it meant to be Irish, there were also differences in their beliefs. For example, Bella specifically associated being Irish with being White, while Candace, Jacob, and Victor did not. At one point, Candace

did associate certain physical characteristics, such as red hair, with being Irish, but she did not say that being Irish and being White necessarily went hand in hand.

Victor also expressed racialized beliefs about Irish Travellers. Victor suggested that Irish Travellers, a socially oppressed ethnic minority group in Ireland, not only looked different, but also possessed different cultural traits. The three other students, along with Victor, all perceived a social tension between Irish Travellers and people of color in Ireland, but it was only Victor who clearly expressed a racialized belief about Irish Travellers.

The students also differed in how they preferred to identify themselves racially as Irish citizens of color. Three of the students (Jacob, Victor, and Candace) chose to identify themselves as Brown, while Bella chose to identify herself as Black. Jacob, Victor, and Candace identified themselves as Brown because they viewed the racial identification “Black” to be denigrating (based on hearing the word used in discriminatory ways by White people). On the other hand, Bella did not necessarily view the racial identification “Black” as offensive, even though she had heard the word used in a discriminatory context in the past. Despite these different views, the students’ perceptions regarding how to identify themselves racially suggests that they understood race as socially constructed.

In the next chapter, I discuss how the students developed their perceptions of what it meant to be Irish. I describe several ways the students learned about Irish citizenship and national identity in their school and community, and I show how the students’ beliefs were heavily influenced by these learning experiences.

CHAPTER 6: HOW THE STUDENTS LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IRISH

In chapter six, I answer the following research sub-question: How do the students learn what it means to be Irish? In particular, I explore ways in which the students developed their racialized perceptions about being Irish. I argue that the students formed their racialized beliefs about being Irish by interacting with peers, teachers, family members, and the media. I also argue that the students developed their beliefs from experiences both inside and outside of school. After describing ways the students formed their beliefs, I end the chapter with a brief conclusion that analyzes and summarizes the main findings.

Peers

The experiences of racism that Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace encountered (described in previous chapters) illustrate the strong influence that peer interactions had on the students and how they learned to be Irish. Jacob felt excluded by White peers in school and in his neighborhood when people discriminated against him, his friends, and his family. Bella described encounters of racism and gender discrimination on the St. Hilary School playground when she and her friend, Brianna, interacted with some White boys. Victor shared instances of being called racist names by his White peers, as well as White peers suggesting that the Ebola virus might personally affect him and his family. Candace said that White children in her neighborhood, who also attended St. Hillary School would, outside school hours, discriminate against her. Overall, these experiences had a profound influence on how the students learned to be Irish children of color, as well as the way the students viewed their community. For the four children, Lancaster was a segregated place where the students had to prepare for possible discriminatory encounters with their peers on a daily basis.

Although the four students encountered racism and other forms of discrimination from White peers in their community, it is important to note that Bella, Jacob, Victor, and Candace also had positive encounters with White students, too. As previously described, some of these encounters occurred when White peers defended them in the face of racism. For instance, when describing the White children who lived next door to her, Candace said her White friend, Holly, defended her when the next-door children commented to Holly that she was “playing with a Black girl.” Victor described instances when White male friends stood up for him when other White boys discriminated against him. Throughout my school observations, I also saw many positive interactions between the children and their White peers. For example, in Mr. Malone’s classroom, I observed Bella work in cooperative learning groups while socializing with White students in positive ways, and I saw Jacob participate constructively in academic group work with his White peers in class. In addition, Bella was an active and valued team member on her Gaelic football team—a group of St. Hilary students that included both White girls and girls of color whom she appeared to get along with well (a topic discussed in greater detail in chapter seven). When these and other positive interactions with White peers took place, they helped the children feel more respected and valued.

In light of these findings, it is important to note that the students’ racialized perceptions about being Irish did not mean that the students’ opinions and beliefs about White people were always negative; that is, that the four students always had negative perceptions about any White peers or adults with whom they interacted just because they were White. On the contrary, although the students admitted to having racist encounters with White peers, they also acknowledged that several of their supportive friends were White, too—people whom they respected. In fact, throughout my interviews and observations with the students, they expressed

a strong desire to get along with their White school-aged peers and to establish relationships that were built on trust and mutual respect.

St. Hilary Teachers

The students also learned about being Irish from their teachers. From the curriculum the teachers used to the personal interactions the students had with their teachers in school, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace learned a great deal about race and being Irish from their teachers throughout the school year.

Some of the curricular knowledge the students used to shape their perceptions specifically came from the school subject of SESE. For example, as described in chapter five, the data suggest that Bella's beliefs about race and being Irish were, in part, historically constructed based on her knowledge of slavery in the US. I discovered that Bella gleaned at least part of her knowledge about slavery from some sixth-grade history lessons in Mr. Malone's class in fall 2014. In these lessons, Bella learned about the U.S. Civil War, Abraham Lincoln (a man whom Bella said she admired (a topic discussed in greater detail in chapter seven)), and Lincoln's role in ending slavery in the US. The following interview excerpt illustrates some of the information Bella learned from her SESE class.

Bella: ...because of our history, they think they can still run over us, still now

Don: And what history are you talking about?

Bella: Talking about being slaves, us getting killed, beaten up, and, like, the Whites, like, ruling everything. They think that, like, just because our ancestors, like, suffered and everything, they think that they can still do it. Well, they're wrong.

It is notable that Bella perceived a shared identity (one that transcended historical periods and political systems) with enslaved people of color in the US up to the Civil War era, indicated

by her use of the pronoun “us.” This historical knowledge, coupled with Bella’s perception of a shared identity, contributed to the development of her racialized perception about being Irish (“...because of our history, they think they can still run over us, still now”). Therefore, the SESE curriculum that Mr. Malone used influenced the way Bella understood Irish identity as a person of color.

In addition to the SESE curriculum, the students’ beliefs about race and being Irish were shaped by social interactions they had with their St. Hilary teachers, all of whom were White. As previously described, Victor felt excluded in his fifth-grade classroom in the 2013-2014 school year by his teacher, Ms. Nevin, who he perceived as racist. Jacob also perceived Ms. Nevin as racist, describing an instance in which he thought his friend of color, Aaron, was disciplined too harshly over a conflict that took place between Aaron and a White boy in the same class. Interestingly, the topic of teaching about diversity in school came up during a one-on-one interview I had with Ms. Nevin. Contrary to what Victor and Jacob said, Ms. Nevin claimed that, from time to time, she tried to discuss issues around race and diversity with her students in an attempt to create an inclusive learning environment. In the interview, Ms. Nevin spoke at length about her efforts to incorporate topics about diversity in the curriculum. She explained,

Not all teachers are very comfortable talking about other countries, especially with so many mixed backgrounds in the class. Like, my first year here, I had a class; very mixed backgrounds. I’d been in Zambia as well before and I was doing about Zambia with them. There was a child in the class (and he was from Nigeria, actually, I think) and every time I mentioned Zambia, every time I mentioned... Like, I don’t see a problem standing up in the class and talking about your skin is different, your skin...I don’t see

why we should not mention that. No, I'm not being disrespectful to anyone in saying that. No, it's a fact. People from backgrounds culturally are different. It's bad, obviously, if you start disrespecting that, but I think it's better to be very open about it and not be afraid to mention that there are children with dark skin in the class. Like, I would rather be open so that if the children feel you're afraid to mention it, then they see this as being, okay, they're obviously very different. But in that class, I've always had that opinion. It doesn't bother me at all speaking openly about it and I would, talking about Zambia, say differences between here and Zambia. Some of them were saying, "Oh, the children, the people in Zambia have Black skin." We have White skin. And this particular child, his head would lift every time and he'd shout "Racist!" at me and, you know, I would kinda... I think that's a fear with a lot of teachers, especially when a lot of it is unknown. Like, I've been in Zambia. I knew a lot about the culture there. I knew a lot about the people there. I felt confident enough talking about it and I could stop and say to him, "Well, how exactly?" It's a fact. I don't think I'm being racist here. If I'm offending you, I am very sorry, but can you explain to me how exactly that is? I think he was just particularly defensive, and the minute he heard anything to do with... if I said the color Black on the board, his head would shoot up. He was just very, very defensive and I think a lot of teachers probably are a bit afraid of that as well and that being shouted. It's not a nice thing to be called, you know, when you're trying your best to be as inclusive as you can.

In the interview, I learned that Ms. Nevin, from her point-of-view, attempted to create pedagogy that was inclusive and that reflected an acknowledgement of, and a respect for, people from different cultural and racial backgrounds ("I think it's better to be very open about it...").

However, despite her efforts, Ms. Nevin encountered challenges with at least one student of color in her class who, she claimed, accused her of being racist because she used the term “Black” in class in a conversation about race (“...if I said the color Black on the board, his head would shoot up. He was just very, very defensive...”). Ms. Nevin, then, was clearly not aware of the preference of some students of color to be called “Brown,” perhaps even the student who perceived Ms. Nevin as racist in class. In fact, neither were Ms. Nevin’s students who, Ms. Nevin commented, spoke openly about the racial background of people from Zambia. (“Some of them were saying, ‘Oh, the children, the people in Zambia have Black skin.’”)

In comparing Ms. Nevin’s perspectives to those of Jacob and Victor, I argue that there were deep divides—both racial and cultural—that existed between Ms. Nevin and the students of color she taught (and between the students of color and White students in the class). Ms. Nevin clearly was aware of the social tension that existed in her classroom in the example she cited, but she did not understand why the tension existed, and she did not know what to do about it. (“If I’m offending you, I am very sorry, but can you explain to me how exactly that is?”) These divides echo Leavy’s (2005) research findings in which she found that White pre-service teachers in Ireland had limited knowledge of people from diverse backgrounds. My findings, however, suggest that Irish *in-service* teachers, too, could also have limited knowledge about diversity and, therefore, must have professional development opportunities to increase their knowledge and awareness of diversity. These professional development opportunities could provide substantial support in teachers’ efforts to create curriculum and pedagogy that are culturally sensitive and relevant, and in turn, help all students feel more respected and valued. With the incorporation of this kind of curriculum and pedagogy, students such as Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace could become more comfortable talking about race and diversity in school.

In turn, the racial and cultural barriers inside classrooms, such as those in Ms. Nevin's classroom, could gradually break down and make way for constructive and inclusive dialogue between teachers and students. Respectful communication could also contribute to higher school achievement among students. On the other hand, "If teachers and schools are unaware of these differences and the impact they can have on learning, the result may be cultural conflict that leads to school failure" (Nieto & Bode, 2012, p. 166).

Family Members

There is evidence to suggest that the students learned about race and being Irish at home from family members, too. As previously described, Victor said he argued about racial tension in Ireland with his mother who told him, "We're not in Nigeria anymore. We're in Ireland. Let them call you whatever they want and...just ignore them." In her effort to dissuade Victor from engaging in physical fights with others over racist name-calling, Victor's mother recognized that employing strategies such as ignoring discrimination could help Victor avoid violent confrontations with peers. In urging Victor to ignore the name-calling in the first place, Victor's mother recognized that part of being an Irish person of color meant to develop strategies to deal with racism, particularly in non-violent ways. The advice she shared with Victor contributed to Victor's racialized perception of what it meant to be Irish because his mother's advice confirmed his experiences of racism in Ireland (described in chapters four and five) in which Victor was excluded because of the color of his skin and, in some cases, his Nigerian background. Victor learned that as a person of color in Ireland, his experiences as an Irish person differed from the experiences of White Irish people because he was visibly different from the dominant White Irish population. Victor's mother, therefore, influenced Victor's racialized perception of what it meant to be Irish, and Victor came to understand that because of the color of his skin, he would

be treated differently. As a result, Victor had to develop strategies to be prepared to handle discrimination when and where it took place.

Similarly, Candace explained that she learned about non-violent strategies to address racism from her mother. For example, when Candace told me in an interview that some of the children in her neighborhood discriminated against her and her sister, Candace said, “My sister wants to fight with them. My mom won’t let her because she’ll just make it worse. My mom just ignores it...” Like Victor, Candace also learned that ignoring racism was a strategy she could use to avoid serious conflict with peers, and based on what she learned from her mother, Candace even employed one of her own strategies: “...sometimes I see them when I’m coming home from school so I just walk faster.” As a result, Candace’s interactions with family members influenced her racialized perception of being Irish. Like Victor, Candace learned from her family that racism existed in Irish society and that, as an Irish person of color, she had unique challenges to confront each day that the dominant White population in Ireland did not.

