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Children of the Diaspora: coming home to 'my own country'?

Caitríona Ní Laoire with Fina Carpena-Méndez, Naomi Tyrrell and Allen White

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Research that focuses on how children and young people experience return migration is rare. Little is known about children's involvement in family decision-making around return or about their experiences of return, which is unsurprising given the lack of research on children's roles more generally in family migration (Bushin 2009). Gmelch's early (1980) review of research on return migration refers to the paucity of research which even mentions children, a situation which has not been rectified in more recent research[1]. Since then, research on children's experiences of 'return' migration has been piecemeal, fragmented and uncommon[2], although considerable research has been conducted on adult second-generation 'ancestral' return – or counter-diasporic migration (see Christou 2006, King and Christou 2010, Potter and Phillips 2006, Tsuda 2009, Wessendorf 2007).

The tendency to overlook children's roles in return migration can be related not just to a broader tendency to deny children's migrancy (White et al., forthcoming), but also to the dominance of particular discourses of migration which associate migration with either 'immigration' or 'emigration'. This uni-linear notion of migration denies the role of circularity and return in global migration flows and

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[1] Gmelch (1980) points to one exception, King's (1977) study, which highlighted the problems, including language and cultural difficulties, experienced by children of school age who moved to Italy with their return migrant parents.

[2] Exceptions to this include Knörr's (2005) study of the experiences of children of German background who migrated from African countries to Germany with their parents, and Hatfield's research with children in returning households from Singapore to Britain (Hatfield 2010).

reinforces a strong emphasis in research on 'foreign' immigration to host societies in the global North. Drawing on Stefansson (2004), this can be related to the dominance of sedentary thinking, whereby migration is viewed as disrupting the close connection between place and self. According to this view, return migration is seen as an unproblematic and natural reinsertion into a place of origin; therefore return migrants are not considered to be migrants but simply 'homecomers' who are returning to where they 'naturally' belong. This construction of return migration relies on the dominance of fixed 'us and them' models of belonging, whereby ideas of belonging are closely tied to specific, usually narrow, concepts of nationality or ethnicity, which oppose natives/homecomers to non-natives/newcomers in host societies.

This chapter[3] aims to contribute both to ongoing deconstructions of hegemonic notions of (return) migration and to the broader agenda of placing children at the centre of research on child migration. It does this by exploring aspects of the social worlds of children who have participated in the return migration phenomenon to one European society. Ireland has a long history of emigration and an ambivalent relationship with its diasporic populations. More recently it experienced high levels of return migration at a time of rapid demographic, social and economic change. By focusing on the experiences of this particular group of under-researched migrant children, the chapter highlights the heterogeneity of child migration, problematising the simplistic host-newcomer dualisms which tend to dominate the ways in which child migration, and migration more generally, are frequently perceived. After outlining the specific research methodology and the context in which return migration occurs in Ireland, the chapter goes on to critically analyse the inherent assumptions of unproblematic belonging which permeate this migration context for the children and parents who are part of it. It explores the implications of this for children and the ways in which they negotiate belongings and identities in often contradictory contexts.

Children and Irish Return Migration

The 1980s was a decade of extremely high unemployment and high emigration in the Republic of Ireland. Annual rates of emigration increased throughout the decade, peaking in 1989 when over 70,000 left the country (Courtney

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[3] Caitríona Ní Laoire is the lead author of this chapter and conducted the research on which it is based.

2000). Men outnumbered women in the flow of emigration in the 1980s (Courtney 2000), probably reflecting the greater opportunities for men in the construction industry and sectors such as engineering and computing in London and elsewhere. The majority of this generation of emigrants were young, and most went to live and work in Britain or the US (NESC 1991).

The economic and social transformation which occurred in Ireland from the mid-1990s onwards contributed to high levels of in-migration and provided opportunities for many of the previous generations of emigrants to return to live there. A significant number of the 1980s generation of Irish emigrants returned to Ireland in the decade between 1996 and 2006, many of them with children who were born elsewhere. Between 2000 and 2008, annual in-flows of returning Irish migrants were lower than those of non-Irish migrants. In all, approximately 240,000 Irish-born migrants returned to the Republic of Ireland between 1996 and 2006 (CSO 2006). Census 2006 data show that Irish-born migrants comprised 8.8 per cent of the total population (374,753 persons) while non-Irish-born migrants comprised 9.5 per cent (403,824 persons) (CSO 2006). In addition, foreign-born persons of Irish nationality in the population comprised well over 100,000 in 2006 (CSO 2006). These are likely to be the offspring or descendants of Irish migrants, who were born outside Ireland, had Irish citizenship, and moved (or 'returned') to Ireland, either at a young age with their parents (the target group of this research), or independently as adults.

While the published census data do not provide a breakdown by age of this group, it is possible to make some inferences about the presence of children in the group. For example, if we examine the Census 2006 data for children (aged 0-19) who were born in Britain or the US[4] and are now living in Ireland, and compare these with numbers of children (0-19) of British and US nationality in the population, there is a significant difference between the two. In fact, British-born and US-born children who do not have British or US nationality comprise 55 and 56 per cent respectively of both of these groups. Given the dominance of Britain, followed by the US, among the destinations of those Irish migrants who later returned in the 1990s and 2000s (CSO

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[4] Britain, followed by the US, were the two most popular destinations for Irish migrants in the 1980s (Courtney 2000).

2006), it is highly likely that the majority of these children are their offspring who moved with them when they returned.

Annual in-migration flows to the Republic of Ireland between 1996 and 2006 reveal the important role played by return migration, a role which is often overlooked in the context of a popular and political obsession with the apparently more visible non-Irish component of in-migration. Children are particularly invisible participants in return migration. They are children and young people who were born in England, the US or elsewhere, into an Irish migrant family, and have 'returned' to live in Ireland with their parents. The term 'return' is used here to signify the broader migration phenomenon of which they are a part, although it is recognised that it is an inaccurate term to use in relation to the children's migrations as most of them were not born in Ireland, nor had they lived there previously. In this context, the notion of 'coming home', often considered a central tenet of return migration, certainly raises issues of identity and belonging for them. On the one hand, they are likely to share similar experiences to other groups of migrant children, associated with moving from a familiar to an unfamiliar place, and with possible experiences of dislocation, loss and exclusion. On the other hand, their familial ties and support structures in Ireland, and their pre-migration knowledge of the destination society, are likely to be stronger, or more complex, than they are for other groups of migrant children. In reality, little is known about their experiences of moving to and living in the 'homeland', an issue that this chapter seeks to address.

While little is known about the experiences of children in returning Irish families, paradoxically children and childhood play a highly significant role in the decision-making and narratives which have surrounded recent Irish return migration. Adult return migrants often explain the decision to return in terms of a desire to bring up children in Ireland and a belief that Ireland is a good place in which to do so (Ní Laoire 2008a, Ralph 2009). Many of the parents who took part in the research presented in this chapter believed that in Ireland their children could have a better quality of life than they would have had in the migrant destination society, often characterising Irish childhoods in terms of qualities of freedom, safety and innocence, and also stating a desire for their children to grow up with an 'Irish' identity. This characterisation of Irish childhoods is based on adult assumptions about how children

of return migrants experience migrating to and living in Ireland, pointing to the need for the voices of the children themselves to be heard in narrating their experiences.

Children in return migration flows clearly comprise a numerically significant section of the population but they are, in many ways, a relatively invisible population, overshadowed in public consciousness by the visibility of the non-Irish component of in-migration. Media, public and policy concerns with issues affecting child migrants tend to be directed towards those who are visibly most different, and therefore perceived to be most culturally different, to the majority Irish population. Indeed, our research suggests that teachers, for example, tend not to consider the foreign-born children of Irish parents as migrants at all. Inherent in the denial of these children's migrancy is an assumption about their identity and position in Irish society. In other words, it is assumed that they should belong unproblematically to an imagined Irish collectivity.

Methodology

This chapter draws on research conducted as part of the *Migrant Children*[5] project, which aimed to contribute to understandings of the experiences of children and young people who moved to Ireland with their return migrant parent(s) during the economic boom of the late 1990s and 2000s, and, in this, to prioritise the voices of the children themselves. The research sought to explore the migration experiences, everyday lives and social worlds of these children and young people, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in their relations with peers, family, kin and their negotiation of identities. The chapter draws on data collected over a period of almost two years with 36 children and young people who moved to counties Cork and Kerry in the south-west of Ireland with their Irish-born or second-generation Irish parent(s).