Media

There also is evidence that the students learned about being Irish from the media. Although the students did not say that the media specifically influenced their views on race and being Irish, the students did say that television and radio programs, to some degree, informed the way they made sense of Irish identity. For example, Jacob explained that he learned about being Irish from a television show on RTE (an Irish network) that focused on what it meant to be Irish. (I attempted to learn what this show was and gain access to the episodes Jacob spoke of, but I was unsuccessful.) In an interview, Jacob said he could not remember the exact title of the show, but he claimed it was a 15-minute program. In describing the show, Jacob said, “...they’re just showing you pictures and then you’re talking about saying if you’re Irish, you have to do this,

obey the laws, don't smoke, don't do anything bad, anything like that. Then there's a kid and they just show pictures of him doing everything right. Then they do another one and show him doing everything wrong." As previously described, Jacob was a rule follower, so this show resonated with him in a particular way. Since Jacob tried his best to follow directions and not disobey the rules, this show spoke to him in a way that he could understand and relate to.

The Irish media also influenced Victor's views on Irish identity, particularly concerning opinions on immigration and work ethic. One time in a focus group interview, Victor spoke about a recent radio show he listened to. He began, "A few weeks ago, I was listening to [a radio] talk show and then they were talking about this: Who would you hire for a job? Would you pick a foreigner or would you pick your own citizen? And most people actually picked the foreigner. Can I tell you why?" Victor asked me. "Why?" I said. Victor answered, "The foreigner is used to getting nothing, so if they get a job, they'll be grateful for it. They'll do everything. They'll be quick." Victor also added that Irish citizens would not have to worry as much about getting a job because if they did not have a job, they could depend on the government for financial support. As he put it, Irish citizens would say, "If I quit now, the government will give me a bit of money..." Therefore, Victor perceived at least some Irish citizens as not having a strong work ethic compared to foreigners in Ireland because Irish citizens could petition their government for financial aid. Foreigners, on the other hand, could not. Victor's comments affirm his point-of-view that some people in Irish society were excluded because of their backgrounds (in this case, their non-Irish backgrounds), and his comments further suggest that Victor believed he lived in a society in which some people received privileges that others did not.

Conclusion

The students' multiple worlds. Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1998) contend that students' daily lives encompass “a multitude of factors emanating from their family, peer, and school worlds” that affect “their ability to connect with teachers, classrooms, and schools” (p. 7). As a result, the researchers developed a model called “multiple worlds” to describe the interrelationships between students' different social spaces that lead them to develop their own knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions about the world around them and their senses of self. In her study on 1.5- and second-generation Nigerian youths in the United States, Awokoya (2012) built on the work of these scholars to argue that, in addition to the family, peer, and school worlds, there was a fourth world—the media—that had a strong influence on how the students developed their identities. In fact, Awokoya contends that the students in her study developed identities that were significantly influenced by negative African stereotypes they encountered in their family, peer, school, and media worlds such as being “ignorant, primitive, diseased, and impoverished” (p. 274).

My dissertation builds on the work of these researchers in an Irish context. The students in my study learned what it meant to be Irish from a number of sources—peers, families, school, and the media—to form their understanding of Irish identity. Multiple factors including norms, values, beliefs, expectations, and actions affected how the students interacted with their teachers, in classrooms, and in school. In turn, these factors influenced how they formed their own perceptions about being Irish. For example, the discrimination the students received from White peers became the norm for them; Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace came to understand they needed to be on the lookout for discrimination on a daily basis. At the same time, the four students realized that discrimination did not come from all White peers because they also had

White school-aged friends they respected and with whom they enjoyed spending time. In terms of their teachers, Jacob and Victor's perception that Ms. Nevin was racist was based on interactions the boys had with her at school in the past. Ms. Nevin's actions, they claimed, made them feel excluded. However, interestingly, Ms. Nevin had a different perspective. She claimed she was not racist and that she tried to promote racial and cultural consciousness in her classroom.

Factors from the family and media worlds also influenced the development of the students' perceptions about being Irish. The students' families, particularly their mothers, helped the children develop strategies for dealing with racism based on a belief that, as children of color, they would encounter racism in Irish society. The media, too, influenced the children and their ideas. Although the students did not specifically suggest that the media contributed to their views on race and being Irish, the students nonetheless learned that there were certain attributes an Irish person had, and in the case of Jacob and the television program he watched, there were certain actions an Irish person did that were "right" or "wrong." As a result, this program led Jacob to believe that being Irish, at least in part, was situated in a rule-like system of "dos" and "don'ts." Overall, the students' different social worlds had a significant influence on the way they learned to be Irish and how they developed their beliefs about Irish identity.

Summary. In this chapter, I described different ways the students learned to be Irish. Through the students' social interactions with their peers, teachers, families, and the media, the children developed beliefs about what it meant to be Irish. These beliefs were largely framed within racialized perceptions based on the students' feelings of exclusion from being discriminated against by White people. Phelan, Davidson, and Yu's (1998) model of multiple worlds serves as a useful frame to understand how the students formed these understandings.

The students learned what it meant to be Irish from multiple sources in their lives rather than a single source. In the next chapter, I build on these findings to explain how the students expressed their Irish identities as children of color. The students, quite creatively, accessed different forms of capital that helped them navigate Irish society, affirm their identities, and ultimately, carve out a place for themselves in Irish society.

CHAPTER 7: THE STUDENTS AND THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF BEING IRISH

In this chapter, I answer the following research question: How do the four elementary-grade students of Nigerian immigrants express their Irishness? Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace, four students of Nigerian immigrants who live in Ireland, all have encountered racism inside and outside school. As a result, the students developed racialized perceptions of being Irish—by that, I mean that as people of color, the four students often did not feel fully Irish because of the way they were treated, and that being positioned as outsiders led the students to experience anger, frustration, and fear in their daily lives. However, I also learned that all four students demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of discrimination.

In this chapter, I argue that the students accessed capital from both their African and Irish backgrounds that, in turn, helped them navigate Irish society as young citizens of color. Specifically, there are two forms of capital—sports and language—that the students accessed to express their Irishness. These two forms helped the students feel more fully valued. Furthermore, in this chapter, I argue that the students drew inspiration from idols—past and present—to build resilience. The idols themselves were people who experienced adversity in their own lives (just like the students). By recognizing the challenges these people faced, the students drew strength from their stories.

The findings in this chapter fit with Ogbu's (1998) classification of minority groups because these findings relate to the students' awareness and growing understanding of their limits of power in Irish society as people of color, as well as how the students worked creatively within their constraints to build resilience and feel more fully valued. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation helps reveal how the students' learning took place, in large part, by being active participants in the social world. Through the students' social

interactions, the students developed a greater knowledge and understanding of their community and the social structures within it.

In this chapter, first I present evidence showing how the students used sports, specifically Gaelic football, as a way to express Irish identity. To begin this section, I provide a brief history of the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) in Ireland and its relationship to Irish national identity. Second, I discuss how the students used language in creative ways to express both their Irish and African identities. I show how the students (and their peers of color in school) used words from different African languages to affirm their cultural and racial identities and resist the discrimination they encountered from White peers. Third, I discuss how the students drew inspiration from idols to build resilience and develop a stronger sense of self. Finally, I provide a conclusion to analyze the chapter's main findings, as well as a brief summary of the chapter.

Participation in Irish Sports

Gaelic football: A means to express Irish identity. In the midst of the students' experiences of discrimination and feeling not fully Irish, all four students explained that they participated in Irish sports, particularly Gaelic football. Gaelic football, a sport in the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), is a popular sport in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland today. In fact, Cronin (1999) argues that since the GAA's founding in 1884, the organization "has been invaluable in sustaining cultural nationalism, thereby giving the Irish people an identity" (p. 79). He continues, "From its very inception, the GAA...has to be viewed as a cultural organization dominated and driven by the demands of nationalist politics and identity" (p. 83).

The origins of the GAA in Ireland: A brief history. When the GAA was founded in 1884, Ireland was under British rule. Michael Cusack, one of the GAA's founders, was concerned that Irish athletic traditions (such as Gaelic football and hurling) were dying out. As a

result, he decided to form a national organization to preserve them. (Education Department, 2008a). Maurice Davin, an accomplished and well-known Irish athlete at the time (and the GAA's first president), supported Cusack's efforts. Cusack also promoted his idea in Irish newspapers where he "appealed to the Irish people to reject English sports and customs, which he described as 'imported and enforced'. He believed they would destroy Irish nationality" (Doherty & O'Riordan, 2002). Cusack called for "the revival of Ireland's national pastimes governed by Irish people" (Education Department, 2008a).

On November 1, 1884, the first meeting of the GAA took place at a hotel in Thurles, County Tipperary. Davin became the organization's first president, Cusack was named one of three secretaries, and Catholic Archbishop Thomas Croke from Cashel in Ireland became a patron (Education Department, 2008a). Croke "believed that the GAA fitted in with his concept of Gaelic democracy" and "he saw the GAA as an expression of Irish independence, a form of Home Rule" (Education Department, 2008b). In addition, three of the men who attended the first meeting—John Power, James Bracken, and F.R. Maloney—were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) (Education Department, 2008c). The IRB was "a radically minded political and highly secretive nationalist organisation aiming at the expulsion of Britain from Ireland" (Cronin, 1999, p. 81).

As the GAA grew, the organization became increasingly politicized due to its association with the IRB. "In the early years of the GAA, the IRB endeavoured to gain control of the new Association, seeing it as an ideal recruiting ground from which fit young men could be called upon to fight for Ireland's freedom if and when the opportunity arose" (Education Department, 2008c). As a result, feuding between members in the GAA took place in the late-1880s to early-1890s to the point that Davin resigned as president and Cusack was pushed out as secretary.

Archbishop Croke, however, remained in the organization and helped strengthen the GAA. He assisted opposing groups to settle their differences and he encouraged the GAA to provide greater autonomy to individual counties. As a result, due to Croke's leadership, the GAA strengthened its organizational stability and financial security. Croke helped save the GAA, and today, Croke is largely credited with the organization's survival. Currently, GAA clubs exist at Catholic parishes throughout Ireland (such as St. Hilary) where local residents, including children, play on Gaelic football teams that compete against each other. The GAA also "has a greater representation and active membership across the contemporary island than the Catholic Church" (Cronin, 2013, p. 159).

To honor Archbishop Croke's efforts, land was purchased in north Dublin in 1913 to establish an athletic park in his name. Today, the venue is known as Croke Park (in Irish, *Páirc an Chrócaigh*) and is the home of the GAA and GAA Museum (Education Department, 2008b). With a capacity of more than 80,000 spectators, the park hosts the national Gaelic football championship match each year as well as various other sporting and cultural events.

Bloody Sunday, 1920. One of the most tragic events in Gaelic football and GAA history (as well as the history of Ireland itself) occurred on November 21, 1920. On this day, British troops opened fire on Gaelic football players and spectators seated in the stands at Croke Park who were watching a match between teams from County Tipperary and County Dublin. (The game took place "to raise funds for the families of Irish political prisoners" (Education Department, 2008d).) Earlier that day, twelve British intelligence officers were assassinated in Dublin in a plot planned by Michael Collins (an Irish revolutionary and political leader, as well as a member of the IRB).

In response to the morning killings, British soldiers arrived at Croke Park in the afternoon where over 10,000 spectators and athletes were in attendance. British soldiers, claiming to have been shot at by IRA (Irish Republic Army) members at Croke Park first, opened fire. The firing continued onto the pitch. “A stampede of spectators and players broke out towards the railway end of the ground. Rapid fire continued successively for about 90 seconds” (Education Department, 2008d). In total, 14 people died from the shooting that day, including two children. In addition, Michael Hogan, a County Tipperary Gaelic football player, was shot and killed. Today, opposite the Cusack Stands in Croke Park, are a set of seats known as the Hogan Stands named in honor of Michael Hogan. Croke Park, therefore, is not only a sporting venue; it is a memorial for those who died in the struggle for Irish independence and the preservation of Irish culture.

The four students and their experiences with Gaelic football. I argue that for all four students, participating in the time-honored tradition of Gaelic football was closely intertwined with Irish identity. The students’ participation in Gaelic football was a means for them to express their Irish identity in a supportive team environment and to feel like valued members of Irish society.

Jacob and Victor. In my individual interviews with Jacob and Victor, I asked both boys to draw pictures showing how they thought one could express Irish identity. In separate interviews, the students drew scenes from a GAA/Gaelic football match (displayed below) to portray their depictions.



Figure 6. Jacob's GAA picture.

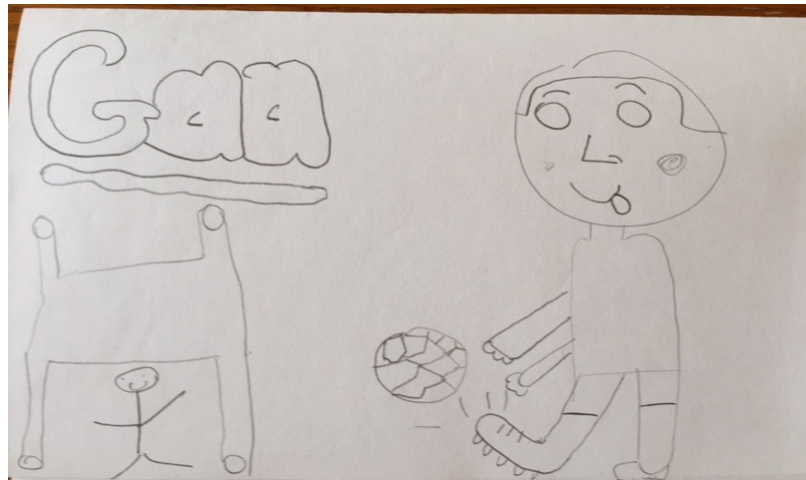


Figure 7. Victor's GAA picture.

Both boys' scenes are strikingly similar. Each picture includes two young male players on opposing teams, one kicking a ball and the other protecting a goal. All players have smiles on their faces and appear to enjoy the game, while each kicker kicks the ball to score a goal. When Jacob described his drawing and his interest in playing Gaelic football, he said that playing the sport helped him to be Irish. When I asked him why, he said, "A lot of people like to play GAA who are Irish, and Irish people made GAA. It's a really good sport for the Irish people." I then asked Jacob how he felt when he played Gaelic football. Jacob answered, "I feel special and I

feel important because I'm helping the team play. When they score a goal, I feel really special, just like when it's the final and they score the winning goal." For Jacob, playing Gaelic football was a way for him to express his Irish identity in a positive and supportive environment. He recognized that Gaelic football was a cultural tradition with a strong following in Ireland, and that when he played the sport, he felt like a valued team member. Although Jacob said in the interview that there could be disagreements about game rules, he said a referee would resolve the conflict. Overall, he said everyone cooperated and enjoyed playing the game together. (Interestingly, Jacob did not mention experiencing any specific incidents of racism when he played Gaelic football.)

Victor, too, believed that playing Gaelic football was a way for him to express his Irish identity. He said, "Irish people are proud to play their sports. They're proud to say, 'This is one of our sports.' All countries have their own traditions. In Ireland, it's a tradition that's gone on for years and [they're] still using it and having fun using it." Victor went on to describe specific qualities that he thought playing Irish sports, such as Gaelic football, demonstrated. Victor explained, "Sometimes I think I know why Ireland people are good at stuff like GAA because I know Ireland people are kind of, like, strong compared to most countries. It's all about strength. It's not about technique. You won't see a weak person play stuff like GAA." For Victor, playing Gaelic football was a way for him to show his pride in being Irish, as well as a way for him to demonstrate strength. Like Jacob, Victor believed that playing Gaelic football was a valued Irish tradition and an important part of Ireland's history.

Bella. Bella also enjoyed playing Gaelic football and thought it was a way to express her Irish identity. In fact, Bella was a member of the St. Hilary girls Gaelic football team that

performed so well in the fall 2014 season that it advanced to the championship match with another girls team from a Catholic school near St. Hilary.

The girls' championship match took place at Croke Park in early October 2014. I learned that being invited to play at Croke Park was more than just an honor for the girls and for St. Hilary School. As Mr. Casey, the school P.E. Coordinator and one of Bella's coaches put it, "In GAA, Croke Park is the center of the world, basically." In addition, given the history of the GAA and Croke Park itself (particularly the events of Blood Sunday in 1920), playing at Croke Park was especially meaningful for Irish athletes of any age (and their fans).

As I conducted school observations at St. Hilary in the days leading up to the match at Croke Park, I saw St. Hilary students learn about the GAA in class and make signs and posters in support of the girls' team (posters that were later displayed in school corridors and classrooms and waved through the air during the match itself). The students also wrote cheers that they and their teachers sang during the match—cheers that expressed the students' and teachers' school (and Irish) pride.

The morning of the match was chilly, bright, and sunny. (Bella and the rest of her team left for Croke Park earlier that morning on their own bus.) As the students, teachers, and I stood in the school parking lot in our jackets, hats, and gloves awaiting the buses' arrival, excitement was in the air. (That day, I learned that several St. Hilary students had never been to Croke Park before, so this day was an especially memorable occasion for them.) The children could hardly contain their enthusiasm. I listened to them practice their school cheers and chat with each other excitedly about the game they would soon see in Croke Park.

After the buses arrived, the students, teachers, and I piled on and left for the stadium. About an hour later, we arrived at Croke Park. Along with a few school parents (Candace's

parents among them) we hustled through the front gates of the park and past a larger-than-life statue of Michael Cusack that guarded the entrance to the stands. We walked up the stairs behind the statue to our seats which were located, coincidentally, in the Cusack stands.

Not long after we sat in our seats, Bella and her teammates emerged from the sidelines of the field and onto the pitch. (I noticed that the field was divided into several smaller Gaelic football fields so other youth championship matches could take place at the same time). The St. Hilary athletes were dressed in white shorts and maroon and light blue colored jerseys. The St. Hilary fans cheered loudly for the girls, and moments later, players from the St. Hilary team, along with the opposing team, took their field positions. Once ready, the referee blew his whistle and the game began.

Players from both teams ran up and down the field vigorously as they kicked, passed, and carried a white ball with their hands. There were several attempts by both teams (some successful) to score points by kicking the ball past a goalkeeper. As I watched the game, I saw that Bella, who was one of four students of color on the team, was especially active. She made many steals and slides throughout the match and, at times, was quite aggressive towards the other team's players in her attempts to tackle and steal the ball away from these players. (Bella later told me, "I was first really, really nervous because, like, everybody's watchin' ya and everybody's dependin' on ya. It was also so exciting to actually play in Croke Park.")

The match lasted about an hour. Unfortunately, despite a hard fought game, Bella and her teammates did not win. Bella later lamented her team's loss to me; she said some of her teammates even cried about it. In my interview with Mr. Casey, he commented that he saw some of the St. Hilary players get upset, too: "We had a few tears, but most of them were okay." However, Mr. Casey also explained that he thought Bella did quite well during the match. Bella,

he said, was “a strong player. Very, very committed, and she took no prisoners when she was on the field. She was one of the backs and she was great.”

Despite the team’s loss, Mr. Casey said that building a strong team was one of his main priorities as a coach that year. He said, “the team-building is one thing that I’m very strong on: that we’re a team, we’re together, and we do not attack each other and criticize each other, no matter what happens.” Bella appeared to embrace that philosophy when she was on the field, too, and it seemed her teammates did as well. For example, I saw all of the players encourage each other throughout the game with high-fives and handshakes. After the game, the girls hugged each other in support. In addition, after the game, I saw the team pose for pictures on the field with the students’ arms around each other’s shoulders. (In fact, one of these pictures was printed in a local newspaper after the game with a headline that stated how the girls showed a “spirited display.”)

When I interviewed Bella after the match, I asked her about what it was like to play in the championship game in Croke Park. I also asked her why she played GAA in the first place. Bella told me that Gaelic football was a way to express herself as an Irish person. She said,

Bella: I play because it’s a really good sport and we Irish people have been playing it for, like, two thousand years now or two hundred. I don’t know. But it’s really athletic and once you get into it, you really can’t stop. I play for two clubs now: one for the school and one for a different one. It’s just really good. I mean, like, you get this rush that the ball is your arm and you need to get over this big ‘H.’ It’s like an obstacle course that’s like infinity and it’s really, really good.

As Bella spoke, I saw a smile appear on her face. In our conversation, I could tell that Bella enjoyed playing Gaelic football and that the sport was liberating for her. Bella’s comments show

that she recognized Gaelic football as a part of Ireland's cultural heritage. In fact, Bella's comment that Gaelic football was a sport that "we Irish people have been playing...for, like, two thousand years now or two hundred" reflects her shared identity with Irish people from the past (even long before Bella's parents moved to the Irish Republic from Nigeria). In addition, Bella's statement that she felt a "rush that the ball is your arm" is notable because it suggests that, for Bella, playing Gaelic football was an important part of her identity as an Irish person. Gaelic football was an activity she enjoyed participating in, and the feeling of "infinity" that she described was, perhaps, a welcome respite from the encounters of discrimination she frequently experienced in her community. From watching Bella play in the championship match myself, I could see that she valued being a team member as she strengthened bonds of friendship with her peers on the team—both White peers and peers of color. As another one of Bella's coaches, Ms. Madigan, put it, GAA takes place "in a very safe environment. I think it's a big confidence booster as well. We really try and push the community spirit. The GAA is like one big family."

Candace. Although Candace did not play on a GAA team, she agreed that playing Gaelic football helped one to express an Irish identity. For example, in one of my interviews with Candace, she discussed her own experiences playing Gaelic football on the school playground with her friends.

Don: Do you think sports has anything to do with being Irish?

Candace: Gaelic [football]

Don: What about Gaelic football has to do with being Irish?

Candace: Gaelic is such a traditional Irish football. Me and Brianna and her friends used to play Gaelic on yard. I wasn't that good at it.

Although playing Gaelic football was not one of Candace's main hobbies, she told me that the

sport was a valued Irish tradition, and that playing “Gaelic” was one way for a person to express being Irish. In addition, in the conversation, Candace mentioned that she attended the St. Hilary girls’ GAA championship game and that it was a memorable experience for her. Candace enjoyed cheering for the girls’ team as she sat with the other St. Hilary students, teachers, and parents (including her own parents who attended the match).

Summary: Feeling more valued (and empowered). Jacob, Victor, Bella, and Candace indicated that playing and following Gaelic football helped them express their Irish identity. Whether participating in the sport meant playing it on the school playground or on a club team, playing in a championship match, or simply being a spectator, the students believed that involvement in the sport was an important part of being Irish. In addition, participating in the sport was a way for the students to strengthen bonds of friendship with their peers and feel more respected and valued as members of their community. The students’ experiences with the sport suggest that it served as a vehicle for positive interactions between the students and their peers, as well as an opportunity for the students to contribute collegially as members of a team. Participating in the sport also appeared to be a brief respite from the discrimination the students frequently encountered. In this way, it is likely that although the four students’ experiences of discrimination inside and outside school often made them feel less than fully Irish, participating in Gaelic football helped them feel more valued as members of Irish society.

Furthermore, in their theory of legitimate peripheral participation, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that LPP is

implicated in social structures involving relations of power. As a place in which one moves toward more intensive participation, peripherality is an empowering position. As

a place in which one is kept from participating more fully—often legitimately from the broader perspective of society at large—it is a disempowering position” (p. 36).

The students’ participation in Gaelic football illustrates how the sport was a means for the students to empower themselves by participating more fully in one of Irish society’s most time-honored traditions. The students had the chance to participate as full members of a team who worked together to achieve a common objective. It is notable that the students not only did not describe any instances in which they were excluded from playing the sport, but that they spoke about their participation in quite positive terms reflecting their sense of belonging and general enjoyment. As young Irish citizens moving from peripheral participation towards full civic participation, then, playing Gaelic football was a way for the students to express their Irish identity in the midst of feeling disempowered from the racial and cultural discrimination they often encountered. To reiterate Ms. Madigan’s words, “The GAA is like one big family.” The students discovered that even though they felt disempowered in some contexts, they could take part in other activities to feel more empowered and valued as Irish citizens.

Uses of Language: “There’s Three Tones.”

During a focus group interview in December 2014 with Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace, the students also explained how they used language to communicate in different ways inside and outside school. This observation became clearer as my fieldwork progressed, although it was not until I conducted the December focus group interview that I began to understand more deeply how the students used language in different contexts and for different purposes.

As we sat together in the St. Hilary Parents Room during the focus group interview, Victor brought up the topic of language. In particular, Victor articulated ways that he (along

with Jacob, Bella, and Candace) spoke to different people. “There’s three tones,” Victor said. “So there are three different kinds of talking?” I asked him. “Yeah, when you talk in school...with your friends” and “one at home.” (In fact, Victor described the home tone as “the language when you talk to your parents.”) Bella, Jacob, and Candace agreed with Victor, at which point all of the students began sharing experiences using these tones in their daily lives.

Tones one and two: “...when you’re in school” and “with your friends.” Although the students, at first, identified tones one and two separately, I observed during my conversations with them (both focus group and one-on-one) that they perceived these two tones as closely intertwined. This was because the students spent a great deal of time interacting with their friends in school, and also because the social interactions the students had with their White peers and peers of color largely influenced the way they communicated with one another in school. Thus, the students discussed tones one and two mostly in terms of their communication with other students in school.