The research involved working with families who had moved to Ireland, where at least one parent was Irish, and there was at least one child who took part in that move to Ireland. Some of the families had one or two Irish-born parents and some had one or two second-generation Irish parents. Sixteen families, including 36 children and young people, and 21 parents, participated in the research. The ages of

the young participants ranged from three to 18, and three young adults in their early 20s were also included. There were 15 boys and 21 girls. The most common countries from which participant families had moved were the USA and England, while families that moved from South Africa, other parts of Europe and from East Asia were also represented. All lived in the Cork and Kerry region in south-west Ireland, including urban, rural and suburban locations, and all had moved to Ireland during the period of high return migration between 1995 and 2007. Achieving a representative sample of the 'returning' child migrant population would have been very difficult given the lack of data and the dispersed and invisible nature of the population. However, efforts were made to include participant families with a range of geographical, family composition and social class profiles, reflecting as closely as possible the known characteristics of the population. The sample has a strong (but not entirely) middle-class profile which partly reflects the estimated social class profile of recent return migrants. It is very difficult to disaggregate return migrants in Irish population statistics but studies have found that they have higher educational qualifications than the resident population (Barrett and Trace 1998) and that male graduate returnees earn on average 10 per cent more than similarly qualified residents (Barrett and O'Connell 2001).

In line with the general approach of the *Migrant Children* project, the methodological approach used in the research draws on developments in what has been termed the 'new social studies of childhood' in its emphasis on the use of children-centred participative techniques. It is based on the recognition of children as social beings with agency and subjectivity, and as worthy research participants in their own rights (James and Prout 1990, James, Jenks and Prout 1998). Thus the research used methods which allowed the children to communicate in ways with which they felt comfortable and competent (Thomas and O'Kane 1998). This meant using a range of techniques in different combinations – including drawing, photography[6], mapping, 'play-and-talk' – depending on the participants' ages, abilities and interests. This is particularly important in research which aims to uncover children's perspectives in a context such as family migration where adult perspectives

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[6] The photography activity involved giving each participant a disposable camera with which to take photographs to document their lives, and using the photographs as a springboard for discussion, following the principles of the photo-elicitation method (Clark-Ibáñez 2004).

tend to dominate. It is through spending time with children and young people, and creating a space in which they can communicate their own views rather than performing particular expected roles that alternative perspectives on their lives emerge. This highlights the importance of using participative techniques with children which allow non-standardised or non-learned narratives to emerge. In this way, a more open and dialogic model of socialisation than the direct adult-to-child model emerges, whereby children are viewed as competent social actors and active participants in parent-child relations (Wyness 2006). Children therefore are viewed in this research as competent narrators of their own lives, and following Smart's (2006) approach to narrative analysis, the focus was not on eliciting children's experiences of migration as if their accounts are simple factual recollections, but on understanding how they interpret and make sense of these past experiences.

These research encounters occurred in the children's homes, and all family members were invited to participate. Usually, parents were not present during research with children, and neither were children present during research with parents. Repeat visits were made to each family (on average three to four visits with each family over a period of up to two years between 2007 and 2009). The family and home-based focus facilitated the exploration of intergenerational dynamics and set children in their familial contexts, in line with the 'children-in-families' approach (Brannen and O'Brien 1996, Bushin 2009). Research shows that the family context is an extremely important site for children and young people's construction of narratives and thus for their developing sense of self (Bohanek et al. 2006).

Return Migration and Assumptions of Unproblematic Belonging

Inherent assumptions about the rights and obligations of children of Irish return migrants to belong, without question, to an imagined Irish community permeate their lives in multiple ways. Based on historical notions of the dream of return which have been influential in shaping diasporic discourses both in Ireland and in the diaspora, return migration has tended to be constructed in terms of 'home-coming'. This powerful discourse reflects the way in which return migration is viewed generally, involving an expectation that return migrants will re-integrate into their 'home' society unproblematically. Return migrants are not considered to be migrants but simply 'homecomers' who are returning to where they 'naturally' belong. So, in popular and political discourse in Ireland, the terms immigration and immigrants tend

to be used interchangeably with terms such as non-Irish, non-national and newcomer, reflecting the host-newcomer dualism that draws boundaries between Irish/homecomer on the one hand and non-Irish/newcomer on the other (Ní Laoire 2008b). Belonging or not-belonging to a nation or an ethnic category can be understood in the context of the politics of boundary maintenance, whereby boundaries are maintained with reference to 'identity markers that denote essential elements of membership (which act to 'code' people) as well as claims that are articulated for specific purposes' (Anthias 2001: 633). As Anthias (ibid.) highlights, these processes are inherently political, involving the construction of hierarchical social positions.

Typically, European states have developed relationships with their diasporas and returnees which reflect ethno-nationalist notions of citizenship involving the use of boundaries to denote membership. This is manifest in policies which give preference to immigration of 'co-ethnics' or at least of those with a 'shared culture' (Joppke 2005, Skrentny et al. 2007). In Ireland, this preference has been reflected in policies to encourage return migration during the economic boom years, government funding for organisations that support Irish emigrants and cultural activities in the diaspora, as well as a growing trend to look to the diaspora as a resource to be harnessed. This reinforces the role of ethnicity or nationality as a boundary between different types of migrants, in effect a homecomer/newcomer dualism. This dualism is reproduced in government policy, where immigration is the remit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and of the Minister of State with special responsibility for Integration Policy, while return migration is part of the remit of the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs. It could be argued then that return migrants are officially included in a collective, increasingly global, deterritorialised (yet still familial-based and exclusive) notion of Irishness (Mac Éinrí 2009). The construction of Irishness in terms of a global family, linked to 'blood' and ancestry (see Nash 2008), has been emerging in recent years in certain official and popular discourses, for example President Mary McAleese's invocation of the global Irish family (Gray 2002). This was institutionalized in 2004 with the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act which reaffirmed the right to Irish citizenship of those of Irish descent. Simultaneously, it removed the automatic right for children born in Ireland to non-Irish parents, contributing to a de-facto legal hierarchy of Irish citizenship (White

and Gilmartin 2008). However, as this chapter goes on to show, this hierarchisation is frequently contradicted in everyday social discourse by the blurring of lines around the category 'Irish' and by responses to what Lentin describes as "the unseemly presence of the 'less than fully Irish'" (2002: 233).

The nexus of assumptions, laws and practices surrounding return migration could be considered to form a particular type of migration system or regime, understood in its broadest sense as: 'the cluster of relevant policies as well as practices, discourses, social relations, and forms of contestation' which shape migration processes (Williams, 2008: 7). Irish return migration has been facilitated by legal rights to residence and citizenship for Irish-born migrants and their offspring, together with the economic boom of the 1990s/2000s and the historical association of return with homecoming and assumptions of unproblematic belonging. This return migration system structures the lives of children who move to Ireland as part of it, by setting the political, economic and social frameworks within which they migrate and live there.

This structuring process can result in sometimes unexpected outcomes because the realities of growing up across national boundaries in this way are far more complex than suggested by the notion of home-coming. Fictional writing by second-generation writers provide valuable reflections on the ambiguities of home and identity with which diasporic children frequently struggle, for example in the novel *Over the Water* by Maude Casey, as cited in Arrowsmith (2000):

> We live in England, but. We live in England but all year long we are preparing for the journey home. […] I wonder, for the hundredth time of wondering, why is it that [Mammy] never thinks of this house as being her home. And why she should feel so foreign here, when she's been here for years and Ireland is so near. And I wonder, for the hundredth time of wondering, in which if them is *my* true home, and whether I'll ever find it, one fine day (Casey 1994).

This passage very keenly expresses the confusions experienced by the young second-generation Irish girl, growing up in England, and not knowing where her home really is. Return migration in many ways brings into focus the confusions and ambiguities that surround the concepts of home and identity for children of the diaspora; it becomes constructed as a journey 'home' but the home being referred to may be an unfamiliar place to children who have spent their childhoods thus far living

in another country. It raises questions of identity as the 'blurred' nature of diasporic identities can be reinforced on return to the 'homeland' (Christou 2006, Walter et al. 2002). Research with adult migrants in other contexts has highlighted the multiple issues of identity and belonging faced by those experiencing return to a 'homeland', as expectations are frequently not met and the ambiguities of identity are highlighted (King and Christou 2009, Potter and Phillips 2006). For example, some of the literature on second-generation Irish in Britain highlights the exclusion of second-generation Irish from acceptance within both Britishness and Irishness (Hickman et al. 2005).