I also discovered that the friends Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace referred to were mostly peers of color at St. Hilary. Moreover, these peers were the same students that Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace spoke to in “African” on a regular basis. (Jacob said he spoke African to his Brown friends, but that, sometimes, he spoke African when his White friends were around, too.) “African,” according to the children, was a collection of words and phrases that they and their friends of color borrowed from different African languages such as Twi, Yoruba, and Swahili. (Jacob also noted that speaking African could also include using a certain kind of accent.) These borrowed words reflected the African backgrounds of the students of color at St. Hilary. The students used African words and accents not only to verbally communicate with each other, but also to affirm their racial and cultural identities in the midst of the discrimination

they encountered from White people. For the children, speaking African was a way for them and their peers of color to resist the discrimination they experienced on a daily basis. During the focus group interview, I dialogued with the students about when and why they spoke African to learn more about how they communicated.

Don: When would you use these [African] words with each other?

Candace: when we don't like someone

Victor: In class I use it.

Bella: in school, definitely in school

Victor: Definitely school, I actually asked my mom to teach me a few [words]...

Sometimes you're fed up with it and you have to say something. And when you're in class, what do you say? Just African words to them.

Bella: definitely in school because, like, it annoys them and that's what you wanna see

Victor: and the person doesn't know what you're sayin'

Candace and Bella provided an example of an African word they often used towards people they did not like: *kwasia*. According to the girls, *kwasia* came from the Ghanaian language Twi. Bella explained the meaning of *kwasia*, stating, "It just means stupid. Whoever annoys me, I just call, 'You're so *kwasia*.' They don't know what that means." Bella went on to describe instances when she and her friends used the word towards White students at St. Hilary. Bella said,

We just walk up straight to their face and say, "You know that you're soooo *kwasia*?"

And they'll just go [*Bella makes a confused look on her face*], something like that, and then they just run away because they don't know what it means. And then me and me friends, like, we'll just be laughin' our heads off, and it's just so fun.

In a one-on-one interview with Candace, Candace said she spoke Twi with her friend, Brianna (whose parents were originally from Ghana), and that she and Brianna even taught a few African words to Lisa, a White girl in their class at St. Hilary. However, Lisa, whom Candace and Brianna initially trusted, shared these African words with other White students at St. Hilary. Candace said, "I remember when me and Brianna were in the library. We used to teach Lisa some. She started tellin' everyone." Candace sounded disappointed, and I wondered if she felt betrayed by Lisa because Lisa told other White students about the African words without her and Brianna's consent. (I never learned for sure, however, what Candace's feelings were about Lisa's actions.)

Once in an individual interview with Jacob, Jacob explained what speaking African meant to him. In the conversation, he made a distinction between speaking African with his friends of color and speaking in other ways with White people.

Don: What about when you talk with your friends?

Jacob: My voice changes as well.

Don: Do you think that your voice is different when you talk to your White friends compared to your Brown friends?

Jacob: yeah

Don: How is it different?

Jacob: Because I know when I speak to Brown people, my voice sounds more African, and when I speak to White people, my voice just sounds normal.

Don: And when you say it sounds more African, what do you mean?

Jacob: accent

Don: When you're with your Brown friends, do you have to try to speak with an African accent?

Jacob: No, African just comes out of my mouth.

Don: Have you ever tried to speak African with your White friends?

Jacob: No, I don't really speak that much African to my White friends.

Don: What would they say if you did?

Jacob: They wouldn't really respond. They just don't really do anything. They just hear my voice and just know it's different.

For Jacob, speaking African meant at least three things. First, speaking African had to do with the way one's voice sounded, specifically in terms of one's accent. Jacob explained that speaking with this accent was something he didn't try to do; it came about naturally ("African just comes out of my mouth"). Interestingly, Jacob's point-of-view was consistent with a perspective Victor once shared with me about speaking African. As Victor explained, knowing when to speak African (and when not to speak African) was similar to the way wifi worked. Victor said, "Do you know wifi? Like, if you walk into your house, the wifi will just automatically turn on, and when you get out, it automatically turns off."

Second, for Jacob, speaking African took place with certain people, particularly with his Brown friends. Jacob indicated that if his White friends observed him speaking differently than he usually did, his White friends "wouldn't really respond" or "do anything". Third, it's important to note that Jacob perceived the way he spoke to White people as "normal," inferring that the way he spoke to Brown people was not normal. For Jacob, "normal" meant speaking with an Irish accent. I learned that Jacob code-switched frequently between his African and Irish ways of speaking. He even said in an interview, "I think it's quite easy to speak in an Irish

accent. It comes naturally to me.” Jacob recognized that different ways of speaking were more valued in some contexts rather than others (particularly contexts based on racial and cultural differences), and Jacob’s comments suggest that he knew when to access (and not access) these ways of speaking to maintain his status in social relationships between himself and different groups of people.

Tones one and two as a counter space. Overall, the students’ use of African with their peers of color at St. Hilary suggests that the students drew on an aspect of their shared African heritage to strengthen their bonds of friendship and support one another. Furthermore, the students’ use of vocabulary from African languages (such as *kwasia*), along with Jacob’s efforts to speak in different accents depending on the context, suggests that the students used language as an identity-affirming counter space in school. Counter spaces, as Carter (2007) describes, are institutionalized mechanisms that serve as protective forces for these students and allow them to maintain a strong racial sense of self, while maintaining school success in a racially hostile environment. The presence of these spaces also offsets the challenges involved in effectively navigating classroom, social, and extracurricular domains in the school context in culturally accommodating but not assimilative ways. (p. 543).

Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace used language as a counter space to respond to challenges they experienced from their White peers in school and to navigate their social interactions with peers. Language also served as a means for the students (and, it seems, their Brown/Black peers) to maintain and strengthen a sense of self as Irish youths of color who also identified as African. Despite the fact that the students received insults for speaking African in school (Victor, for example, once said, “Some people be like, “Shut up, man! Talk English!”), the students believed that using African in school was an expression of their racial and cultural

identities. As Bella noted, “Accept me for who I am. What you see is what you get.” Therefore, I argue that the students also used language as a form of resistance to express their own individuality. The students’ use of language was a way for them not only to “push back” against the discrimination they experienced in school, but also a means for them to develop a collective sense of belonging among their peers of color at St. Hilary.

In terms of Ogbu’s classification of minority groups, these findings suggest that the students can be classified as voluntary immigrant minorities because the students (who were all children of immigrant minorities) were “influenced by the community forces of their forebears” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 166). In this case, the force that influenced the students was language. The children recognized their limits of power among their White peers, and as a result, they used language that originated from different African cultures and ethnicities to empower themselves and resist the discrimination they encountered. In turn, the students built a network of support among themselves to strengthen friendships and affirm their identities.

Tone three: “...one at home.” In addition to the first two tones, the students identified a third tone that they used at home, particularly with their parents (and less frequently, outside their homes when encountering their parents’ adult friends). This tone included verbal words and phrases (as well as certain customs) the students used to show respect for their parents and elders. The students also pointed out that the third tone did not necessarily apply to the way they communicated with all adults. For example, the students drew a distinction between the way they spoke to their parents and elders of color, and the way they spoke to White adults, such as their teachers, at St. Hilary.

During the focus group interview, the students explained how the home tone differed from the school tone. The following excerpt illustrates how the students made this distinction. (Interestingly, as the students spoke, I observed that they even finished each other's thoughts.)

Victor: The only thing that I change when I go home actually

Bella: It's just my tone that I would change because the way I talk at school is never gonna be the way I talk at home

Victor: to my mom

Jacob: yeah

Bella: At home, it's totally

Jacob: different

Bella: different

Victor: the way, the respect

Bella: yeah, respect

Victor: the respect, manners, my ma

Candace: respect

The students all agreed that the way they spoke at home was different than the way they spoke in school. In fact, according to the students, the tone they used at home to speak to their parents (for Victor, his mother specifically) was grounded in respect. The students said their voices changed when they talked to their parents, and they explained that if they spoke to their parents as informally as they spoke to me in the focus group interview, there could be consequences at home.

Candace: If I speak like this at home

Bella: I mean, like

Victor: You get a whip! (*Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace laugh*)

Bella: You don't get a whip, but, like, your parents will be sayin', "Why are you talkin' to me like that? I'm your mother! I'm the one that gave you life so you should respect me!"

Jacob: "Wow, you've changed!"

In addition, for Candace, the home tone could also extend to other family members or to elders outside the immediate family. For example, Candace's sister was the oldest child in the family, and Candace said she often addressed her sister as "aunty" to acknowledge her sister's position in the family. Candace also said there were specific morning and afternoon greetings she had to give her parents' friends in public or at home when she encountered them. She explained, "In public, you just bend down a little, and then in your house or something, you literally kneel down. For men, you kneel down. For a woman, you don't kneel down." Candace contrasted these greetings to what she perceived as a typical Irish greeting: "If you're Irish, then you say 'hi'," she said with a laugh.

Similarities and differences with the students' use of the three tones. Compared to the first two tones, the students' use of the home tone further illustrates how the students used language in certain contexts and for different purposes. Using the home tone affirmed the students' racial and cultural identities and, at least at times, provided the students with opportunities to express their African heritage through the practice of traditional customs such as bending and/or kneeling (as in the case of Candace).

In contrast to the first two tones, however, the students' use of the home tone does not suggest that it was necessarily used as a protective force in the same way that the students used the other two tones. The students' use of the home tone seemed to fulfill family norms and

expectations for how the children should socially interact with their elders of color who deserved respect. (White elders, such as the students' teachers, were greeted differently. As Victor put it, "If I see a teacher, I'd be like, 'Hey!' I'll wave and continue whatever I'm doing." Jacob added, "You give your parents the most respect.") However, in general, the students' identification and use of all three tones suggests that they accessed language as a form of capital to enact their racial and cultural identities as young Brown/Black citizens of color in Ireland. Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace recognized that, in order to navigate the ins and outs of Irish society successfully, language could be a particularly useful means for affirming their African heritage, meeting family expectations, and resisting discrimination.

Drawing Inspiration from Idols

I also argue that the students built resilience and developed stronger senses of self as young Irish citizens of color by drawing inspiration from at least three historical figures: Muhammad Ali, Abraham Lincoln, and Nelson Mandela. These three people encountered adversity in their own unique ways, but what connected the three men (at least in the students' eyes) was that they all possessed qualities that the students admired—namely, resilience in the face of significant challenge—that helped inspire the students themselves as they faced racial oppression in their own lives. In this section, I discuss the three men and the students' beliefs and opinions about each of them.

Muhammad Ali: "...he can kick anyone's ass!" Winning was important to Victor. For Victor, winning showed strength, not weakness; it showed dominance, not vulnerability. Victor's desire to win not only surfaced when he played competitive sports such as GAA, but it was especially present when he found himself in physical fights with peers who discriminated against him over his racial and/or cultural background. Victor once told me that he had never

lost a fight to a White person. He continued, “I’ve never ever in my life lost a fight, and I’ve had so many. I’ve never lost a fight.” It made sense, then, when Victor told me in one of his interviews that he looked up to one of the biggest winners of all time: the American boxing heavyweight champion, Muhammad Ali.

Victor first mentioned Muhammad Ali in the second focus group interview with Bella, Candace, Jacob, and me. As the students and I sat in the Parents Room at St. Hilary, all four children shared stories about being slagged by their peers in school. Victor said, “Mr. McClure, I could put any money on this. Before home time today, before we go home, we’re all gonna get slagged.” Bella agreed with Victor, while Jacob and Candace listened quietly. (At the end of the school day, I followed up with Victor on his prediction. He told me that, indeed, he had been slagged by his peers since the focus group interview ended. “Remember what I said to you earlier?” Victor whispered to me as he poked his head out of his classroom’s doorway. “Well, it happened.”)

As Victor went on to describe fights he had with White peers in the past, he said, “I’m looking up to Muhammad Ali when I’m beating them up.” It was not until the third focus group interview, however, that I had an opportunity to learn more about Victor and his admiration for Ali. As the students spoke about their experiences in school, I brought up Ali again. Victor grinned and Candace asked a question about Ali.

Candace: Who is that?

Victor: He’s one of the most famous boxers in the world.

Candace: okay

Victor: I think he’s dead now, but he’s a famous, famous boxer.

Bella: I thought that he was still alive.

Don: He's still alive. He's very old, though. *(To Victor)* Can you tell me why you admire him?

Victor: Because he can kick anyone's ass! Anyone. You can put anyone in a ring with him and he'd show them how to fight. Yeah!

Bella: The reason why [Victor] admires him is just cause, like, of the boxing and everything...

Victor: There's other reasons also.

Bella: What's the reason?

Victor: Like, coming up from a bad background and all, he showed...I don't know how to explain it. All I'm saying is that he came from a bad background and everything, and instead of wasting his life, there was something he was obviously good at, and what he was good at was fighting. Instead of using it in a bad way, he took it into a good way. He put it in the sports industry and made money off of it unlike some people going around and hurting people anyhow. He made use of his life. He knew what he could do and he went out and used it in a good way. Some people, they know how to use guns and they know how to break into places. They use it in a bad way. They're gonna rob stores. Instead of joining, like, the cops or something like that and like break into a criminal's house, like, you know? He used his powers in a good way. Like, for instance, like Iron Man and all. He knew how to make weapons...and instead of using them in a bad way, being the richest man on Earth, he used his power to save people on Earth and all. Yeah, that's what I mean.

Victor admired Ali because he viewed him as a man who, despite the challenges he experienced, demonstrated strength and resolve. Ali was a fighter, just like Victor. Victor

believed that Ali recognized his own “powers” and used them “in a good way.” For Victor, one of Ali’s powers was his skill for fighting, and Victor recognized that Ali used this skill to launch a successful athletic career in which he made money and “made use of his life.” Interestingly, Victor compared Ali to Iron Man, the comic superhero, who also “used his power to save people on Earth and all.” For Victor, Ali was comparable to Iron Man because both figures demonstrated great strength and good judgment. Victor believed that Ali and Iron Man used their talents and abilities for good rather than to hurt people (i.e. using guns and robbing stores). Overall, Victor looked up to Ali when he fought his peers because he believed that fighting against people who discriminated against him was a way for him to confront people who were trying to hurt and oppress him and others. In this sense, Victor viewed his fighting as a means to use his skill in a good way, not a bad way—to literally resist, in a physical way, the discrimination he experienced in his own life.

As the conversation began to shift, I decided to ask Victor one more question. Channeling Victor’s comment about Iron Man’s powers, I asked, “What do you think your powers are?” Victor responded, “I haven’t figured them out yet, but let me just say something. I’m the fastest one in the school.” A few moments later, Victor added, “I can eat a lot if you want to count that.”

Abraham Lincoln: “...he fought for us to be treated equally.” In one of my interviews with Bella in spring 2015, I learned that there were people whom she, too, admired. One of these people was Abraham Lincoln. When I asked Bella why she admired Lincoln, she said, “because, like, what we learned in school is that when we were slaves back a long time ago, he fought for us to be treated equally as well.” Indeed, Bella had learned about Abraham Lincoln in school. Earlier that year, she and her classmates studied a unit on the USA from their

sixth-grade textbook *Earthlink*, a curricular text published in 2004 that was written by primary school teachers in Ireland. (The text linked SPHE and SESE, the two curricular areas of social studies in the Irish Primary School Curriculum.)

In a unit on the USA, there was a brief section devoted to the Civil War that discussed Lincoln, slavery, and the Confederacy, and Bella explained that she learned that Lincoln was a past president of the United States who fought against slavery. She said,

Bella: When he saw, like, the way we were getting treated, he didn't like it at all. And, like, I think it was the South that was treating us badly, but the East were, like, treating us really, really nice. When we were in the South, we got treated really, really bad cause we were slaves and got beaten up. We got whipped and got forced to do this. I learned this ages ago, but I don't remember because it's so long ago, but when we were in the East, we got treated like equals. So then, Abraham thought that we should all get treated equally. So then, like, I think he fought for them to...for us to get treated equally. Then, in the end, he won and we all got treated equally. We were shipped from Africa to America, and like, if it wasn't for him, then I don't know where we'd be standing right now. Really.

In her explanation, Bella shared her reason for admiring Lincoln. She indicated that Lincoln helped the enslaved people of the South and said, "I think he fought for them to...for us to get treated equally." She also believed that if it was not for Lincoln's efforts, the future of people of color would have been less certain: "...if it wasn't for him, then I don't know where we'd be standing right now. Really." Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Bella's statement was her use of the first person plural pronoun "we" to indicate her perception of a shared identity between herself and the slaves in the US—an identity that transcended not only

time, but also political systems and cultures. Even though Bella identified as Irish and as a person of color with African heritage, she still perceived a strong connection between herself and slaves in the U.S. South who, centuries ago, were abused and mistreated. Bella perceived this connection because she, too, had been discriminated against in Ireland (a predominantly White country). Bella, therefore, admired Lincoln as a historical figure because Lincoln worked to end slavery for those who “were shipped from Africa to America,” and he promoted greater equality for people of color who lived in the United States.

In addition, Bella’s comment suggests that her understanding of race was historically constructed. She used her knowledge of history to understand the place of race in U.S. society, and her comments suggest that she thought Lincoln’s efforts had an effect on her life in Ireland today. Although some of Bella’s comments were not completely historically accurate (“I think it was the South that was treating us badly, but the East were, like, treating us really, really nice”), she nonetheless perceived the history of racial inequality in the US as a significant issue from the past that influenced the lives of people of color in the present day, even people of color who lived outside the United States.

Nelson Mandela: “He’s a legend!” I learned that Jacob, Victor, Bella, and Candace all had strong admiration for Nelson Mandela, too. For the four students, Mandela was a leader who embodied courage, confidence, and grit in the face of oppression, and he was a source of inspiration for Bella, Candace, Victor, and Jacob.

The first time Nelson Mandela came up in a conversation was during my second focus group interview with the four students. Victor and Bella were discussing how, sometimes, they felt like they were not treated fairly in school. Bella said this was “a bit like Nelson Mandela.” I decided to probe further. “Well, what about Nelson Mandela?” Jacob exclaimed, “Nelson

Mandela is the best!” The conversation continued from that point forward, and the students began to share what they knew about Mandela.

Bella: He spent 27 years in prison.

Jacob: in jail

Candace: just believing somethin’

Bella: For being accused as a terrorist because he was, like, bombing buildings and the South African government said people were getting hurt, but like, he would make sure that people wouldn’t get hurt. I mean, like, he would make sure that people were out first before he started bombing. But then he was classified as a terrorist and he spent 27 years in jail. And then when he came out, I mean, they didn’t even say sorry.

As the discussion continued, I learned from Bella that “they” were White people in power in the South African government. The students told me more about Mandela’s life and I wanted to know, more specifically, what the students’ own opinions about Mandela were. After I asked the group, Victor spoke up and said, “We all have the same opinion. God bless Nelson Mandela!” Bella agreed and added, “He’s a legend!” Candace and Jacob sat in their seats quietly. I wanted to hear what they had to say, too, so I asked for their opinions.

Don: “[Jacob] and [Candace], what do you think about Nelson Mandela?”

Jacob: He’s a good man.

Don: Why is he a good man?

Jacob: because he freed Black people from the rule of White people

Don: okay

Victor: Sorry. Stop. *Brown* people. I'm not classified as Black in English. I'm Brown. Continue.⁶

In this excerpt, Jacob stated that Mandela was “a good man” because he “freed Black people from the rule of White people.” This comment suggests that Jacob recognized Mandela as a civil rights leader who worked to increase equality for people of color in South Africa who were oppressed by White people. Candace expressed a similar point of view when I asked her for her own opinions.

Don: So what do you think about Nelson Mandela? What are your opinions about him?

Candace: That, like, he's a good savior.

Don: Why do you say that?

Candace: Cause like, basically, he just helped all the Brown people.

Jacob: Brown! (*laughs*)

Victor: (*claps*)

Like Jacob, Candace believed that Mandela helped people of color who were discriminated against, and Candace described Mandela as “a good savior.” Bella even said she wrote a report about Mandela that was “four pages long,” and during her research, one of the things she learned concerned Mandela's prison sentence. She explained, “I learned that as soon as his son died, he wasn't allowed to go to the funeral [because of] the White people. If that was

⁶ This was the only instance I recalled when Jacob referred to himself as Black. As described in chapter five, Jacob told me he chose to identify as Brown. Victor, however, was quick to call out Jacob on his word choice in this instance; Victor interrupted the conversation to correct Jacob. After doing so, Bella said, “But you still get slagged as a Black person. If you're in sixth, you're gonna get slagged. It's not even like a half-hour ago [Liam] was calling me Darth Vader from Star Wars.” Although this brief exchange was not explicitly about Mandela, it nonetheless illustrates the continued disagreement among the students about racial identification.

me, I would bleedin' break out of here cause that's my eldest son and now I'm not allowed to go to my eldest son's funeral.”

As I listened to the students speak passionately about Mandela, I wondered how they knew so much about him. (I knew that Bella completed her own research, but I did not know how the others learned about him.) After I asked the students, Victor began,

Victor: Nelson Mandela's group was called the ANC [African National Congress]. I was actually watching it on TV last night.

Don: What's the name of the show?

Jacob: *Long Walk to Freedom*

Don: Oh, the movie

Victor: Yeah, I was actually watching it yesterday.

Jacob, too, said he watched the movie and learned a lot about Mandela from it. (Candace, on the other hand, never said how she knew about Mandela.) During this conversation, I discovered that at least two of the students in the group—Victor and Jacob—learned about Mandela through the media. In fact, the movie *Long Walk to Freedom* was the two boys' primary source of information for learning about Mandela. It informed their understanding of history, and it also influenced the students' perceptions of race and being people of color in Ireland themselves.

As my second focus group interview with the students began to conclude, I had one more question for them about Mandela. Candace had just told a story about visiting a local convenience store in Lancaster in which a young customer in the store suspected her of having the Ebola virus. Candace said,

Candace: I was in the Centra one day and this little girl goes, “She’s gonna give you Ebola.”

Bella: Even in my class, there’s a boy and he goes, “Will you go away from me, you? I don’t want to get Ebola off ya!” But guess what I said? I don’t want to get HIV off you, so piss off!

Victor: Some people don’t mean it.

Bella: I’m not messin’. It’s just annoying.

Victor: Some people, they don’t mean it, but they do it. Some people don’t mean it.

Bella: Most people mean it.

Victor: Oh my God! The day that they said the Ebola outbreak, “Oh my God! Is your family all right? Anything wrong with them? Are you sure? You know?” That is the way it is.

I could tell that the students were angry and frustrated as they spoke about the exclusion they experienced; their White peers viewed them as having a disease because of their racial and cultural backgrounds. Recognizing these feelings, I asked the students a question and incorporated Mandela. I said,

Don: So let’s say that Nelson Mandela was in Ireland today and you had a conversation with him. Imagine this happening.

Bella: Like now?

Don: Yeah, like now. It’s the four of you with Nelson Mandela and he was talking to you.

Bella: I would be on my knees!

Don: You were telling him about these kinds of things that were happening. What do you think that Nelson Mandela might say to each of you?

Jacob: to try and change it

Victor: Like, in my mind, this is what I think Nelson Mandela would say: “Don’t break. They want you to break. They want to show that we’re bad people. They want to show that we have a mask on our face when it’s them that have the mask on their face.”

Don: They have a mask on your face? Or they have a mask on theirs?

Victor: No, they want people to think that *we’re* the ones that have a mask on our face. That we’re devils. That’s what they want to prove.

Don: And when you say they, who’s they?

Bella: the White people

Jacob: White people

Victor: White people because, like, they don’t mind getting in trouble to get us into even more trouble.

I noticed that Candace, who had brought up the topic of Ebola a few minutes before, remained quiet during the dialogue. Since I wanted to know her opinion, I asked, “What do you think, [Candace]? If Nelson Mandela were here and he was having a conversation with all four of you, what do you think that conversation would be like?” Candace’s response was brief, but she said she might tell him about “how much racism I’ve seen through my life.” A few moments later, Jacob added (about Mandela), “He would try and fix it.” Victor, however, was less optimistic that Mandela could help solve the problem of racism in Ireland. He said, “There’s no way of fixing it. South Africa was different than Ireland. South Africa was mostly owned by Brown people. Here it’s owned by White. Like, Nelson Mandela...look, unlike

America, they'd be like one-third Brown people, two-thirds White. In here, there's, like, one-eighth Brown people, seven-eighths White.”

Victor's comment reveals interesting points-of-view about the way he viewed race in Ireland. First, Victor's statement reflects an understanding that South Africa and Ireland are different places, so the strategies Mandela used to promote equality in South Africa may not work the same way in Ireland. To support his view, Victor pointed to demographics. He claimed there were more Brown people in South Africa than there were in Ireland, which was mostly White. In addition, Victor also perceived the US as a more diverse society where the proportion of Brown people was higher than in Ireland.

Second, it is notable that, when discussing South Africa and Ireland, Victor characterized the two countries as being “owned” by people from different races (Brown people or White people). This characterization suggests Victor's perception that one's racial background could heavily determine one's power and sense of ownership in society. Therefore, those who are members of a nation's racial minority (such as Victor in Ireland) could have less power simply due to race, and thus, experience an increased chance of exclusion in society.