Most of the children who participated in the research had been brought up by their parents to see themselves as in some way 'Irish'. In many cases, there was an unproblematic and taken-for-granted sense of Irishness by parents and children alike which involved a strong connection to Ireland prior to the return move. This was manifest in frequent visits to family in Ireland and an almost unspoken assumption (although more frequently found among parents than the children) that return to Ireland was inevitable. Some of the children had grown up with this sense of inevitability about the move to Ireland:

> Like they never, my parents never intended to stay there [England], it was just that you know, there were no jobs in Ireland so... ahem, that's why they went and you know when they got enough money together it was always the intention that they would go back home and I was brought up with that as well and I never really, I don't think I ever really considered England home because we always knew that Ireland was our home (Conversation with Anne, early 20s, moved from England aged 5).

> See we were always supposed to move over here. As far back as I remember. Every time we'd be here, we'd talk about it. I wasn't upset about it at all, and for a child not to be upset, that says a lot (Conversation with Cait, age 15, moved from England).

This strong connection to Ireland and sense of inevitability about return can be connected to two prevalent discourses of migration and identity in relation to transnational European migrations: one a diasporic and ethno-national discourse of return, the other a discourse of elite mobility. The diasporic discourse constructs identity in terms of ethnicity and/or nationality, frequently drawing on naturalized kinship-based and genealogical connections in order to construct a sense of belonging (Fortier 2000, Nash 2008). According to Fortier (2000), in diasporic contexts, ethnicity can become naturalised, whereby some cultural practices are reified as

'typical expressions' of an ethnic identity, and are seen as resulting from that identity rather than performing it. However, through these enacted cultural practices, a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to ethnicity develops.

In the Irish context, this discourse draws on traditional notions of Irishness, which construct members of the Irish diaspora as ethnically Irish, and draws on particular, often selective, elements of what are perceived to be typically Irish cultural practices (in areas such as sport and music) to assert this. It is reproduced in diasporic families through dense familial transnational connections, often reinforced through multiple migrations to and from Ireland across multiple generations. According to Reynolds (2006), participation in transnational family rituals, practices and visits provides diasporic youth with a sense of belonging and collective membership. Cait, like a number of the other participants in the research, is part of a large multi-generational transnational extended family network which spans Ireland and the diaspora, in her case, in England. Both of her parents were born in England to Irish-born parents and they moved to Ireland when Cait was eight years old. However, before moving they had spent most of their holidays there visiting family and since moving they continued to travel back to England frequently. Both Cait and her mother Rachel pointed to aspects of their life in England such as the food they ate, the music they listened to and their involvement in an Irish community, to emphasise their Irishness.

> Rachel: So, so, you know, we did grow up in very much an Irish house. My, my dad and my mum were very involved in the [County] Association in London.
>
> Caitríona: Okay.
>
> Rachel: And so we'd have been dragged along to, you know, dinner dances and various things all through childhood. And then I started playing Irish music when I was about 13, 14 (Conversation with Rachel, Cait's mother).

As Fortier (2000) argues, in the process of repeated performance of these practices, a sense of cultural ethnicity becomes embodied. Their sense of Irishness was developed in a diasporic context where family practices and rituals produced a belongingness which was constructed in ethno-national terms. This reproduces formal understandings of Irishness as global, de-territorialised and ethnicised. In other words Irish citizenship is understood in relation to ethnicity and as available to members of the diaspora (Mac Éinrí 2009).

The other (related) discourse which produces, and is produced by, assumptions of unproblematic belonging of return migrants is a discourse of elite 'travel' or 'mobility'. Western discourses that have their roots in colonialism construct the migration of elite white westerners as 'travel', 'mobility' or 'expatriation', in opposition to the *migration* of the globally marginalised (Favell 2008, Fechter 2007, Kofman 2005). Particular types of elite migrants tend to be constructed as 'expatriates', usually understood as westerners living outside their own country as part of a privileged form of migration, living lives in a 'bubble' maintained by a range of cultural and racial boundaries (Fechter 2007). Research has documented the types of lifestyles associated with 'expat' lives, which are characterised in particular by practices of detachment from host societies (Walsh 2006a) and expectations of either further transnational mobility or return to the home country (Fechter 2007). Notions of difference, foreignness and exotic otherness frequently permeate their constructions of the host societies (Fechter 2007; Hindmann 2009).

While the tendency to apply a sentimental exile and victimhood motif to Irish migration has been well documented (Miller 1985), others have argued that migration from Ireland has also displayed characteristics of elite and privileged migration (Akenson 1996, King and Shuttleworth 1988). Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, large numbers of Irish migrated globally as part of the colonial elite of the British Empire (Akenson 1996). Middle class and professional migration existed throughout the 20th century, and recent OECD figures show that there was significant emigration of the highly skilled from Ireland in the years prior to 2002 (Dumont and Lemaitre 2005). The Murphy[7] family can be considered to have participated in this type of migration. Unlike the other participant families, the children were in fact born in Ireland and, following a number of inter-urban moves within Ireland, the family moved to continental Europe because of the father's employment when the children were aged between 3 and 11. They lived in two different continental European countries, each one for two to three years, before returning to Ireland. While abroad, the children attended English-speaking international schools, did not learn to communicate in the local languages, and the family returned to Ireland frequently on holidays. The children had a strong sense of their Irish identity while growing up outside Ireland, as the following excerpt shows:

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[7] All surnames have been changed to protect participant anonymity.

Esme: Our friend [X], she moved here from Australia.

Caitríona: Oh really?

Emily: Her parents are Irish, from Belfast. They've all got kind of Australian accents.

Esme: Yeah but they've all got an Australian accent and she even thinks herself she's Australian because she's lived there.

Caitríona: Really? And would ye be the same or would ye see yourselves as Irish?

Both: Irish.

Emily: Because like [Country A] we moved there when we were three and we only lived there for three years so we like we wouldn't really remember much, and [Country B] we only lived there for two years and we were like 6, 7 and 8 there so we wouldn't really...

(Conversation with Esme and Emily, sisters aged 8-10, moved from continental Europe).

Their explanation of their own Irishness rests in part on the absence of any other nationality with which they can identify because of not having spent long enough anywhere else. It is likely also to be related to a constant and unproblematised sense of Ireland as 'their own country':

Caitríona: And can you remember when ye found out ye were going to be moving?

Esme: Mmm, upset, because of my best friends and stuff

Caitríona: really?

Esme: But then I was kind of happy because like you know, I was happy but sad at the same time

Emily: Yeah

Caitríona: So you were sad to be leaving your friends?

Esme: Happy to be going to my own country

Caitríona: And why were you happy to be going to your own country?

Esme: Well because you know we'd never really remembered living there. Like we'd remembered living there a little bit but […] we don't really remember

(Conversation with Esme and Emily, sisters aged 8-10, moved from continental Europe).

The sense is that their time living outside Ireland, even though they had little memory of living in Ireland, was really a temporary sojourn. Their mother reinforces this through her narrative of the family's migration which constructs the places in which they lived as both sophisticated and exotic. She describes life there in positive terms but as 'completely different' and a 'huge shock'. In some ways, this family's narrative

of their own migration could be understood in the context of discourses of privileged mobility. While the Murphy family did live locally embedded lives in continental Europe in many ways, they also maintained an 'expatriate' type of lifestyle, disconnected to an extent from local culture, interacting mainly with other English-speaking migrants, maintaining a strong sense of (Irish) national belonging and intending at all times eventually to return to live in Ireland. It is in this context that Esme and Emily see themselves as unproblematically Irish, and for various reasons, as discussed later, it seems that this is not contested on their return to Ireland.

Moving as part of the return migration regime, which involves an assumption of belonging, confers upon children (and adults) advantages which are not easily or automatically available to children who move within other migration regimes. The role of family, kin and local networks, material wellbeing and legal citizenship in shaping children's and young people's opportunities and belongings in different ways is explored in the rest of the chapter. I argue that these factors can contribute to the accumulation of social and cultural capital among children of return migrants but, importantly, that this does not always happen and that such capital is not available to all children of return migrants. This reflects the contradictions inherent in assumptions about return migration and returning migrants' identities as well as the ways in which migrant status intersects with other factors such as social class, gender and geographical location.

Drawing on the work of Connolly (1998: 20), I use the concepts of 'cultural' and 'symbolic' capital here to refer to the 'range of scarce goods and resources lying at the heart of social relations' which confer status and prestige on the owner. Connolly (1998) has used Bourdieu's concepts of social, cultural and symbolic capital (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) in his research on racism and gender identities among young children in a multi-ethnic primary school in London. The term social capital refers here to the 'networks and connections that can be mobilised to generate advantages or benefits' (Kelly and Lusis 2006: 834). The accumulation of particular types of social and cultural capital creates advantages which reinforce some children's social/cultural acceptability within shared frames of reference which have meaning in specific contexts and facilitates the development of belongings and attachments to these frames of reference. Belonging is understood here as going beyond the essentialist notions of claiming identities as 'possessive properties' (Anthias 2001),

and instead understanding the multiple ways in which emotional attachments are formed which provide a sense of security and acceptance (Valentine, Sporton and Bang-Nielsen 2009). The important role of performance of cultural practices in claiming ethnic/national identities is not denied here however. Instead, Fortier's (2000) argument, drawing on Butler (see Butler 1993), that through repeated performative acts, ethnicity becomes a deeply lived and felt identity is acknowledged. In other words, a sense of belonging develops and is enacted and performed through the lived and grounded realities of everyday life, such as cultural practices, family relations, materiality and language (see Fortier 2000, Walsh 2006).