Furthermore, Victor's characterization of countries being “owned” based on racial majority in the first place is not reflective of core democratic values and principles—values and principles that are explicitly listed in the Irish Primary School Curriculum as central to the citizenship education curriculum. The Republic of Ireland, a representative democracy and member of the European Union, is built on the pursuit of liberty, justice, and equality, although for Victor and the other three students, the pursuit of these goals did not often seem within their reach. As a result, although Jacob expressed hope that someone such as Nelson Mandela could “try and fix it,” Victor (who nonetheless admired Mandela) was skeptical that even someone as

inspirational as Mandela could help solve the problem of discrimination that he and other people of color in Ireland experienced.

Conclusion

Irish sports, language, and idols. The students' participation in, and opinions about, Irish sports (such as Gaelic football), along with their creative uses of language and their admiration for idols, helped the students navigate Irish society as young children of color. As described in previous chapters, the students' experiences of racism and discrimination led them to feel excluded in Irish society, and these experiences influenced the students to develop racialized perceptions of what they thought it meant to be Irish. Although Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace all encountered feelings of anger, frustration, and fear in their lives, I learned that the children also sought ways to feel more included and valued as Brown/Black Irish citizens.

Although only three of the four students were active Gaelic football players (Candace was mostly a spectator), all four students believed that Gaelic football, nonetheless, was an important part of Ireland's heritage and a way for one to express her/his Irish identity. The sport's historic role in promoting Irish national identity under British rule (particularly in the late-19th and early-20th centuries) was crucial for the preservation of Irish culture and tradition. Although none of the students in the interviews specifically described the history of Gaelic football and the GAA in relation to Home Rule and the promotion of Irish nationalism under the British, the students all recognized that playing Gaelic football was an expression of Irish identity, and that by participating in the sport as an athlete and/or as a fan, one could be a part of the social fabric of Ireland. Even though the students' racial and cultural backgrounds differed from the majority White population in their community (and in Ireland in general), participating in GAA was a means for the students to feel more fully valued as Irish citizens. Particularly for

Bella, Victor, and Jacob, playing Gaelic football was an opportunity to build relationships with school peers from different backgrounds and be part of a team that worked to achieve a common goal. In addition, as athletes, the three students played under a shared set of rules and norms that all team players had to follow. Playing Gaelic football, perhaps, served as an intersection of sports and democracy for the students because core democratic values such as fairness and equal opportunity were emphasized and enforced. In this way, the athletic field itself became a “classroom” for the students.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note (in light of the history of Gaelic football and the GAA) that for Jacob, Bella, and Victor (and possibly Candace), GAA was an opportunity for the students to further integrate into Irish culture. This experience illustrates a shift from the original purpose of the GAA in 1884 when its primary aim was to preserve Irish culture by promoting Irish national identity while under British rule. For Jacob, Bella, and Victor (at least), Gaelic football was indeed a way to promote Irish national identity, but in a much different context. Participating in GAA was a way for the students to further integrate into Irish culture during an age of significant demographic change in Ireland—change that will, no doubt, continue to shift the cultural landscape of Ireland for years to come.

The four students’ uses of language also served as a means for the students to feel more included and valued. However, in contrast to the students’ participation in Irish sports, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace used language as a way to affirm their racial and cultural identities as youths of color in Ireland. Language also helped the students develop a sense of belonging with other students of color at St. Hilary. The four students identified and described three different ways, or “tones”, in which they used language to communicate: 1) at school; 2) with friends; and 3) at home (particularly when the students interacted with their parents and elders of color). The

first two tones were closely intertwined because the way the students used language at St. Hilary was largely influenced by the kinds of interactions the students had with their peers in school (especially their White peers). In other words, the students learned how to use a collection of words from different African languages (languages that mirrored the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the students of color in school) as a tool for empowerment and to resist the discrimination they experienced from their White peers. In this way, the students frequently code-switched between speaking “African” and speaking the way their White Irish peers did. Code switching, therefore, allowed the students to move in and out of different social spaces at St. Hilary (depending on the context) to affirm their identities as young Irish people of color in the midst of racial oppression. In addition, the students’ use of the first two tones suggests that they used language as a counter-space to navigate the challenges they faced in school.

The third “tone” the students used, the home tone, was both similar to and different from the way the students used the first two tones. On the one hand, the home tone was a means for the students to speak and interact with other people of color—namely, the students’ parents and other adults of color—to affirm a strong sense of self as Brown/Black people. On the other hand, the home tone was not used as a protective force in the same way that the first two tones were used. The students used the home tone not to resist discrimination, but rather, to fulfill social expectations within their circle of family and adult friends of color. Therefore, the home tone can be viewed as a way that the students aimed to validate their racial and cultural identities, but within a context of respect for elders rather than as a protection, of sorts, to defend themselves against racial hostility. Overall, the students’ use of all three tones points to the students’ creativity and ingenuity in using language for specific purposes and in specific contexts in order to empower themselves and build stronger relationships with certain groups of people.

The students' unique uses of language helped them to navigate their school, homes, and social circles and negotiate their identities as Irish and African youths.

Finally, the students' admiration for idols played an important role in how they expressed themselves as young Irish citizens. In my interviews with the students, I learned that they looked up to at least three different people (both individually and collectively): Muhammad Ali, Abraham Lincoln, and Nelson Mandela. These three men represented qualities that the four children admired, especially resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge. Even though none of these men were Irish, I learned that the students tried to channel Ali's, Lincoln's, and Mandela's grit and resolve to face the challenges they themselves faced both inside and outside school, particularly in terms of the racism they frequently encountered from White people. This inspiration informed the students' understanding of what it meant to be Brown/Black Irish citizens because the three men's stories helped the students acknowledge the discrimination they experienced in Ireland, as well as develop resilience to bounce back from their unfair treatment. In addition, it is interesting to note that the students did not mention any idols who were women. Although Bella once briefly explained that she admired and looked up to her mother (described in chapter 4), in general, the students primarily discussed only men whom they looked up to and admired.

Playing Gaelic football, using language creatively, and admiring idols were important ways that the students expressed their Irish identity. Overall, these expressions, along with the students' experiences of racism (leading to feelings of exclusion), suggest that the students, as young Irish citizens of color, encountered a unique experience of being Irish that contrasted sharply with the dominant White Irish narrative. These experiences and expressions suggest that

the students demonstrated creative efforts to carve out a place for themselves in Irish society as youths of color in light of being positioned as outsiders in their community.

In terms of Ogbu's (1998) classification of minority groups, the students recognized that they frequently occupied a subordinate power position in society compared to Whites (consistent with Ogbu's understanding of "minority"). However, my research also suggests that, despite the students' recognition of their subordinate power position compared to Whites in their community, they nonetheless searched for ways to increase their power, particularly by playing Irish sports, using language as a counter space to push back against the discrimination they experienced, and code-switching. In addition, when the students desired inspiration and guidance, they looked up to people such as Ali (a great fighter-athlete), Lincoln (a politician who helped end slavery in the US), and Mandela (a contemporary civil rights leader and politician from South Africa). It is notable that two of these three figures were people of color themselves, and the third figure was a White man who promoted greater equality for people of color in the US in the 19th century. The students' expressions of being Brown/Black Irish citizens (to varying degrees) demonstrated their sense of determination and their desire for equality.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) also helps to illuminate important themes regarding the students and how they learned to "be Irish." This research suggests that the students' learning took place, in large part, due to their active participation in the social world. Participating in the life of the community as students, peers, athletes, sports fans, and family members affected the four students' perspectives and the development of their identities as Irish youths of color. In this way, the students' identities, consistent with Lave and Wenger's understanding of LPP, were "long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus, identity,

knowing, and social membership entail one another” (p. 53). By interacting on a daily basis with those in their community, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace used their experiences to understand the social world(s) in which they lived and to develop stronger senses of self.

In addition, Lave and Wenger’s understanding of LPP as complex and multi-layered is consistent with the findings presented in this study. Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace aimed to integrate into the dominant White Irish culture by recognizing the heritage of Irish sports (and, for three of the students, by participating as athletes), while simultaneously affirming their racial and African backgrounds by using language as a tool for empowerment. These expressions illustrate the complexity and multi-layered nature of the students’ development of Irish identity. The students’ use of agency to interact with others throughout their social worlds suggests that the students’ understanding of what it means to be Irish is neither fixed nor static, but rather, continually shaped by their experiences and engagement with others in their community.

Summary. In this chapter, I described how Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace expressed Irish identity through sports, language, and admiration for idols. I also explained how the students used these expressions to feel more fully valued, and I suggested that these expressions demonstrated the students’ efforts to carve out a place for themselves in Irish society. Through their efforts, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace acquired perseverance and strength in the midst of significant challenge. In the next chapter, I provide a discussion of the findings from this case study to conclude the dissertation.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

This study explored how Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace, all students of color, understood what it meant to be Irish in the context of significant economic, political, and social change in Ireland and the rest of Europe. In recent decades, the Republic of Ireland has experienced a marked increase in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity among its residents. Irish schools (such as St. Hilary) are one of many places in Ireland that reflect these demographic changes. Although Ireland still remains mostly White and Catholic today, current Irish census figures show that the number of people from diverse backgrounds in the nation is rising. This trend has implications for the way Irish schools and society prepare youths for active civic participation in a changing democratic society and an increasingly interdependent world.

In this chapter, I first provide a summary of main findings of this research. Second, I ground these findings in the literature to show how this study builds on existing research. Next, I describe the study's limitations, followed by a discussion identifying directions for future research. Finally, I address the educational significance of this dissertation study.

Summary of Main Findings

Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace, all with parents originally from Nigeria who later moved to Ireland, were children born in the Irish Republic. All of the children also identified as Irish (to varying degrees). During the interviews, the children described experiences of racism in school, in their neighborhoods, and in other public places in the community of Lancaster where they lived. These encounters occurred among both White school-aged peers and White adults. This racism took place through verbal harassment, physical harassment, and theft. Although the students, at times, described instances in which White peers defended them, they nonetheless experienced anger, frustration, and fear which, in turn, affected the way the students interacted

with others inside and outside school, along with their decisions to participate in (or not participate in) certain activities. In addition, because of the students' experiences with discrimination, they explained that they developed racialized perceptions of what it meant to be Irish, and they felt like outsiders who were not fully valued as Irish citizens.

Despite the students' feelings of exclusion, however, all of the students also found ways to express their Irish identity as young citizens of color, feel more fully valued, affirm their racial and cultural identities, and build resilience. Three of the students (Bella, Jacob, and Victor), for example, actively participated in playing Gaelic football, a traditional Irish sport. (Candace admitted to playing the sport sometimes, although she was not an active athlete.) Even though the students participated in the sport at varying levels, all four students believed that participating in, and/or being a fan of, Gaelic football was an expression of Irish identity, as well as an important part of Ireland's history. For Jacob, Bella, and Victor, playing the sport was a way to feel more valued as Irish citizens because they participated as members of a team who abided by a shared set of rules and norms that all athletes had to follow.

In addition to Gaelic football, language was used by the students in creative ways to affirm their cultural and racial identities. More specifically, the students understood language in terms of three "tones:" one used at school, one used with friends, and one used at home (or with their parents and elders of color outside their homes). The students indicated that the first two tones (used at school and with friends) were closely linked because they were quite often used together in school where many of their social interactions with peers took place. These two tones were used among the students of color at St. Hilary to resist the discrimination they experienced from their White peers. For example, words from different African languages that mirrored the students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds were used as a counter space to push back

against racist encounters initiated by White students. In this way, language served as a protective force for the students in the face of the challenges they encountered. In contrast, the home tone was used to fulfill the social expectations of parents and adults of color who deserved respect. Therefore, the home tone was used as a way for the students to affirm their racial and cultural identities, too, but it was not used as a protective force in the face of discrimination as the first two tones were. It is also interesting to note that Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace acknowledged that the way they spoke to White adults, such as their teachers, was different than the way they spoke to their parents and other adults of color. They claimed to address adults of color with even more respect than they did White adults.

Finally, the students explained that they looked up to idols, both living and deceased, who helped them build resilience as youths of color in Ireland. For example, Victor said that he admired the boxing heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali because he was a fighter who used his athletic skill “in a good way.” Bella explained how she admired Abraham Lincoln because he worked to end slavery as a president of the United States. All four students said they admired Nelson Mandela, the former South African president and civil rights leader, for his strength and resolve. All three men were particularly influential to the students for different reasons, but a common link between the three was that, in the students’ eyes, they all demonstrated perseverance and fortitude in the face of adversity. In this way, the students built resilience amidst the racism they encountered that led to their feeling like outsiders in Ireland and less than fully Irish.

Situating the Findings in Literature

Education research that includes students from a Nigerian immigrant background has taken place in the Irish Republic in recent years (e.g., Bryan, 2008; Devine, 2009; Devine,

Kenny, & Macneela, 2008); however, research that focuses specifically on the experiences and perceptions of these students and that recognizes the underpinnings of these students' unique ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds, has not been fully explored. The findings from this study help show that the experiences of students from immigrant backgrounds inside and outside school are not always the same; in fact, students' experiences can be (and very likely are) quite different depending on the students' unique backgrounds. Previous research in a U.S. context supports this claim (Awokoya, 2012; El-Haj, 2007; Flores-González, 2002). This dissertation helps fill a gap in Irish educational research literature by exploring the perceptions and expressions of Irish identity of a small group of second-generation Nigerian students, and it increases scholars' understanding, in an Irish context, of how these second-generation students navigate Irish society as young citizens of color.

This study also reveals experiences of racism that the four students encountered from White people in their community, resonating with Waters's (1994) study on the ethnic and racial identities of second-generation Black immigrants in New York City. In this study, Waters noted that Whites tended "to make racial judgments about identity when it came to blacks" (p. 818) and that the Black students "[got] the message that blacks are stereotyped by Whites in negative ways" (p. 816). Although my study does not address the perceptions of White people directly, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace felt that Whites in their community made racial judgments about them, and that these judgments frequently occurred in negative ways. As a result, I argue that part of learning to be Irish for these students meant to develop "a knowledge and perception of racism and its effects and subtle nuances" (Waters, 1994, p. 800). In addition, I contend that the four students, similar to the children of immigrants in a U.S. context, had to "develop a keen

eye for discerning the place of race and color” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 98) in Irish society.

Through the experiences of racism that Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace encountered, the students learned that in order to navigate Irish society as youths of color, they had to know when and where racism occurred, in what contexts it took place, and how they could (and should) handle it. The students developed strategies—both verbal and, at times, physical—to deal with racism when it took place. This finding suggests that Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace encountered a unique experience of being Irish that stands in sharp contrast to the dominant White Irish narrative that exists today. Furthermore, the four students, similar to Mexican-American second-generation students in the US, struggled to “combat what they perceive as a hostile environment and their need to construct a new identity that will allow them to face that environment with confidence” (López & Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 57). The students’ experiences also further highlight the changing demographics taking place in Ireland, as well as the shift occurring in the Irish Republic from a relatively culturally homogenous society to a more multicultural one.

This study also reveals the complexity of racial identification. For example, as Renn (2012) explains, racial identification operates at both the individual and group levels. For Bella, Jacob, Victor, and Candace, I discovered that the students (both individually and in social groups) struggled to understand how to identify themselves racially in Ireland. My data suggest that the students developed racialized perceptions about being Irish, and that the students’ experiences in the social world largely influenced their perceptions. From a sociological perspective, the students’ experiences confirm that “forces [are] acting on individuals as they come to understand themselves as racialized people” (Renn, 2012, p. 17). The presence of these

forces was especially notable when the students explained their preference for identifying as either Brown or Black. For Jacob, Candace, and Victor who all identified as Brown, the students surmised that identifying as Brown was a safer racial identification to use than Black. In addition, the students likely identified as Brown because they perceived Brown as a lighter skin color than Black, and thus, closer to the color White. After all, as Tatum (1997) argues, a societal preference does exist for people who are lighter skinned. Bella, on the other hand, chose to identify as Black, possibly due to internalized oppression she may have experienced from a case of colorism because, phenotypically, she was the lightest person out of all four students in this case study. Bella's case illustrates an example of exclusion that Bella may have experienced from within her social group of peers of color.

Jackson III (2012) also emphasizes the complexity of racial identification when he argues that intersectionality (or the multiple dimensions of identity that include gender, age, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and race) is an important and valuable perspective to consider in Black identity development. I found that the intersection of at least race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion (to varying degrees) influenced the way the four students developed their own racial identities. For example, Bella and her friend, Brianna, experienced both gender and racial discrimination by some White boys on the school playground because of their hair. Victor's White peers assumed he was from a low-income family because of the color of his skin. In addition, Victor witnessed his father's Irish citizenship questioned by employees in a local store because of the employees' assumption that his father had a non-Irish nationality. Candace described how her family's religious beliefs influenced her level of participation in Irish cultural holidays such as Halloween (and Bella, Victor, and Jacob agreed with Candace's point-of-view). Therefore, in order to better understand how the four students struggled to develop their own

racial identities as Irish citizens, it is helpful to consider how other dimensions of identity affected the students and the way they understood themselves racially as Irish people. These experiences illustrate how complex one's racial identity development can be, especially in a nation that, only within the last few decades, has become much more diverse racially, culturally, and ethnically than it ever has been before.

In regards to the development of Irish identity specifically, Waldron and Pike (2006) (researchers who studied Irish primary school children's conceptions of national identity) discovered that "sport provided an important focus for children's perceptions of national identity" and that "the dominant association was between Irishness and Gaelic games" (pp. 237-238). As previously noted, Cronin (1999) contends that Irish sports, particularly Gaelic games, have played a significant role in promoting an Irish identity. De Búrca (1999) argues that Gaelic games and the GAA, as a national organization, have "importance in community life, especially since the establishment of an independent Irish State in 1922" (p. 228). This study builds on the work of these scholars by investigating the role of sports in the lives of second-generation Nigerian students in Ireland—a group of students that, previously, has not been the primary focus of education research in the Irish Republic. For the four students in this study, participating in Gaelic football clearly played an important role in how they expressed their Irish identity.

This study, however, also yields new findings related to Gaelic sports and national identity that previous research has not revealed. Gaelic football was a way for the students to express their Irish identity, as well as a means for them to feel valued in the midst of racial oppression. For Jacob, Victor, and Bella in particular, the Gaelic field seemed to become an intersection of sports and democracy: the students, while playing Gaelic football with their peers,

felt like valued members of a team who worked together to achieve a common objective. Together, the students abided by a shared set of norms that held everyone accountable to the same standards. Overall, playing Gaelic football appeared to help the students feel more included rather than excluded, as insiders rather than outsiders. In addition, it is interesting to note that the students' participation in, and perceptions of, Gaelic football crossed gender lines. In contrast to Waldron and Pike's study, this research found that both boys and girls actively participated in Irish sports and/or expressed an interest in Gaelic football. (It is important to note, however, that this study only focused on a small group of four students, not a larger number of students like Waldron and Pike's study did.) Therefore, this study points to the potential that Irish sports may have in promoting core democratic principles by crossing racial, cultural, and gender lines.

The findings in this study also point to the need for Irish schools to increase all students' awareness of race and diversity as they educate these young citizens for civic engagement in an increasingly multicultural society. As Banks (1990) notes, "Citizenship education in a multicultural society must have as an important goal helping all students, including White mainstream students, to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed not only to participate in, but also to help transform and reconstruct, society" (p. 211). As the victims of racial discrimination on a frequent basis, the experiences of Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace illustrate the strong need for the transformation and reconstruction for which Banks advocates. Although this study does not specifically focus on the citizenship education curriculum used at St. Hilary, the experiences of the four students show, nonetheless, that there is more work to do to help all students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for living in a fair, just,

and diverse society. In this regard, this research illustrates the possibility that Irish sports could play in that effort.

Limitations

There are three main limitations in this study. First, as a former teacher at St. Hilary, I brought certain beliefs and perceptions about the school and community to this research. Although my prior teaching experience at the school was vital in gaining research access to St. Hilary in the first place, my experience as a St. Hilary teacher, nonetheless, influenced the way I interpreted the data. In addition, my experience as a former classroom teacher likely influenced the way I communicated with the students. For example, towards the end of my fieldwork, I noticed that the students were more comfortable speaking with me in interviews compared to the beginning of the fieldwork. Certainly, this change (at least partially) could have been due to my lack of prior experience with the students in the early stages of the research; after all, Jacob, Bella, Victor, and Candace had never met me before September 2014. However, as time progressed, I surmised that my former role as a teacher could have influenced the way the students interacted with me. (For instance, the students chose to address me more formally as “Mr. McClure” during the fieldwork.) Therefore, as “Mr. McClure” rather than “Don,” the students may have viewed me, at least initially, as more of an authority figure like their St. Hilary teachers, rather than as a researcher visiting St. Hilary to learn about them and their perspectives.

Second, my background as a White male and as a non-immigrant in the United States affected the research I conducted. I acknowledge that, as a non-immigrant White male, I brought certain perceptions and experiences with me to this research that influenced the questions I asked and how I understood and interpreted the data. In addition, given the students’ experiences being

discriminated against by White people, it is possible that my background as a White person asking them questions about their discriminatory experiences could have caused them, at least at times, to feel uncertain and/or cautious. For example, Victor once asked me to promise him that the perspectives he shared with me would remain anonymous. Candace told me that, sometimes, she was embarrassed to talk with me about racism because I was White. Therefore, I recognize that my background as a White person posed limitations on this research.

Third, this research focused only on four students who attended one school in an Irish city, and the study investigated these four students' perceptions of what it meant to be Irish. Although the students' viewpoints and beliefs revealed important themes that deserve continued research in this area, the small number of student participants does not necessarily represent the beliefs of all second-generation Nigerian students in Ireland (or even all second-generation Nigerian students at St. Hilary itself.) In addition, because this research focused primarily on only four students' perceptions, this study limits the viewpoints of the St. Hilary School staff, the parents of the four students themselves, and the four student's peers. (I did reach out to the students' parents to try and interview them, but was unsuccessful.) Despite this limitation, this study does open the door for future work investigating the perspectives of these people and helps advance knowledge in research concerning youth, diversity, citizenship, and national identity.

Future Research

This study yields three promising opportunities for future research in education. First, this study highlights the need for education scholars to further address the experiences of young Irish citizens of color, and how the experiences of these young people frame the youths' understandings of what it means to be Irish. Given Ireland's changing demographics, this research is important because it could promote cultural awareness for teachers, teacher educators,

policymakers, and others charged with creating and sustaining learning environments that value and respect the backgrounds of all students. Furthermore, knowledge gleaned from this kind of research could emphasize the necessity for educators to incorporate teaching in schools that is culturally relevant. As Ladson-Billings (1995) argues, “Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). Therefore, research that highlights social inequities in the first place could illuminate challenges that diverse students face, and provide opportunities to ponder how schools could promote democratic values that address these inequities.

Second, this dissertation study invites future work investigating the relationship(s) among sports, citizenship, and national identity. In an Irish context, traditional Irish sports, which are woven deeply into the fabric of Irish society, hold great promise for instilling democratic values, integrating youths from different backgrounds, and promoting inclusivity in an increasingly diverse Ireland. Because Irish sports and the GAA are quite popular among young people in Ireland, education scholars could further research the participation of racial and ethnic minority students in Irish sports to better understand how their participation informs the development of their identities as youths in Ireland. In addition, education researchers could study what effects, if any, participation in Irish sports (or Irish sports in general) may have on school curriculum and citizenship education in Irish schools.

Third, this study opens the door to comparative educational research between Ireland and other countries, such as the United States, regarding students from immigrant backgrounds, schooling, and citizenship development. As societies throughout Europe and the US become increasingly multicultural, comparative studies could provide useful synergies between educational systems that would offer opportunities to share knowledge and strengthen mutual

understanding. Furthermore, comparative education studies could help teachers and schools work together to create more meaningful democratic education that, as scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995) argue, could challenge social inequities. These efforts are critically important today, particularly because elected representatives in the EU in recent years have appeared to support positions that promote divisiveness between people from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

Implications

Education policy. The findings from this study suggest that Irish policymakers and other government officials should create policies that promote greater educational equity and inclusiveness in Irish schools. In 2010, the Irish Intercultural Education Strategy (IES) for 2010-2015 was released by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Office of the Minister for Integration (OMI) in Ireland. In this strategy, a framework was proposed that included ten key components, or goals, to guide educators as they created learning environments that were conscious of diversity and respected cultural difference. This dissertation responds to one of the IES policy's key components, data collection and research, that states, "Research will provide evidence based data for consideration for future policies and practices, based on analysis, evaluation, and adaptation (where necessary)" (Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration, 2010, p. 54). The evidence presented in this dissertation offers insight regarding the perspectives of a small group of second-generation Nigerian students who attended one school in the Irish Republic, and how these students were frequently excluded inside and outside school because of their backgrounds. The findings from this dissertation not only can inform the creation of future educational policies in Ireland, but they also can support a main goal of the DES which is to "support and improve the quality,

relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools” (Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration, 2010, p. 4).