Belonging: Family, Kin and Connectedness

This section explores the role of family, kin and connectedness in facilitating the development of a sense of belonging through the everyday realities of life in the 'homeland' among children of diaspora. The following questions will be explored: what is the role of family in connecting the children to the wider community of Irishness in Ireland? What does 'Irishness' mean to them in Ireland? What is the social currency of diasporic, ethnic or ex-patriate identifications on return? The ways in which families can provide access to social and symbolic capital through specific relationships and practices are explored here. The focus is on the ways in which families mediate, foster or inhibit the formation of collective attachments and belongings in children's everyday lives, and the ways in which these processes can be interrelated with notions of ethnic/national identity.

The closely-interconnected roles of family, kinship and community in building social capital is supported by a wide range of existing research, which points to the role of close familial ties as a source of emotional, practical and material support:

> Arguably, it is through this institution [the family] and its associated practices that the individual can lay claim to the collective identity of the wider kinship and community and to what is being perceived as social capital. There is, therefore, an affinity between the relatively private institution of family, its wider kinship network and the creation and utilisation of social capital (Goulbourne and Solomos 2003: 332).

While this neat conceptualisation of the interconnected nature of family, kin, community and social capital may be specific to certain types of contexts, it is a useful way of understanding how family can be the means through which children can become accepted (or not) as part of a wider kinship network or community and can

therefore have access to the social and cultural capital associated with it. Other literature has explored the role of transnational family networks in shaping diasporic identities among minority ethnic youth through shared cultural practices (see Reynolds 2006, 2010). Here I explore the role of family connections as a material and cultural resource in developing attachments and belongings which go beyond the family itself.

I argue that the local or familial connectedness of a child's nuclear family can provide access to a range of opportunities and possibilities. However, this is dependent on the potential of these connections to confer advantages, which in turn depends on the social positioning of those to whom there are connections (Kelly and Lusis 2006). Children of return migrants can benefit from their rooted, and often relatively privileged, family connections in comparison to, and in ways which are much more difficult or impossible for, other migrant children. The importance of being connected into nationally rooted networks is highlighted by Favell's (2008) claim that quality of life in European countries is associated with long-term investment in place, pointing to the frequently unacknowledged benefits of *im*mobility, settlement and national citizenship. However, having rooted family connections does not necessarily translate into social/cultural advantages for all return migrant children, given the complex nature of family relationships, particularly in the context of migration and return. Research in Irish diasporic contexts on transnational family networks points to the frequently oppressive, restrictive and conflictual nature of family relations in the diaspora (Gray 2004, Ryan 2008). The tensions and resentments associated with migration and its legacies within families can have far-reaching effects on family relations, which are brought sharply into focus by return migration (Gray 2004, O'Donnell 2000). In other European diasporic contexts, research highlights the complex matrix of relations of obligation, guilt, desire and conformity/resistance which characterise transnational families (Christou 2006, Panagakos 2004).

Family was a very important source of social capital for many of the participant families in this research. This was apparent on my research visits to their homes when relatives might drop by or children would mention that they go to their grandparents' homes after school, for example. While the network of reciprocal arrangements between family members was extremely important in shaping the space

of family life for many of the children in this research, I focus here on the role of cousins in particular, as this was a common theme in the children's narratives.

> Caitríona: …How did you feel when you found out you were going to be moving?
>
> David: Nervous or shocked.
>
> Caitríona: And what did you think it would be like?
>
> Caitríona: I didn't really know, I thought it was good, I thought it was a lot closer to family and cousins.
>
> Caitríona: So you had come back on holidays?
>
> David: Yeah.
>
> Caitríona: And what was it like coming back on holidays then, did you used to look forward to it or?
>
> David: Yeah a lot.
>
> Caitríona: Really?
>
> David: Yeah, mainly cousins.
>
> Caitríona: So do you have a lot of cousins here?
>
> David: Yeah, a couple of them are in England but most of them are here.
>
> Caitríona: Oh right, yeah, so can you see a lot of them now that you're back?
>
> David: Yeah, especially in the summer, yeah.
>
> (Conversation with David, aged 12, moved from East Asia)

All of the children who participated in the research had relatives who were living in Ireland. Some had close kin (grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins) there, while others had more distant relatives. Some moved to live near their family and others moved to other parts of Ireland. Having family connections in Ireland frequently worked together with the 'local' knowledge of the return migrant parent (especially in the case of a first generation migrant parent) to embed these families locally – in cultural, social and economic terms. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of such local and family connections in facilitating the settlement process, acting as forms of social capital for the children and their parents. For example, many of the participant children took part in team sports, dance or music classes, among other types of formal extra-curricular activities. This was frequently facilitated by family connections or family knowledge about the role of particular sporting or cultural activities in Irish society. As they were usually relatively familiar

with the norms and structures of Irish society, return migrant parents and relatives recognised the importance of institutions such as sport and other extra-curricular activities as a means of integration for children. As a result, they frequently encouraged the children's involvement in these and provided the resources to make it possible. For example, this parent explicitly identifies sport as a key mechanism of integration for her sons:

> Kate: …but I got him stuck in that then and he got to know the lads and he was going in to town and the team was in town so he plays with [the town] all the time and that got him into a lot of things. It got him active.
>
> Caitríona: So do you think things like sport have an important role to play?
>
> Kate: Oh I think huge for boys. Maybe not so much for girls, but boys need physical stuff
>
> (Conversation with Kate, parent of Colin, aged 18).

Similarly, other children spoke with pride of owning hurleys[8] or of following local football teams. They were clearly aware that such possessions or activities were a source of symbolic capital which had value in their localities and among their peer networks.

Interestingly, these sources of symbolic or cultural capital could sometimes contribute to children's assertions of their Irishness, as many of the activities are also bound up with particular definitions of Irishness and thus could be used as a badge of identity. Colin (aged 18), when discussing his feelings of being part-Irish and part-American, referred to Gaelic football to explain his 'part-Irishness':

> Colin: but like part Irish or part American, yeah like because I, my sport is football like, Gaelic football, but like I feel American like, so it's kind of like the best of both or whatever like, you know, so I don't know
>
> (Conversation with Colin, aged 18, moved from the US).

In this way, formal leisure activities act to socialise children and young people to an imagined norm (Harker 2005). Sports such as Gaelic football and hurling are extremely popular in Ireland. They are traditionally male-dominated sports and have also been associated with a particular narrow cultural nationalist ideology of Irishness, being closely tied to assumptions of an authentic unique and pure Irishness with its

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[8] A hurley is a stick used in the Irish sport of hurling.

origins in 19th century nationalism. Traditional Irish music and dance can have similar connotations. This is also related to the role of these sports and traditional music and dance in the Irish diaspora, where they are viewed as symbols of Irish national/ethnic identity. Many of these children grew up with this type of relationship to these cultural activities in the diaspora.

The children's family connections to Ireland (together with material resources and citizenship rights) also meant that many of the families had spent holidays in Ireland before moving there.

> Caitríona: So when you did move here, was it what you expected?
>
> Warwick: Nope. No, no.
>
> Jade: Yes.
>
> Caitríona: So you'd say no and you'd say yes? So what was it, was everything the same as you thought it would be?
>
> Jade: 'Cos we did move like two years ago; no, we just came to look at it, maybe not two years ago but a few years ago we came and just for a holiday and we really liked it (Conversation with Jade, aged 9, Warwick, aged 6, moved from southern Africa).

This meant that Jade and Warwick were part of a family decision-making process which involved going to Ireland on holiday, travelling around and choosing a location to live in. So for Jade (although not for Warwick), there was a sense in which she knew what to expect, and felt she had been involved in the decision-making process, before migration. Similarly, the Murphy family had gone to Ireland on holiday regularly and had even bought a house there before moving back. Emily and Esme's holidays had involved spending time in their house in Ireland, seeing relatives and making friends in the neighbourhood. The latter proved to be very important in easing the transition to living there full-time.