Whole school development. The findings from this study also suggest that more could be done in school to reflect multiculturalism in Ireland more prominently. One possible area for development is in the area of curriculum. For example, SPHE and SESE curricula could be developed to reflect the changing demographics in Irish society and acknowledge the implications that increased diversity has (and will continue to have) on the way children engage in participatory democratic citizenship in the Irish Republic. As previously noted, scholars in the US (Castles (2004); Parker (2004); Ladson-Billings(2005)) have argued for school curricula that feature multiculturalism more prominently because society has, in recent years, become increasingly diverse and globalized. Although there have been positive steps towards progress in this regard in Ireland, this dissertation suggests that more can be done to create curricular materials that more closely mirror the changing demographics in Irish society.

The findings from this dissertation show how a small group of second-generation Nigerian students perceived Irishness in a racialized way. Therefore, school curricula in Ireland could also focus more intensively on educating all students about the various forms of cultural and ethnic difference that exist in society and how to identify and confront issues of inequality that take place. In addition, curricula could include a greater focus on gender, a topic that Crocco (2001) argues should have a stronger presence in social studies classrooms (in a U.S. context). Irish school curricula, therefore, could more strongly emphasize how students could become democratic members of a pluralistic society that work to bring about “a unity of individuals alongside the diversity of groups” (Walzer, 1992, p. 68). In particular, exploring the potential role(s) that sports could play in the Irish school curriculum could be particularly

valuable in light of the findings from this dissertation. Participation in Irish sports could be a way for students from different backgrounds to learn how to work together more cooperatively and form greater unity in the midst of diversity.

There are also other ways, or “dimensions” (Banks, 2008b, p. 32), that Irish schools could use to incorporate multiculturalism to a greater degree. For example, Banks proposes that, in addition to curriculum development, schools pursuing multiculturalism could actively work to integrate content. Integrating content, Banks explains, concerns how teachers use examples and content from different cultures to help students learn about particular ideas and concepts throughout different areas of study. Another dimension Banks proposes concerns teachers’ engagement in the knowledge construction process, or the process of helping students “understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it” (p. 32). If implemented, this dimension could also help students in Irish schools understand how knowledge is created in the first place.

Banks’ (2008b) three remaining dimensions for multicultural education in school include reducing prejudice, pursuing an equity pedagogy, and working to achieve an empowering culture and social structure in school. Banks argues that teachers in school can reduce prejudice by understanding their students’ attitudes and beliefs about race and how to address them; develop pedagogy that is equitable by adjusting “their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups” (p. 32); and empower students from racial, ethnic, and cultural groups by examining how students and teachers interact across racial and ethnic boundaries. All of the dimensions Banks proposes

could be helpful approaches for schools in the Republic of Ireland (such as St. Hilary) to promote multiculturalism along with greater educational equality for all students.

Teaching and teacher education. This dissertation also offers research that can help teachers and teacher educators consider how to create more inclusive, democratic classrooms for elementary and secondary school students. As explained in this dissertation's Introduction, recent research on primary school students in Ireland has revealed that majority ethnic students (i.e. Irish, White, and Catholic) have limited understandings about diversity (Devine, Kenny, & Macneela (2008)). In addition, Leavy (2005) asserts that Irish pre-service teachers' exposure to and knowledge of people from diverse backgrounds is often limited, and she argues for pre-service teachers to have opportunities "to examine their own backgrounds and become more aware of the influence of gender, race, class, and culture; to explain their conceptions of and interest in diversity; and to articulate their concerns" (p. 174). This dissertation confirms these research findings and builds upon them.

In this dissertation, I argue that four second-generation Nigerian students in Ireland experienced discrimination inside and outside school on a frequent basis. However, the data also suggest that at least some of the students' teachers (all of whom were White) were unaware of these students' experiences of discrimination and how these experiences influenced the students' knowledge and perceptions of Irish citizenship and national identity. Therefore, it is important for both pre-service and in-service teachers in the Irish Republic not only to examine their own knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions about diversity as Leavy (2005) suggests, but also to possess the knowledge and skills needed to acquire and examine their students' beliefs and perceptions about diversity. In turn, teachers could use this knowledge to inform the development of pedagogy and curriculum in their classrooms to increase their students' knowledge and

awareness. In a U.S. context, Swalwell (2015) argues that teachers who investigate their students' perspectives about social studies topics can create stronger curriculum that addresses the specific learning needs of students. In a Northern Irish context, Barton and McCully (2005) advocate for teachers to examine their students' perspectives in order to "challenge more directly the beliefs and assumptions held by students of varied backgrounds, as well as to provide a clearer alternative to the partisan histories encountered elsewhere" (p. 85). In an Irish context, my research echoes these scholars' perspectives and advocates for pre-service and in-service teachers in the Irish Republic to increase their knowledge of students' own experiences and points-of-view. In turn, this knowledge could be used to help Irish teachers develop curriculum and pedagogy that is more culturally relevant and that reflects the changing cultural landscape of Irish society.

Drawing a new "map" for Irish education. Fourth, and most importantly, this study provides greater perspective on citizenship education in the Republic of Ireland. Research on this topic in Ireland is scarce. Nonetheless, it is a critical area to explore because of the breadth and depth of diversity that now exists in Ireland. Undoubtedly, this diversity has significant implications for the way students in Ireland learn to be Irish citizens. Furthermore, in light of recent political elections in the EU that reflect concerns about immigration as a threat to national identity (Higgins, 2014, May 26), research on citizenship education in the Irish Republic, and the rest of Europe, is becoming an even more salient issue. Therefore, my investigation aims to fill a gap in educational research by illuminating prominent contemporary issues such as immigration, national identity, and citizenship that are particularly significant in Irish schools and society today. Hopefully, my research will encourage education leaders and scholars in the Republic of Ireland to think more deeply about the way Irish schools are preparing *all* students for active

citizenship, and how these schools can more precisely mirror the changing demographics in Irish society. To borrow a metaphor from Benhabib (2004), perhaps this may require Irish educators and policymakers to draw a new map for Irish schools—one that reflects a response to new and different needs rather than the needs of the past. If this is the case, I hope that my research can help redraw this map in order to support efforts to educate all Irish students to become engaged, deliberative, reasoned, and inclusive democratic citizens.

EPILOGUE

It was a Wednesday afternoon in early December. Bella, Jacob, Victor, Candace, and I were finishing a focus group conversation that lasted well over an hour—a lively dialogue that covered topics as diverse as boys wearing ripped jeans, girls loving or hating “One D” (short for One Direction, the popular boy band from the UK), interacting with Irish Traveller children and, of course, the students’ perceptions about race and being Irish. My fieldwork, which began in September, was quickly drawing to a close (and so was the school day). My iPhone clock read 2:30 pm. At 2:45, four ascending pitches from an electronic dismissal bell would echo throughout the halls of St. Hillary. It would be time to go home.

“Can we have one more meetin’ together, please? One more?” Victor asked eagerly. “One more meetin’ together, yeah?” Bella added. Candace and Jacob listened, waiting for me to answer. “This is actually the last one,” I responded pensively. The truth was, I wished there could have been one more meeting. I was sad to leave the students to whom I had grown so attached; I tried my best to hide my disappointment from them. (I do not know why.) I reminded the children that Friday would be my final day at St. Hilary and that I would leave for the US on Saturday.

“I have one more question to ask all of you, probably the last one before you go back to your classrooms.” I looked at the students. “What was it like for you to talk about race with a White guy from America?” Victor spoke up first: “To be honest, it’s very hard.” “Hard,” Candace and Jacob said, one after the other. Bella agreed and explained, “I wouldn’t talk to, like, anybody about this,” and Victor added, “because they might use it against ya.” Bella continued, “I’ll just keep quiet. Like, all the anger in me. When I come into school with that anger, I would put it on somebody but, like, I didn’t mean to. It was just anger.”

In that moment, like many other moments, I felt sorry for Bella. At the same time, I also felt honored that Bella (and the rest of the students) shared their personal stories with me over the course of the semester—stories that I recognized were not always easy for them to share.

Bella had more to say, though. She explained, “We feel comfortable cause it’s, like, the four of us. We did feel more comfortable.” Jacob agreed and added, “More comfortable, yeah.” Bella continued, “If it was about ten people here, we’ll just be like, ‘Yeah.’ ‘No.’ ‘Maybe.’ ‘I don’t know.’ Some kind of thing. But because it’s just you, we just, you know, take a deep breath and exhale all that anger.” As Bella and the students continued to talk, I realized that my interviews with them were their first opportunity at school to talk about their experiences of racism openly and, perhaps, their first opportunity to talk about these experiences with a White person. In the end, for the students, my interviews were not just interviews; they were opportunities for them to say what was on their minds to someone who would listen. The students simply wanted to be heard. This research outcome was one I did not anticipate, and in that moment, I did not know what to say to the students.

As I tried to absorb what the students told me, Victor asked, “Do ya know Megan?” (Megan, who was White, was a counselor on staff at St. Hilary.) I nodded yes. Victor continued, “I actually wish she had a program like what you’re doin’.” Jacob and Bella agreed with Victor. Candace sat in silence. Victor then said, “Can I tell you what? I am actually serious. I’m actually gonna start talkin’ about this now cause I actually feel better talkin’ about this.” As I sat and listened to the students, I admired their courage and resilience. Once the students finished speaking, all I could do was express my gratitude towards them. “Thank you for being open and for trusting me with this information,” I said. They accepted my gratitude, but they also wanted to make sure that everything they shared with me in our conversations

would be kept secret by their self-selected pseudonyms. “You promise you won’t tell anybody?”

Bella asked. “Nobody will know it was you,” I said.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Topics for the Children of Nigerian Immigrants

Personal background

- Location of birth
- Family/home life
- Interests and hobbies
- Peers/friends

Student life at St. Hilary School

- School routine/schedule
- The kind of work they do in school
- Interactions with fellow students, teachers, and administration
- Descriptions of instructional groups/classes the students are enrolled in
- Extracurricular activities, if any, that the students participate in

Beliefs about what it means to be Irish

- Students share drawings and descriptions of who they think an Irish citizen is
- Rules, guidelines, and/or norms for being Irish
- Race and Irish identity
- Traditional Irish customs and ways of thinking

Learning about what it means to be Irish

- Where the students learn about Irish citizenship (school, peers, local community, etc.)
- What, if anything, the students learn from their teachers about being Irish
- What, if anything the students learn from their peers about being Irish
- Learning about being Irish outside of school
- The balance between being Irish and the students' Nigerian heritage
- Race and learning to be Irish

Expressions of Irish identity

- The students' opinions about "good" and "bad" Irish citizens
- What people do to be Irish
- The students' descriptions of themselves as Irish people
- How and where the students express being Irish (and, if applicable, where the students do not practice/enact being Irish)
- The students' navigation of race and being Irish

Appendix B: Interview Topics for Teachers

Background in education and prior professional experience

- Undergraduate program
- Teacher preparation program
- Role(s) at St. Hilary
- Other professional experience

Students at St. Hilary

- Daily schedule/routine
- Classroom demographics
- Observations and impressions of case study students
- Academic achievement of students (particularly case study students)
- Social interactions between students (particularly case study students and others)

Teaching students about what it means to be Irish

- Curricular materials used to teach students about Irish citizenship and identity
- Opinions about the most important features of being Irish that they teach their students
- Observations and impressions of how their students (particularly the case study students) engage with the school's citizenship education curriculum
- Opportunities for students to learn about Irish citizenship and identity outside of school (extracurricular activities, etc.)

Student opportunities to engage in being Irish

- Discussion and deliberation about Irish citizenship and identity in school
- Student participation in activities that promote Irish citizenship and national identity (particularly for the case study students)
- Practicing a religious faith and being Irish
- Observations and impressions of how case study students practice/enact being Irish (inside and outside of school)

Appendix C: Contact Summary Form

Contact Type (check one):

- school observation _____
- student interview _____
- teacher interview _____
- parent interview _____
- focus group _____
- other (specify) _____

- contact site: _____
- contact date/time: _____
- pseudonym(s) (if interview): _____
- time length of contact: _____
- today's date: _____
- form prepared by: _____

1. Briefly describe the context of this contact.

2. What were the main issues/themes that emerged from this contact?

3. Summarize the information you obtained (or failed to obtain) on the target questions you had for this contact.

Question

Information

4. Did anything else emerge about this contact that was particularly interesting or salient?

5. What new or remaining target questions do you have for your next visit with this contact?

Appendix D: Document Summary Form

Document Type (check one):

student work _____
school report _____
curricular material _____
news article _____
other (specify) _____

date document was received _____
today's date _____
location of document (i.e. file folder,
computer file, etc.) _____
form prepared by _____

1. What is the name of this document? If no name exists, describe the document.

2. Specify the event and/or contact with which this document is linked (if any).

3. Why is this document significant?

4. Provide a brief summary of this document.

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