> Caitríona: So what was it like when ye moved here? It was last year wasn't it?
>
> Emily: Mmm, it was in summer, August
>
> Caitríona: How did you find it?
>
> Esme: It was okay because we knew [friend x] and [friend y] and stuff - they're friends from around here.
>
> Emily: And we like knew them already
>
> Caitríona: Oh I see. How did you do that?

Emily: Because we had made friends. One day two girls were out and they were friends with the others so then we became friends with the others and then one day [friend x] came up to us because [she] was new but we had this house as a holiday house but [she] didn't know anyone so she said 'hi can I be your friend?' and we said sure, so then we got to be great friends.

(Conversation with Esme and Emily, aged 8-10, moved from continental Europe)

However, of course, living full-time somewhere is a very different experience to spending one's holiday there, as some of the participants discovered. For some, starting school marked the transition point between old and new experiences of a place.

Our neighbours in our first house were English and I played with the girl next door all summer. The biggest shock was when school kicked in – it wasn't a holiday any more. It was real. School - everything was so different. I started Brownies over here – it was so different. I had a birthday party in November. I thought everyone was okay. I don't know when things when downhill. (Conversation with Cait, aged 15, moved from England).

Until then, being in Ireland had been familiar and comfortable, their social worlds marked by a combination of spending time with extended family and being 'tourists'.

… because [this town] was always more fun than Boston. *[Laughter]* [The town] had sweet shops and I could go to the shop by myself and I had friends on the road and everything.

(Conversation with Caroline, aged 23, moved from US at age 11)

We came home every summer and they had an idealised view of Ireland – holidays, grandparents, lucozade and chocolate, football.

(Conversation with Pauline, parent of David, Homer and Bart)

Spending holidays in Ireland can contribute to unfulfilled expectations about living there full-time. For example, Colin (aged 18) had expected life in Ireland to be a rollercoaster of fun times with cousins, but was disappointed when he found that his parents had decided to live in a location which was midway between both sets of relatives, but not close enough to either to see them every day.

… all the family would kind of come around or whatever like you know, they would come around during Saturdays or Sundays or if they are not working, so like for that two or three weeks, you would have all your cousins around you nearly full time whatever,

but I'd say I wasn't expecting that like, I was thinking that was how life actually was back here.

(Conversation with Colin, aged 18, moved from the US)

Similarly, Bart (aged 7) pointed out to me that his cousins lived too far away to see them regularly, even though some of them lived just a few miles away and he was attending a party with them later that day:

Caitríona: So, do you like living near your cousins?

Bart: Yeah.

Caitríona: Well when you were in [East Asia] you probably – did you have cousins living near you there?

Bart: No, every single cousin is in Ireland.

Caitríona: Okay. So now that you're back in Ireland is it nice to be able to see them?

Bart: Yeah, like, some of them – every single one of them lives far away because one lives in [town 20 miles away], the other lives in [nearby suburb], that's the one who I'm going to the party with like, and then, oh yeah, there's also another cousin and I don't know where they live in Ireland.

(Conversation with Bart, aged 7)

Arguably, he actually lives quite close to his cousins compared to where they had lived previously, but to him, they are still far away. This suggests firstly that his expectations are shaped by having spent holidays in Ireland when he would see his cousins a lot, and secondly, that the idea of moving back to be near to family is very different when viewed from children's and adult perspectives.

Whether they lived near or far from them, most of the children and young people who participated in the photography project about their lives took photographs of their cousins. Usually, these were taken at special family occasions or during family visits. Some of the children moved to live in localities where their cousins already lived, for example the Kennedy family who moved to a rural location close to many of their relatives and cousins. This meant that they attended the same school as their cousins, which in this case, was a source of social support for Sean and facilitated his integration within the peer group:

Caitríona: How about you Sean, would you say it's hard to make friends or easy?

Sean: No because I had a cousin and I knew him before and I just hung out with him and I made friends

(Conversation with Sean, aged 12, moved from the US).

In cases such as this, potential markers of difference (such as accent) can be rendered unimportant by a family connection which supports the child's claim to belong. However, cousins do not always play this kind of role. For example, Cait talks about tensions between herself and her cousin in Ireland, which she explains with reference to the effect of her migration to Ireland on their relationship.

> Cait: My cousin [name] and I were really very close, we were inseparable, until she moved away. Her family moved to Ireland […]. After that we drifted apart a bit.
>
> Caitriona: Why?
>
> Cait: Well, we just drifted apart and it was kind of strange because when we moved to Ireland […], until then Ireland was kind of her thing, so she didn't really like it. Plus whenever anyone like my aunt came over from England, instead of just staying with them, they'd have to come and see us too.
>
> (Conversation with Cait, aged 15, moved from England)

This highlights the ways in which transnational migration can disrupt family relationships, or in the case of return migration, can shatter high expectations of such relationships.

Elaine and Daniel moved to a small rural locality where they live close to their cousins.

> Caitríona: Do ye both go to the same school? Boys and girls?
>
> Elaine and Daniel: Yeah.
>
> Daniel: Even [name] below there goes.
>
> Caitríona: And what age is he?
>
> Elaine: Five.
>
> Daniel: I'm five as well.
>
> Elaine: Yeah but [name] is kind of older d'you know. You're five and a half and [name] is five and three-quarters.
>
> Caitríona: Do ye play with him?
>
> Daniel: Yeah. He's our cousin.
>
> (Conversation with Elaine, aged 7, and Daniel, aged 5, moved from US)

As this exchange suggests, Elaine and Daniel referred quite a bit throughout my exchanges with them to their cousin who lived next door. He is clearly an important

figure in their lives (although they had never met him before moving to Ireland). However, they did not tell me that there were other siblings in their cousin's family who also went to the same school, one of whom was in Elaine's class. This information emerges later. Discussions with the parents reveal that there have been some tensions between the cousins, which the parents explain in terms of the social differences between the children. Only the youngest cousin can relate to Elaine and Daniel but even he seems to be positioned 'above' Daniel in the children's age-based social hierarchy. As a result, friendships have not developed and having cousins does not seem to have facilitated a wider integration within local peer networks. This can be related to the types of tensions that can emerge between return migrants and non-migrants especially when family relationships are involved. In the Irish context, research by Gray (2004) and by O'Donnell (2000) has highlighted the ways in which the emotional 'baggage' of emigration/staying/return decisions within families can be a source of conflict when return occurs. Feelings of guilt, envy and resentment, on both sides, can come to the surface when return migration disrupts the status quo. In this case, it has meant that family connections have not helped the children to become integrated in the local peer networks. In fact, they may have hindered it as the family tensions can have effects within the wider social networks.

Belonging: Citizenship, Ethnicity and Nation

This chapter has shown that assumptions of unproblematic belonging pervade the experiences of children who move to Ireland as part of returning Irish families. However, these assumptions are challenged by the children's encounters with peers, institutions and other aspects of Irish society. Their everyday encounters with peers and with Irish society undermine the formal and diasporic discourses of Irishness which construct them as unproblematically Irish, resulting in struggles over identity and belonging. This supports Reynolds' (2006) assertion regarding what she calls 'the basic paradox of ethnic identity formation', which is that it is presented (by all) as fixed and immutable, but that people's everyday lives tell a different story. The children's everyday encounters are explored further in this section with a particular focus on their negotiations of identity and belonging in relation to concepts of citizenship, ethnicity and nationality. This highlights the ways in which the children's complex positioning can facilitate the accumulation of social/cultural capital and therefore acceptance as belonging but simultaneously can result in exclusion.

Conflicting Concepts of Irishness and Belonging

In an earlier section, two related discourses were explored which support the assumptions of unproblematic belonging for children in returning Irish families: discourses of diasporic/ethnic belonging and of ex-pat/elite mobility. Some of the young participants in the research, along with their families, had spent the early years of their childhoods in Irish diasporic contexts and were aware of a conscious sense of ethnic Irishness, associated with certain performative practices, contributing to their identity formation. They continued to assert their Irishness while in Ireland, but many of them had found that this was not as easy as might have been expected given their backgrounds. Instead, they found that they had to constantly assert their Irishness in the face of challenges to it from among non-migrant Irish. Being born outside Ireland and having a different accent could be used to mark children out as being different and 'not Irish.'

> I settled down....but ahem...like every now and then like somebody would say I was English and I would be like "No I'm not" like you know and they would be "But you were born in England" and then like "No, sure all my family is Irish"

(Conversation with Anne, early 20s, moved from England at age 5).

The exchange which is related in this excerpt highlights the clash of two different notions of national belonging among the children. Anne's own diasporic understanding of national belonging, based on ancestry and a naturalized ethnic identity, comes into conflict with other children's understanding of national belonging, based on birthplace. Anne's global and diasporic sense of Irishness is undermined by assertions of the primacy of territory. Anne elaborates further on the other children's assertions of the significance of birthplace:

> … this is what I always used to say to people, "If your parents are on holidays in Spain and they had you while they were on holidays you know, would you be Spanish like?" and they'd be like "No but then you lived there after", and then I'd say "But what if your parents had to stay there for a few months so you'd be Spanish then wouldn't you", and they'd be like "No, no" and it was just I don't know, like I used to say that but I never used to convince them that I wasn't English. […] Like in Primary school like if they found out that you were born in England like you are English so and I still had to try and explain myself but then they would be like "No, because you lived there for a few years after then it wasn't just an accident that you were born there kind of thing.

This suggests that the other children view the fact that Anne *lived* in England as well as being born there defines her as 'English'. They are pointing to the undeniable 'fact' of her early socialisation in England (albeit in an Irish family), as reflected in cultural markers such as her accent, to undermine her claims to Irishness. In this way, attention is drawn to her difference, and to the ways in which she does not fit in, resulting from her early socialisation in another place. Ancestry and performance of 'typical' Irish cultural practices provide Anne's means of challenging this characterisation but they seem to have little symbolic capital in the school playground.

Some of the participant children had received negative comments about their accents or where they were from. These are verbal manifestations of often subtle processes of exclusion, whereby children are made to feel as though they do not quite fully belong. In some cases, it seems to have been at the root of processes of active exclusion of children within peer networks and of bullying. For example, Caoimhe says that she was bullied by local boys when she was younger, because she was seen as 'English and weird'. This took the form of verbal abuse, mimicry of her accent and sayings, and she also felt that the other children targeted anti-English comments indirectly at her.

> I have been... bullied in primary school because I came from England. It wasn't girls, it was boys. To me it seems boys have more problem with English people than girls do, girls just get on with it, and I never used to fit in with the boys like the rest of the girls because I was different, I was English and I was weird, and I wasn't like the rest of them, that I wasn't from Cork and things like them. I was just born in a different country, I see myself as Irish anyway. It did upset me a lot.

(Conversation with Caoimhe, aged 15, moved from England)

In this case, again, Caoimhe's own sense of her national belonging based on ancestry and kinship clashed with the other children's views, in particular the boys', which were that she was English because she 'came from' England. Cait also experienced bullying in primary school. She had moved to a rural area in Ireland from England when she was eight, and said just that things had gone downhill after starting school and told me that she was bullied in school. She did not like to talk much about it except to say:

> I don't really have any good memories from when I was in primary school. Secondary school is all good memories. Primary school, I don't know, there was just too much sadness.
>
> (Conversation with Cait, aged 15, moved from England)

Social practices of exclusion such as these are rooted in process of othering, whereby concepts of self and other become the basis for social exchange and social practices. Return migrant children may become constructed as the other and in this way become objectified, made to feel what they are not. According to De Castro (2004), notions of otherness emerge to protect the self from pain or anxiety and sustain conceptions of self and other as temporary positions in processes of social exchange. In other words, the presence of the child who is *both* a migrant *and* claims to be *Irish* challenges pervasive assumptions about native-newcomer dualisms and may produce a certain emotional anxiety among peers, who respond by objectifying and othering the migrant/Irish child.

It could be argued that children draw on wider (adult) discourses of belonging and identity to construct children of the diaspora as not belonging. Discourses which work to construct Irish return migrants as not belonging draw on historical stereotypes of returned migrants, or returned 'yanks', and especially the children of migrants, as being not fully or authentically Irish. Second and third generation Irish, in particular, are defined as 'not fully Irish' (Arrowsmith 2000, Hickman et al. 2005). Closely intertwined with this is a history of anti-Englishness in Irish society, which reinforces this discourse of exclusion for children who were born in England. Children can pick up on these discourses of authenticity and fixed national boundaries and transfer them to their own peer contexts, as seen above with Anne and Caoimhe being labelled as English despite their own insistence that they are Irish. In this type of situation, where she 'comes from' is seen to define her identity, as it marks her out as different.

While the Bradley children were also born outside Ireland, they lived what their mother called an 'expatriate' lifestyle in different parts of East Asia, until the family returned to Ireland when the children were aged between seven and twelve. The children talked about having felt Irish while living in East Asia in terms of something that set them and their co-ethnics apart from the rest of society:

> Homer: I think one of the things is being Irish in [East Asia] there's, there's a GAA association. They have, like, they were the only other Irish people that I knew. So now there's tonnes of Irish people here, so in [East Asia] I didn't know any other Irish people.
>
> Caitríona: Okay […]. So what would being Irish mean to you? What do you think it means?
>
> Homer: Well when I started in [East Asia] my teacher who's Scottish, the first year, she knew where it was, no-one else came from near where Ireland was.
>
> (Conversation with Homer, aged 9, moved from east Asia)

Homer appears to be trying to communicate that 'being Irish' in East Asia meant something very different to 'being Irish' in Ireland. The children's notion of Irishness is made complicated by moving to Ireland where they find that 'being Irish' means something different. It is no longer about being different and instead is very much about sameness.

> Caitríona: Say, what do you think of if I said 'Irish'? What are the words that come into your mind?
>
> David: Being born there or living there and, like, if you're used to that way of living.
> (Conversation with David, aged 12, Homer's brother).

David goes on to tell me that not speaking the Irish language[9] and not being able to share his school-friends' early childhood memories both make him feel less Irish. In different ways, then, the everyday lives of these children both reinforce and contradict their own and others' assumptions of their unproblematic Irishness. This highlights how problematic and complex the children's belongings are once pervasive assumptions of return migration begin to be de-constructed. It contradicts the growing public and official acceptance of diasporic or ethno-national definitions of Irishness[10] (which simultaneously work to exclude others such as those born in Ireland to non-Irish parents). In other words, while ethno-national definitions of Irishness which

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[9] While English is the dominant spoken language in Ireland, the Irish language is also used and is taught in all schools in the Republic of Ireland.

[10] As reflected, for example, in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the 2004 Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act; see also Mac Éinrí, P. (2009) 'If I wanted to go there I wouldn't start from here: re-imagining a multi-ethnic nation' in Ging, D., Cronin, M. and Kirby, P. eds. *Transforming Ireland: Challenges, critiques, resources*, Manchester University Press

relate to a *jus sanguinis* model of Irish citizenship[11] have begun to gain official currency, children of the diaspora who return to Ireland often find that different definitions of Irishness have currency in their own social worlds.

Citizenship as a Resource: Strategies of Identification

Research with migrant or second generation youth in other contexts has highlighted the strategic and fluid nature of their identity constructions, pointing to the young people's resourcefulness in relation to their positioning strategies (Noble, Poynting and Tabar 1999, Pollock 2005, Rassool 1999). Young migrants can exert agency in moving strategically between different elements of their identities, depending on the social context (Mason 2007). In this research, formal Irish citizenship was used as a resource, sometimes selectively, by the children to position themselves as Irish and therefore as entitled to belong. All of the children who participated in this strand of the research had, or were entitled to, formal Irish citizenship, as is the norm for returning Irish families. While this was taken for granted by many children, it could also be extremely useful in certain circumstances. For example, it could be used as 'proof' of identity and belonging when these were challenged by others.

> Caitríona: And do you think other people consider you to be Irish?
>
> David: Maybe, I wasn't born here, I never lived here but my passport's Irish, so… (Conversation with David, age 12).

Having an Irish passport of course also has important material implications. It means that the holder can consider a future in Ireland: staying in Ireland, including going to university or working there, are taken-for-granted possibilities which are not so easily available to non-EU citizen children (see Chapters 3 and 5).

> Caitríona: Where would you say you see yourself in a couple of year's time?
>
> Kevin: I don't know, I might go to, I'm thinking of taking a year off school and going to America for a year like, but I'll come back to go to college then I suppose.
>
> (Conversation with Kevin, aged 17, moved from the US)

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[11] A *jus sanguinis* model of citizenship is based on the idea of citizenship by 'blood' or ancestry, in other words, the right to citizenship based on one's parents' and grandparents' citizenship. The 2004 Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act marked a shift from a *jus solis* (citizenship based on birthplace) towards a more *jus sanguinis* type of model of Irish citizenship.

Like many of the other teenage participants, Kevin was attracted by the idea of spending some time outside Ireland (many talked about living for a while in the country in which they had been born). However, like some of the others, Kevin felt that this would be temporary and that he would then return to live in Ireland. Having Irish/EU citizenship means that there is freedom to travel abroad without fear of being unable to return. This can enable strong ties to develop in or to Ireland, often as part of a web of transnational connections. In this way, the passport, as the material symbol of citizenship, can be seen as both a material and cultural resource upon which children can draw.

Family/ancestral connections were also used by the participants as 'proof' of Irishness, thus drawing on genealogical definitions of identity, as seen in the case of Anne above. This argument was used to counter challenges from others to their own sense of Irishness. The young participants in general showed an awareness of the power of the 'birthplace' discourse of national belonging in Ireland. David's statement above about not being born in Ireland reflects his acceptance of this, up to a point. The unproblematic acceptance of Emily's and Esme's Irishness, both of whom were born in Ireland, is also notable. The birthplace argument could be cleverly used against itself by some of the young participants. For example, in one family, while the eldest two children were born in England, the youngest had been born in Ireland. However, all three were subject to processes of othering and denial of their Irishness by their peers, which may have been related to their use of the English accent within the family context. To counter this, they all pointed to the youngest brother's undeniable Irishness:

> … because he's not [English], like, I mean he's got a birth cert to prove it so, I mean nobody believe[s] it, sometimes they'd be outside and fighting with [my brother] and they'd be saying "Go away back to England, will you", like [...] and [my brother's] kind of like "Why would I go back to England when I was never there, like, never born there", like, he can't go back to where he doesn't belong, so, I don't know

> (Conversation with Caoimhe, aged 15, moved from England)

Other children referred to their grandparents having been *born* in Ireland, and thus asserted their own Irishness as a result of their grandparents' birthplace. Family and kinship connections can also be used to construct narratives of the self, which have the effect of reinforcing a claim to Irishness through the birthplace discourse. In

the course of this research, a number of the participants constructed narratives of themselves which emphasised their identities as members of strong transnational extended family networks. For example, Cait's photobook about her life, which had 28 pages, included 13 pages devoted to members of her extended family and only two dedicated to her immediate family. Most of the photographs were taken in Ireland of relatives who were either living in Ireland, or were on holiday in Ireland from England at the time. Her relatives' house in another part of Ireland, where her grandfather had been born, had particular symbolic significance. Of this house, she writes:

> A second home – love this place – fridge is always full – we're always welcome – know it so well.
>
> (Excerpt from Cait's photobook, aged 15, moved from England)

A page devoted to her grandfather includes the words: 'My Mum's Dad - Irish and crazy – I love him to bits'. The use of the descriptor 'Irish' is quite revealing, as he was born in Ireland, unlike Cait's mother and Cait herself, suggesting that Cait wishes to emphasise her grandfather's 'Irish' credentials in birthplace terms, thus also asserting her own Irishness through her connection to him.

Clearly, many of the children and young people who participated in the research claimed affiliations to other national identities in addition to their Irish identities, although they were also careful about where and when they would display these.

> ... you know there'd be some days I'd be, like, you know, I'm totally English today, like you know. For instance a soccer match was on television, you know, Ireland versus England, I'd automatically go for England anyway because, you know [...] my granddad who's like from Cork would go for England. I would not go for Ireland because I know more of the players on the England team than I do on the Irish team and I just get more enjoyment out of watching them play than Ireland play so you know I know then ha, I'm from England so I can go for England (Conversation with Caoimhe, aged 15, moved from England)

They actively constructed their own narratives of identity, belonging and citizenship, by producing selective narratives of self – claiming some available narratives where it was appropriate or beneficial to do so, and disavowing others. This shows their competence as skilful narrators by judging which aspects of their complex selves to emphasise in particular situations.

> If I'm talking to an American person, I say I'm Irish; if I'm talking to an Irish person, I'd probably say I'm American.
>
> (Conversation with Michelle, aged 11, moved from the US)

According to Yuval-Davis, Anthias and Kofman (2005), belonging to a nation is not just about citizenship but about the emotions evoked by such membership. In other words, it is not simply about fitting in but also about feeling secure in one's membership to that nation. While these children and young people could clearly perform their Irishness quite competently to the point where they 'fitted in', they did not always *feel* fully accepted or that they fully belonged, which is an important distinction, as highlighted by Valentine, Sporton and Bang-Nielsen (2009). This can be related to feelings of belonging to concrete local communities. For example, Caroline who lived in the US until she was 12, presented her life in Ireland in very unproblematic terms and did not seem to have had any problems 'fitting in' in her town or making friends, due in part to very strong local family connections locally. However, later in the interview, she elaborates on her 'local' credentials:

> Caroline: Because I'm partially a local… I think it's known my family is local… but I'm not a full local, I think I was a bit too old to be the full local…
>
> Caitriona: Really?
>
> Caroline: ...and I spent too long away…
>
> (Caroline, aged 23, moved from the US at age 12)

Caroline shows awareness of the criteria for 'full localness' and feels that she does not meet these. She implies that she can never meet these criteria because she was too old when she moved from the US, unlike her younger siblings who are, according to her, 'completely local'. In Caroline's case, she believes that her 'localness' is diminished by her 'Americanness', suggesting that localness is closely tied to national belonging:

> Caroline: …and I was sitting inside the pub with all the people I'd gone to school with and they're all asking me how's America.
>
> Caitríona: Really.
>
> Caroline: It's like I don't live in America, I live in Limerick.
>
> Caitríona: Really, wow, so they're associating you in their minds with America.
>
> Caroline: Yeah. I'm just always kind of associated with it…

(Conversation with Caroline, aged 23, moved from US at age 12)

She had moved to a city in another part of Ireland in recent years, but it was mistakenly believed locally that she had moved back to America, reflecting local constructions of her as American, or at least part-American. Similarly, despite having a very strong network of friends locally, Cait believes she will never fully belong to her local town:

> Well, because I'm not a [town] person, like. I love [the town], but I don't think like a [town] person. And realistically, I'm never going to be completely a [town] person. Because I'm...I am still...part of me is still English and part of me is kind of where I went to primary school. And I don't think like them, so they don't really get me sometimes (Conversation with Cait, aged 15, moved from England).

This suggests that at an emotional level, no one nation, place or community can provide a sense of belonging for these young people. As Valentine, Sporton and Bang-Nielsen (2009) argue, it is not enough simply to claim an identity – belonging requires that an identity be recognised or accepted as such by a wider community of practice.

Therefore neither genealogical nor birthplace definitions of national belonging on their own can provide an adequate sense of emotional security. The young migrants could draw on genealogical notions of national belonging to attempt to challenge their everyday experiences of exclusion, although this was not always successful. However, they also undermined or challenged genealogical notions of belonging in different ways. Firstly, by claiming hybrid, mobile or migrant identities, they challenged the imagined fixed boundaries of national identities, for example, by associating with more than one national identity, sometimes depending on the concrete local context:

> When I'm in school I'm Irish, when I'm at home I'm English.

> (Conversation with Caoimhe, aged 15, moved from England)

Some preferred to emphasise a generic 'migrant' identity through their associations with other migrants or minorities, thus rejecting national identities and performing a more cosmopolitan identity:

> I think that's why I really like our group, because there's never any pressure to be anyone, we're all completely individual, we all do our own thing. People just accept us for who we are (Conversation with Cait, age 15).

> People are just different, because of their experiences and just the way they have been brought up and the backgrounds that they are from, you know, and people here wouldn't really be used to moving, they would have moved from their primary school to their secondary school or maybe, you know, oh from Dublin to Cork, but like you would be very close still to your family and to your friends and to the old friends. Moving from country to country is quite different because you basically leave behind, what you have, you can go and visit but it's quite different.

> (Conversation with Emma, aged 16, moved from continental Europe)

Secondly, some use the ambiguity of their citizenship status in playful or strategic ways, almost in Ong's (1999) sense of 'flexible citizenship'[12].

> Colin: Well over there like because I'm Irish over there, I'm not American, I'm the Irish kid like. Like here I'm the American kid so it's like no nationality like.

> Caitríona: Yeah and what does that feel like?

> Colin: It's grand because like I can go over to America and do whatever, like travel all over the place over there, then I can go anywhere around Europe freely with my Irish passport as well so it is the best of both worlds like.

> (Conversation with Colin, aged 18, moved from the US)

Colin views his dual citizenship as a resource which gives him an advantage in terms of travel and opportunities in relation to many of his peers. Caroline uses her ambiguous identity strategically to 'mess with people' as she puts it and to challenge their preconceptions:

> If someone holds it against me, I just view it as their ignorance, not mine. There was one guy one day he was making so much fun of Americans and he was on – he was having a rant basically about George Bush and Americans and he works with my best friend X and she just elbowed me and goes show him, and I have an American driving licence and I just put it out and I put it on the table in front of him and I put on a pissed off face and I've never seen someone crumble so fast!

> (Conversation with Caroline, aged 23, moved from the US at age 12)

In this exchange, she challenges his assumptions about national belonging by letting him believe she is Irish before displaying her American citizenship. She

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[12] Flexible citizenship is understood in the sense of '... the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions' (Ong 1999: 6).

appears to play with her identity, shifting between identification as Irish and American, and portraying a transnational fluid and strategic sense of belonging. Of course, it is only possible to do this in situations where one feels it is safe to do so and where there is sufficient familiarity with the cultural context. Caroline also plays with her identity for strategic reasons – in this case, in order to gain some symbolic capital which marks her out as different from her peers:

> Caroline: It can be fun to mess with people sometimes or for getting into pubs.
>
> Caitríona: Oh right.
>
> Caroline: Reardan's [nightclub] in Cork, they don't like anyone under the age of 23. I say I live in America, I'm just here for the weekend, stick on the accent and they let you in no bother.
>
> Caitríona: Really [laughter]. How did you work that one out?
>
> Caroline: Oh they just hadn't let me in, I said oh come on, whatever I said. They were 'oh you're American'. Yes, yes I am.
>
> (Conversation with Caroline, aged 23).

Identifying with the local or the post-national is another strategy for transcending the exclusionary nature of national belongings. For example, by mobilising family as a source of belonging which is both grounded in local places and also transnational, young migrants assert their post-national identities. They find a sense of emotional security and acceptance by positioning themselves within large transnational extended families which practice a non-territorial form of Irishness. This is reflected in Cait's photobook which points to the centrality of her extended family to her sense of self (or the sense of self she wished to convey to the researcher). As Fortier (2000) argues, a diasporic and familial identity politics re-appropriates narratives of origin, ancestry and genealogy, thus destabilizing nationalism.

Finally and importantly, the participants in this research also avoided the politics of national identity every day by emphasising other aspects of their identities, such as their gender, social class position, interests in music, sport or fashion, or affiliations to localities, schools, particular types of peer groups or clubs. This does not mean that national belonging is not at all relevant in their lives. Instead, it is just one of a range of cultural frames of reference which have meaning in their lives. For example, John's photograph of three of his rugby shirts includes the Irish shirt as just

one of a number of shirts, while pride of place is afforded to his Munster[13] shirt (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: 'My rugby shirts', by John, aged 11, moved from England

Through participating in aspects of global consumer culture, as well as through highly localised practices, the children and young people accumulate the cultural, symbolic and social capital which facilitates the formation of meaningful connections to others (peers, family) and provide a sense of belonging. Many of the children displayed material symbols of consumer culture with great pride (see Figure 6.2). These can be viewed as articulations of the children's engagement with global frames of reference which can facilitate connections with others, connections which are often actually formed at the local level.

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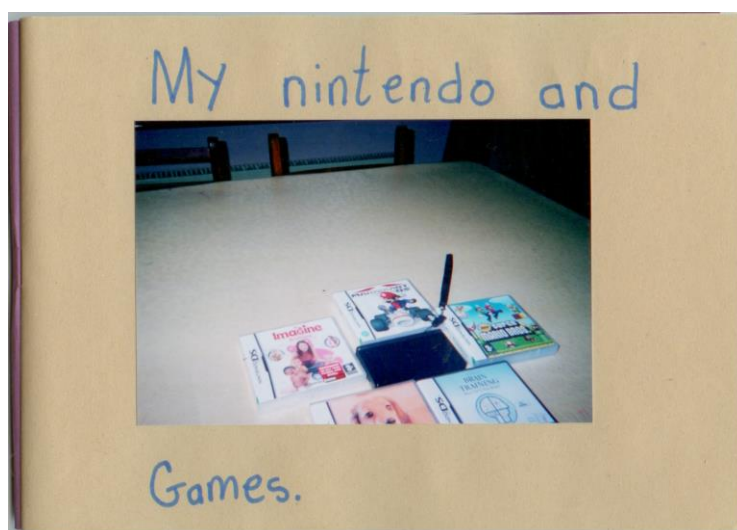
[13] Munster is a provincial rugby club in southwest Ireland.

Figure 6.2: 'My Nintendo and games', by Lisa, aged 7, moved from US

Possession of the latest consumer goods is an important source of symbolic capital among peer groups.

> … and in the winter we go up and we play the Wii because we got it from Santa. [Caitríona: Santa managed to get it to you did he?]. Most people seemed to get them. There's about five people in my class that don't have it. […] Mostly people now get the Wiis. People got Nintendos sort of last year. They were the style last year (Emily, aged 8, moved from continental Europe).

For Emma, some of her meaningful connections with others extend beyond the local and national to the transnational:

> Emma: Yeah, but like it's good to keep the friends because like I know one friend from [previous country of residence] I want to come over this summer and she will probably come over and I might even go to France with her.
>
> Caitríona: Really?
>
> Emma: Yeah and improve my French, well her English, she got better grades in English than I did.
>
> Caitríona: Really?
>
> Emma: Yeah, fluent, perfect English, like not even an accent.
>
> (Conversation with Emma, aged 16, moved from continental Europe)

Emma maintains contact with friends from her previous country of residence and clearly values multilingualism as a source of cultural capital, which fits with her goal of international travel.

> I'd love to do something that would let me travel, I'd love to travel, I'd really love to see New York, I'd love to live there and work there yeah, and Asia, and Australia, I've never been to Asia or Australia so, I'd love to travel there, and Africa possibly
>
> (Conversation with Emma, aged 16).

Sean (aged 12) drew a self-portrait during one of the research visits, which shows him playing football and wearing the strip of his favourite (English premiership) club - Arsenal. He recognises that supporting this particular club is in itself a source of symbolic capital among his peers locally. However, it seems to be also an important dimension of his relationship with his father, who has taken him on trips to England to support the team, and furthermore, it is closely connected with his transnational extended family. He was first introduced to soccer by his relatives in

Ireland while he was living in the US, and his trips to England are also an opportunity to visit relatives there. While discussing the positive aspects of moving from Ireland to America, Sean volunteered:

> Sean: 'Cos if I was in America I wouldn't even know who Arsenal is.
>
> Caitríona: You wouldn't have heard of them is it?
>
> Sean: Well I would but I didn't really know them in America, but I did have their jersey. (Conversation with Sean, aged 12, moved from the US)

In different ways, Sean and Emma are accumulating cultural capital which contributes to their negotiations and performances of identity – as Arsenal supporter or cosmopolitan traveller. These are identities with which they feel comfortable, which enable meaningful connections with others and which transcend the politics of national/ethnic belonging. Their negotiations of these identities may intersect with their migrancy, Irishness or diasporic backgrounds in different ways, reflecting their translocational positionality – 'the interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialization' (Anthias 2001: 634). But they are also important aspects of their identities not just as migrants but as young people/teenagers, boys/girls, sons/daughters/friends, living in contemporary Ireland in the 21st century.

Concluding Comments

The focus on social and cultural capital (in a Bourdieuan sense) in this research highlights the structural context of child migration without denying children's agency. Even in a migration stream such as return migration, which is often considered to be 'voluntary' and 'unregulated', the particular discursive, national and familial contexts in which it occurs shapes migrant children's lives in multiple and often contradictory ways. The children and young people develop particular strategies of belonging and identification within this context. The chapter highlights migrant children's subjectivity, competence and agency in negotiating multiple strategies for articulating a sense of self in contradictory contexts.

The struggles and negotiations of belonging and identity which they experience in the process problematise notions of unproblematic belonging for children of return migrants, and thus problematise ethno-national definitions of belonging. The research challenges the idea that children in returning families can and

do become integrated without any difficulties. While they can benefit from their formal and familial connections to the 'home' society and to the state as members of the (returning) diaspora, at the same time, their everyday encounters with the 'home' society can serve to mark them out as different and to question their claims to belong. This highlights the inherent contradictions of narrow ethno-national ideas of citizenship based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Research with children brings this into particularly sharp focus, in part because of expectations placed (by adults) on children as representing 'the future'. Children, especially migrant children, become the focus of adult anxieties about identity and citizenship (reflected in return migrant desires to bring up their children in the 'homeland', or in the debates surrounding the 2004 Citizenship Referendum) and the resulting tensions play out in the children's everyday lives in different ways. The ways in which the children and young people respond to this serve both to reproduce and subvert adult discourses of migration and belonging. Through their very presence as simultaneously both migrants and 'home-coming' children of the diaspora, they challenge the host-newcomer dualisms which dominate understandings of migration and belonging in a European migrant society. From this ambiguous, in-between, sometimes privileged but often painful position, they negotiate new hybrid and mobile identities and develop complex strategies of positioning which shed light on broader processes of return migration and child migration in a specific European context.

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